

Skills of the future: Preparing for the jobs of tomorrow

They say change is the only constant — and that's especially true of the job market! In the past few decades, we've seen major shifts in the way people work, with entirely new industries and roles created, previously popular jobs phased out, and technology becoming a huge part of almost every industry.

Those kinds of changes are sure to continue. With emerging technologies like AI and machine learning already ushering in new ways of working, the [jobs of the future](#) will probably be quite different to what we're used to today, requiring new sets of skills and aptitudes.

While we can't predict the future, we can make smart, informed guesses about how future work might evolve and what kinds of future work skills may be valuable in the years ahead. In this article, we look at some of the [key skills](#) of the future you can learn today, to help [future-proof your career](#) and keep yourself in demand.

The changing nature of work

Before we look at a list of skills of the future, it's important to first consider *why* work is changing and *how* it's changing. By understanding the changing nature of work and how future work, you can better position yourself to be ready for roles in the years ahead. After all, we can't predict exactly how the job market will change, but we can look at what might influence work and make an educated guess.

The following factors have had an impact on how we work and the essential future skills you may need to enjoy a [fulfilling and stable career](#).

Automation and jobs

Perhaps the biggest factor influencing the world of work is automation. Automation has been affecting industry for decades now, ever since the first machines were introduced into factories and plants across the globe. Automation affects jobs because it can replace manual labour roles efficiently and safely.

In the present day, automation takes a wide range of different forms. It's not just machines assembling cars in manufacturing plants, it's also software that can carry out tasks much faster and more efficiently than any human. Just look at the large language models like ChatGPT that can write entire books and answer questions in seconds.

There's understandable concern that advancements in technology will make certain jobs completely obsolete. Roles in accounting, SEO writing, graphic design and data analytics are just some that could be impacted by AI, if those professions don't evolve with coming changes.

The gig economy

In recent years the 'gig economy' has emerged, offering a flexible working solution for those seeking casual work or wanting to supplement their income. Gig-based work covers food delivery, ride sharing, online tutoring and [freelance work](#) as a '[side hustle](#)'.

Remote work

Another big driver of change in the nature of work has been the rising popularity of remote work, accelerated by the pandemic. More people than ever are now [working from home](#), allowing companies to hire remote talent and save on office costs, while employees can enjoy better [work-life balance](#) and save time and money on commutes.

In-demand skills

With the above in mind, let's look at some of the most in-demand skills of the future. The following [skills and traits](#) are already in high demand and seem likely to continue being sought after for the foreseeable future. An important thing to note is that many future work skills are transferable soft skills and [character traits](#) that go beyond education and training.

Digital literacy and tech skills

Developments in technology are a major influence affecting how we work, so it makes sense that some good future skills to have are related to using tech. A foundation in using technology is essential in many fields already, whether it's science, sales, engineering or law. Most office workers will need to know how to use common software packages and operating systems at the very least.

With tech in mind, app and software development and robotics engineering are some fields that seem likely to enjoy future demand. The more [technical skills](#) you have and the more comfortable you feel using a computer, the better position you'll be in to fill many future work roles.

Adaptability and resilience

As we've seen in recent years, the world of work can be subject to sudden unexpected changes – but even in a predictable work environment, the ability to adapt is a handy skill to have. Adaptable and resilient employees are able to stay productive and efficient in changing environments, whether that's internal restructuring or due to external factors (like a pandemic). These [soft skills](#) of the future are also good to develop from a personal perspective as they will serve you well in other aspects of your life.

Creativity and innovation

With or without AI tools and automation, creativity and innovation are sought-after skills. Every organisation needs to innovate to stay relevant, which is why creative thinkers and trailblazers will always be in demand. In a more literal sense, the [creative industries](#) will continue to need artists, writers, producers and directors. Fields like digital marketing and advertising rely on human creativity and innovation as much as they do data analytics and technology, making these skills increasingly valuable in the years ahead.

Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence, or EQ, is often cited as one of the most desired future work skills. It's what is broadly referred to as 'having people skills'. [Emotional intelligence](#) refers to a person's ability to understand and manage their own emotions, as well as

understanding the emotions of those around them. High EQ is important in leadership positions, [teaching](#), social work, advertising, HR, nursing and many more roles.

EQ is important even outside of these roles. Importantly, for both present-day and future work, having a high level of emotional intelligence makes you more employable, as you are easier to work and collaborate with and can fit well into different [work cultures](#). You're also more likely to [ace your job interviews](#).

Critical thinking and problem solving

Critical thinking and problem solving have always been important skills for employees, and they'll continue to be valuable future skills for years to come. These kinds of skills are highly [transferable](#), as employers seek out team members who can analyse situations rationally and overcome challenges autonomously.

Communication and collaboration

Like critical thinking, the ability to [communicate well](#) with colleagues is another transferable skill that will surely continue to be so in the world of future work. Being able to communicate well entails a range of different skills that require practice to master.

Whether it's verbal or non-verbal communication, [writing emails](#), giving presentations, managing stakeholders or editing reports, communication is one of the most important skills of the future. If you're a good communicator it's likely you're also a good collaborator or team player – the two skills go hand in hand and will continue to be essential skills for employees for the foreseeable future.

Skills employers are looking for

A lot of employers are hoping for workers who can help support and grow their businesses for the long term. That's why many look beyond the skills you can bring to the table in your first years at their organisation, to what skills of the future you offer. Here are some good skills of the future to list on your [résumé](#).

Industry-specific skills

Many employers are eager to find workers who can demonstrate technical knowledge and attributes that are relevant for their industry. In the field of digital marketing, for

example, skills like creativity, data analytics and an understanding of social media are always important. In [nursing](#), a relevant degree, patient care skills and staying current with healthcare policy and practices is vital. No matter what career you pursue, it's important to make sure your technical skills are up to date and that you're aware of industry trends and developments.

Soft skills in high demand

Technical skills are important, but not much use to you without the soft skills to support them. Soft skills include things like time management, communication, [collaboration](#), adaptability and so on. These skills are transferable not only across industries but across work conditions, meaning you have the ability to take work well even though your environment, responsibilities or organisational structure may change.

Global perspective and cultural competence

Globalisation has affected almost every type of industry. If your career plan includes working for a large company, you may find yourself communicating and collaborating with people around the world. A global perspective — or [cultural awareness](#) — isn't strictly a skill, but it's a trait you'll need to develop if you want to successfully work with people from different backgrounds. Multinational corporations value people who can demonstrate strong cultural competence and work well as part of a diverse team.

Entrepreneurial mindset

A lot of employers also appreciate workers who demonstrate an entrepreneurial mindset. What is an entrepreneurial mindset exactly? It means being ambitious, determined, motivated and driven to succeed. Those with an entrepreneurial mindset also tend to be creative and resilient, able to work autonomously and eager to get out of their comfort zone. They maintain a positive attitude, even when times are tough.

Preparing for the future job market

So, how can you prepare yourself for future work and get those essential future skills needed to succeed? One way is through education. There are many educational pathways you can take: formal education ([degrees and diplomas](#)), online courses, workshops, [certificates](#), [on-the-job training](#), [internships](#) and more.

If you're keen to break into the workforce, an internship or traineeship might suit you. If you want a career that requires a degree, it's best to study while you're younger and have fewer responsibilities. Alternatively, you can work while studying online or work and study part time.

Formal education may seem time consuming and expensive, but it can be a good investment in your future. Many jobs these days [require a bachelor's degree](#) and if you want to work overseas one day, a degree is often a prerequisite for a work visa.

Staying competitive

If you want to stay competitive in your field, you have to commit to ongoing professional development. Gaining new skills and ensuring that you've got key skills of the future will mean you'll always have something valuable to contribute. Continuous learning could look like getting new certifications, [upskilling](#) in your current role, finding a mentor for career guidance, adding more services to your business or moving to a new team in your organisation. A key is to stay open-minded about changes in your industry, so you can move with them rather than resist them.

Career paths of the future

The new skills of the future go hand in hand with new career paths that are starting to emerge. Many of these jobs are oriented around technology, such as roles in AI development, machine learning, robotics, aeronautics, automotive engineering and so on.

But tech isn't the only type of future work. We can also expect to see a greater number of roles focused on conservation, renewables, sustainability and agriculture, in response to climate change and food security issues. Additionally, the field of [healthcare is always evolving](#), with new roles opening up alongside developments in medicine and growing interests in mental health, longevity and aesthetics.

Overall, many important future work skills are the same skills that are already in demand today. Transferable soft skills like communication, critical thinking and adaptability will continue to be valuable. Conversely, technical skills, digital literacy and specialised knowledge will also be important to have.

By working on having a well-rounded skill set, you have the best chances of future-

proofing your career. There's no guarantee that any job or field will offer stability down the track, so the best thing you can do is focus on what you're good at, while mastering essential soft skills and staying adaptable.