

Chapter 5: Skills & Strengths

We all have natural skills that are innate to us. For example, typically you may be able to learn sports quickly because you are very physically coordinated or perhaps you have strong musical abilities and can quickly learn a new instrument.

Too often in this world, we focus on weaknesses and areas for improvement. In doing so, we generally overlook the things we are naturally good at – our strengths and our gifts. These are the things which you are naturally good at and that you feel good doing!

What do you think your strengths or gifts are?

LIST YOUR TOP 5 STRENGTHS:

Use the following statements as a guide to help you:

I like that I am...

I need to celebrate myself for...

My friends like it when I...

I know others appreciate me when...

People tell me I am good at...

I know I am good at...

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

STRENGTHS 360 ASSESSMENT

This exercise is a fun way to create greater awareness around your strengths and gifts. It's particularly useful if you find it difficult to identify your own top 5 strengths.

- Once you have identified your own strengths, perform your own 360 strengths assessment by asking 4 - 5 friends, coaches, teachers, and/or family members what they think your top 5 strengths are.
- Each person will provide you with a different observation – either affirming what you already know or pointing out qualities you haven't considered as strengths. With this greater awareness, you can make better choices about what you decide are your top 5 strengths.
- Use the following table to record the results of this 360 strengths assessment.
- Once completed, reflect on the strengths people mentioned that you hadn't considered. Consider whether you would change any of your top 5 self-identified strengths listed above.

Name	Example: Jane				
1st Strength	Adaptability				
2nd Strength	Creativity				
3rd Strength	Determination				
4th Strength	Enthusiasm				
5th Strength	Patience				

REFLECTION:

Are any of the strengths identified by others a surprise to you? Why?

Given the feedback you received from others about your strengths, would you change any of the top five you identified?

SKILLS

Skills are learned abilities. For example, if you're a hockey player you might have learned puck handling or skating techniques to improve your performance. It's often hard to decipher what's a natural aptitude versus a skill. As an example, if we look at Wayne Gretzky, one of Canada's greatest hockey players, it would be difficult to know how much of his effectiveness as a player was natural aptitude versus learned skills, but it's likely that both contributed to his abilities as a player.



As skills are learned they're also something that you can choose to enhance.

Rating your skills and abilities will help you better understand areas you are better at and areas to develop.

There are several different types of skills. It's important to choose training and education opportunities that will supply you with a combination of skills.

- **Transferable skills** are skills we can take from one job to another, which help us be effective in a variety of situations and keep us continuously employable. Verbal communication and interpersonal abilities are examples of transferable skills.
- **Job specific** or **technical skills** are specific to a particular role or type of role. For example, knowing a specific computer system for the health care industry, or a computer programming language.

In the next exercise, we will look at identifying the skills and aptitudes you already possess. You can also note whether it's a skill/ability that you would like to improve for use in your future career.

Most importantly this section will help you identify some patterns in your skills and what areas may represent some overall talents!

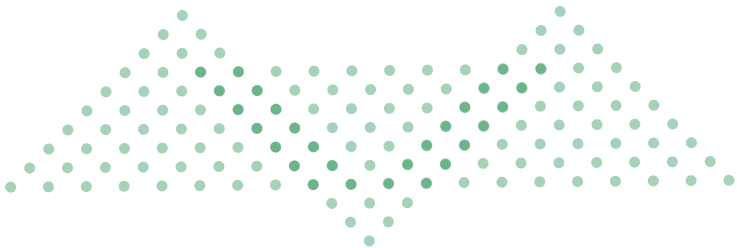
SKILL AREAS SELF-ASSESSMENT

Read the following statements and rate your skills/ability using this scale:

1 - WEAK 2 - BELOW AVERAGE 3 - AVERAGE 4 - ABOVE AVERAGE 5 - EXCELLENT

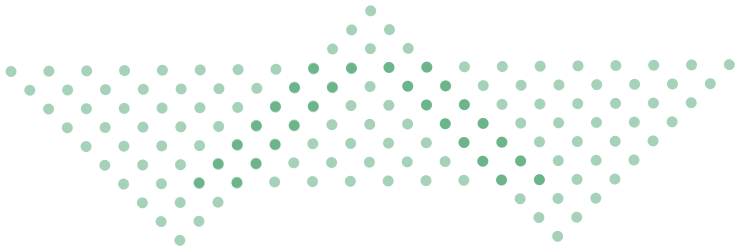
Place a check mark next to the skill/ability that could be a future area for development.

1. LINGUISTIC	Rating (1 - 5)	Area to Develop?
Clearly articulate ideas in writing		
Write persuasive essays		
Clearly articulate ideas verbally		
Reading comprehension		
Learn new words and incorporate them into my vocabulary		
Able to learn and use new languages		
Typical ratings of my written work		
Deliver effective presentations		
Able to learn by reading		
Able to identify themes and symbolism in written passages		
TOTAL		



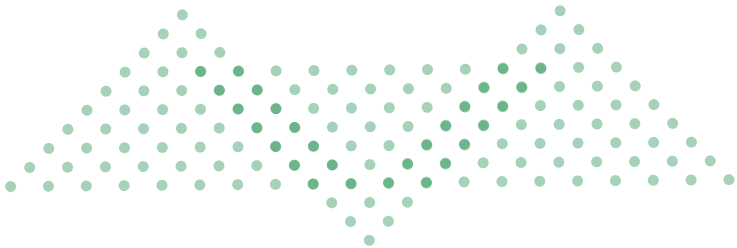
1 - WEAK 2 - BELOW AVERAGE 3 - AVERAGE 4 - ABOVE AVERAGE 5 - EXCELLENT

2. KINESTHETIC	Rating (1 - 5)	Area to Develop?
Physical strength		
Physical endurance		
Play sports		
Work with hands		
Able to learn by actively manipulating objects		
Sense of touch		
Express myself physically (hand gestures/other movements)		
Agile		
Ability to remember physical movements		
Physical coordination		
TOTAL		



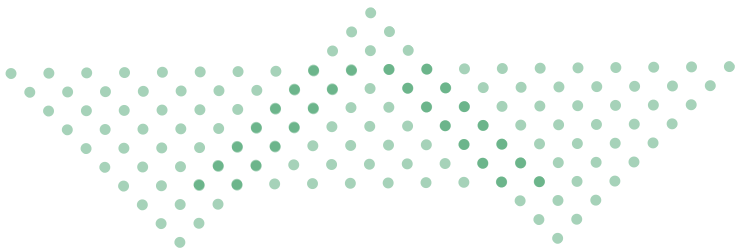
1 - WEAK 2 - BELOW AVERAGE 3 - AVERAGE 4 - ABOVE AVERAGE 5 - EXCELLENT

3. CRITICAL THINKING & ABSTRACT REASONING	Rating (1 - 5)	Area to Develop?
Critical thinking ability		
Can identify patterns or themes in information		
Able to conceptualize and organize information in my head		
Analyzing facts and ideas		
Problem solving		
Researching; observing and gathering information		
Evaluating		
Creating/innovating		
Deductive reasoning; reducing information to underlying elements		
Synthesizing; combining to create an insightful whole		
TOTAL		

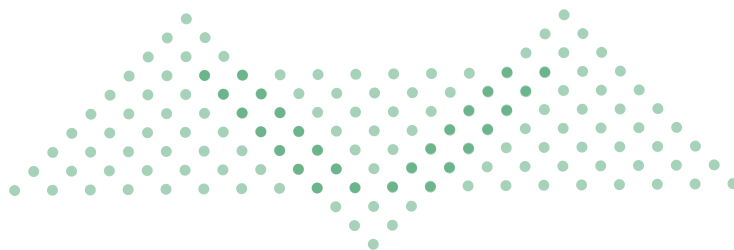


1 - WEAK 2 - BELOW AVERAGE 3 - AVERAGE 4 - ABOVE AVERAGE 5 - EXCELLENT

4. VISUAL-SPATIAL PERCEPTION	Rating (1 - 5)	Area to Develop?
Solve visual puzzles		
Can visualize pictures in my head		
Able to draw or design things		
Able to visualize 3 dimensional objects		
Sense of direction, able to read maps		
Can remember places or information visually		
Notice colors or shapes		
Geometry skills		
Able to design spaces or objects		
Can design plans		
TOTAL		

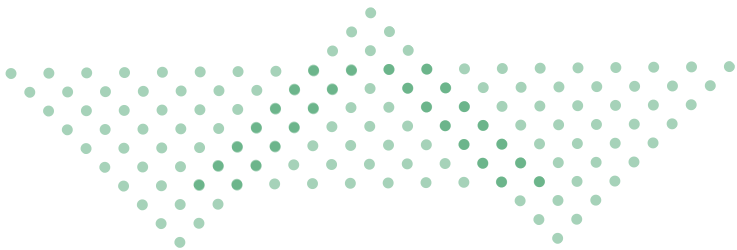


5. CREATIVE EXPRESSION	Rating (1 - 5)	Area to Develop?
Developing original ideas		
Drawing, painting, or sketching		
Photography		
Performing, acting, or dancing		
Playing an instrument or singing		
Cooking and/or baking		
Eye for fashion (i.e., shape, colour, texture, and patterns)		
Making crafts, clothing, sculptures, pottery, or other creative projects		
Aesthetic design abilities (i.e., graphic design, technical sketching, or decorating)		
Creative writing		
TOTAL		



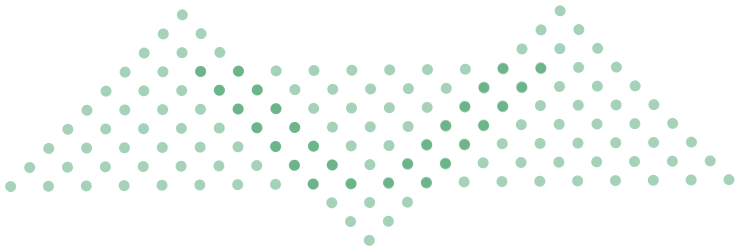
1 - WEAK 2 - BELOW AVERAGE 3 - AVERAGE 4 - ABOVE AVERAGE 5 - EXCELLENT

6. NUMERICAL	Rating (1 - 5)	Area to Develop?
Understand numerical information		
Apply mathematical formulas		
Computational abilities		
Pay attention to numerical details and inconsistencies		
Estimation - costs or approximations		
Understand financial information		
Prepare spreadsheets		
Bookkeeping		
Quickly process numerical information		
Solve mathematical problems		
TOTAL		



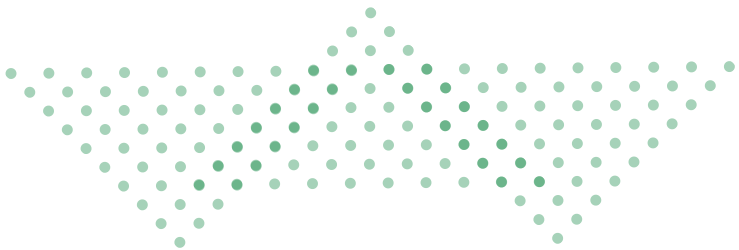
1 - WEAK 2 - BELOW AVERAGE 3 - AVERAGE 4 - ABOVE AVERAGE 5 - EXCELLENT

7. INTERPERSONAL	Rating (1 - 5)	Area to Develop?
Build and maintain satisfying and positive relationships		
Negotiate		
Ability to listen to and understand others		
Ability to work as part of a team		
Empathy		
Manage interpersonal conflict		
Teach		
Counsel, help, and mentor		
Build rapport with others		
Ability to clearly communicate with others		
TOTAL		



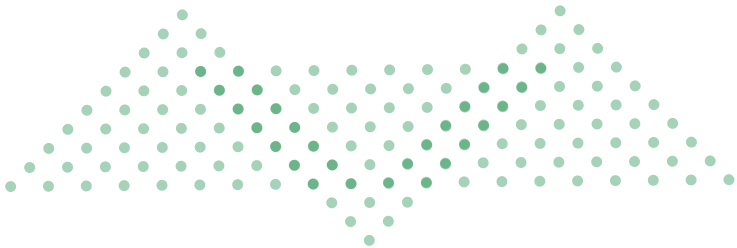
1 - WEAK 2 - BELOW AVERAGE 3 - AVERAGE 4 - ABOVE AVERAGE 5 - EXCELLENT

8. STRATEGIC AND ENTREPRENEURIAL	Rating (1 - 5)	Area to Develop?
Creative thinking		
Strategic thinking		
Financial forecasting and budgeting		
Marketing		
Ability to build and maintain professional and business relationships		
Ability to prioritize		
Adaptable		
Efficient		
Goal oriented		
Solving strategic problems		
TOTAL		



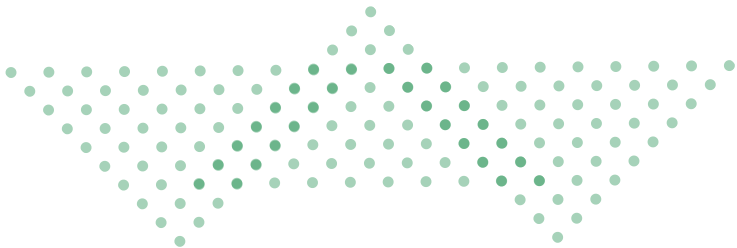
1 - WEAK 2 - BELOW AVERAGE 3 - AVERAGE 4 - ABOVE AVERAGE 5 - EXCELLENT

9. SELF-MANAGEMENT	Rating (1 - 5)	Area to Develop?
Aware of and able to regulate emotions		
Time management		
Ability to plan		
Reliable		
Organizational skills		
Hard working		
Persistent		
Accomplish goals		
Ability to concentrate		
Regulate behaviour and thoughts		
TOTAL		



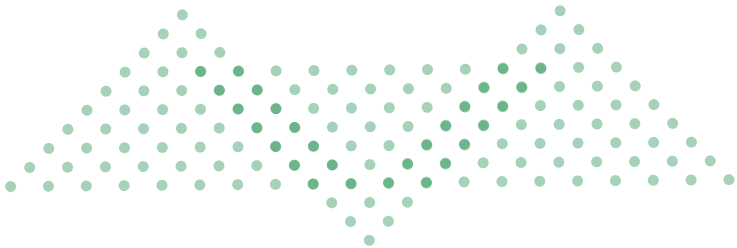
1 - WEAK 2 - BELOW AVERAGE 3 - AVERAGE 4 - ABOVE AVERAGE 5 - EXCELLENT

10. LEADERSHIP	Rating (1 - 5)	Area to Develop?
Take initiative		
Manage and mediate workplace conflict		
Manage change and support team through the process		
Strategic thinking		
Ability to act as a mentor and coach		
Decision making		
Influencing others		
Political savvy; understanding the forces at play internal and external to the organization		
Teamwork and collaboration		
Ability to delegate		
TOTAL		



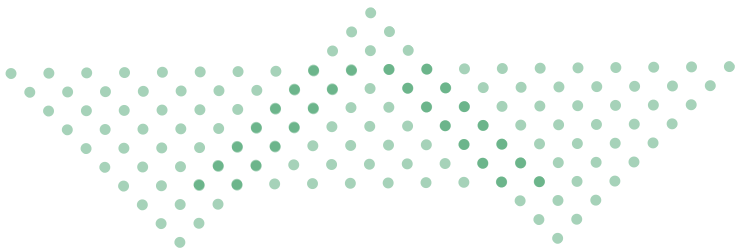
1 - WEAK 2 - BELOW AVERAGE 3 - AVERAGE 4 - ABOVE AVERAGE 5 - EXCELLENT

11. TECHNICAL & MECHANICAL	Rating (1 - 5)	Area to Develop?
Repair machines and equipment		
Operate electronics		
Construct buildings, furniture, or machines		
Handle precision tools or machinery		
Operate large equipment		
Work with hands to build or fix things		
Use diagnostic equipment to assess technical issues		
Precision work		
Create a physical product		
Problem solve through physical means		
TOTAL		



1 - WEAK 2 - BELOW AVERAGE 3 - AVERAGE 4 - ABOVE AVERAGE 5 - EXCELLENT

12. COMPUTERS & TECHNOLOGY	Rating (1 - 5)	Area to Develop?
Learn new technology		
Word processing		
Use technology to increase my efficiency		
Utilize programs and technology to develop and deliver presentations		
Use databases and spreadsheets		
Program computers		
Use media as a professional networking tool		
Effectively use the internet		
Use technology/computers to create and manipulate graphics		
Problem solve and fix technical issues		
TOTAL		



SUMMARY SCORES

Add up your scores for each of the **12 skill areas** and multiply each total by **2** to get a percentage score. This will help you identify potential talents and record them in the chart below.

1. Linguistic		7. Interpersonal	
2. Kinesthetic		8. Strategic and Entrepreneurial	
3. Critical Thinking & Abstract Reasoning		9. Self-Management	
4. Visual-Spatial Perception		10. Leadership	
5. Creative Expression		11. Technical & Mechanical	
6. Numerical		12. Computers & Technology	

UNDERSTANDING YOUR SCORES

20 - 25%: This is either an area of development for you, or it represents a field you have little interest in and therefore do not want to set any developmental goals for.

26 - 50%: Your scores are within the low to average range. You may have some strengths as well as areas for development within this category. Some components of this area may neither be of interest, nor strengths for you.

51 - 75%: This area is a relative strength for you. There may be a few skills you want to enhance but you have abilities in this area that you could utilize in your future career.

76 - 100%: This is an area of strength for you. You could consider utilizing your abilities in this area in your future career.

Some of the categories you assessed your skills in are self-explanatory, but others may require additional information to understand the types of skills they are measuring.

Please see the following explanations of each of the ability categories, based on Gardner's intelligence scale:

1.
Linguistic

This represents the ability to effectively use language; to express oneself both verbally and through written language, as well as utilize language to accomplish goals. Those who score high on this may also use language as a means to remember information and possess the ability to learn languages. Speakers, writers, poets, lawyers, journalists, and various other careers would all have strong linguistic abilities.

2.
Kinesthetic

Individuals who score higher on this scale may have a number of physical abilities. They may be physically strong, coordinated or possess a high level of endurance. They may also be more sensitive to touch, have good manual dexterity and learn best by physically doing something or problem solving in a hands-on way.

3.
**Critical Thinking &
Abstract Reasoning**

Critical analysis is actively and skillfully gathering, organizing, conceptualizing, synthesizing and evaluating information, then utilizing the information to guide your thoughts and behavior. Careers within scientific, academic, or research fields might be a fit. In addition, occupations that would allow you to analyze or think strategically might also be something you'd enjoy.

Abstract reasoning refers to understanding ideas that are not presented in concrete terms, but instead they might only exist at a theoretical level. People with strong abstract reasoning are typically good at taking a set of general principles and solving unique problems. This type of reasoning would be required for philosophy, science or other theoretical topics.

4.
**Visual-Spatial
Perception**

People with strong visual-spatial abilities have a unique aptitude for visualizing 2- and 3- dimensionally. They will notice colors, visual patterns and are also good at understanding visual information such as maps. They can often be artistic but this is not always the case. People with strong visual-spatial abilities could use their aptitudes in a number of roles. They could put their abilities to use as painters, architects, theoretical physicists, navigators, graphic artists, designers, engineers, and cartographers.

5.
Creative Expression

Creative expression includes being able to perceive something and transform it into a visual, aesthetic, or creative form. There are a variety of forms of creative expression: culinary arts, creative writing, dance, acting, music, design and visual arts. As a result there can be quite distinct job interests based on a person's preferred form of creative expression.

6.
Numerical

Numerical skills refer to the way a person perceives, processes and calculates numbers and numerical symbols. Numerical skills can be used in research (i.e., science/math professor) or applied roles (i.e., statistician, engineer, math teacher).

7.
**Interpersonal
Abilities**

Interpersonal abilities include the ability to communicate effectively with others; the skills involved in this would be: listening, understanding one's emotions as well as those of others, expressing empathy, and using socially appropriate verbal and non-verbal behaviors.

8.
**Strategic and
Entrepreneurial**

Many individuals work in a more entrepreneurial fashion. Even when working for a large firm, individuals who work on a contract basis must possess some of the skills that other small business owners need. It is a unique combination of strategic planning, self-management, people, financial and business acumen that an entrepreneur must master in order to be successful.

9.
Self-Management

The self-management category represents skills that allow one to manage day-to-day life effectively and adapt to changes that occur in our environment. Self-management skills are useful across a wide range of careers.

10.
Leadership

Leadership abilities are important across numerous careers and apply to anyone in a position of influence, ranging from project management through to being the CEO. Leadership behaviours can also be displayed in positions that are not official leadership roles (i.e., leading without authority), and are linked to career success.

11.
**Technical &
Mechanical**

This category represents the ability to build or fix machines/equipment, as well as the ability to operate tools and equipment. Individuals who score high in this area might enjoy technologist or engineering roles, to name a few. In general people who score high on this scale will enjoy being engaged in active, hands-on work.

12.
**Computer &
Technology**

Almost all of us in today's world of work utilize some form of technology. For those with strong skills in this area, technology and computers might be a focus of one's job (e.g., computer programmer). Others, however, may prefer to simply use technology as a means to an end.

REFLECTION:

Review your scores and identify your top **10** skills below.

* **Note:** It’s easiest if you take a blank sheet of paper and write down any abilities you scored as 5, then order them from there. If there are not 10 abilities that you gave a score of 5, then look at the abilities you ranked as 4’s, etc.

1.		6.	
2.		7.	
3.		8.	
4.		9.	
5.		10.	

What can you start or continue doing to best leverage your existing skills and strengths?

What types of work or projects would be a good fit based on your current strengths and skillset?

What opportunities are there for you to develop skills you had identified for development?

Refer to [page 192](#)

CAREER CRITERIA SUMMARY

Take a moment to transfer your top skills, abilities, and talents to the Transferable Skills portion of the "**SKILLS & STRENGTHS**" section on your Career Criteria Summary!



JOB SPECIFIC SKILLS

It's often helpful to review paid work, volunteer work experience, and course work to identify both your job specific and transferable skills.

In this next section, we'll look at identifying the skills that you have gained from your work, volunteer, and school work experience. You can look at a copy of your current resume and simply highlight skills from previous jobs that you believe are industry specific.



You may be surprised about how many might transfer to other industries!

Fill in the tables below with experience and/or courses from your last **3** paid and unpaid positions, and industry specific skills and/or knowledge gained with each:

1. Occupation/ Field of Work	
Time Frame	
Industry Experience + Skills/Knowledge	
2. Occupation/ Field of Work	
Time Frame	
Industry Experience + Skills/Knowledge	
3. Occupation/ Field of Work	
Time Frame	
Industry Experience + Skills/Knowledge	

EDUCATION/TRAINING

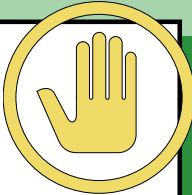
Fill in the table below with relevant education and/or training and the skills and/or knowledge gained:

Education/ Training	
Experience + Skills/Knowledge	

.....

Refer to [page 192](#)

CAREER CRITERIA SUMMARY



Take a moment to transfer your industry specific skills and/or knowledge gained to the Job Specific Skills portion of the "**SKILLS & STRENGTHS**" section on your Career Criteria Summary!

