

What Are Employers Looking For in Young Jobseekers

Employers don't expect young jobseekers to have years of experience. What they do like to see is what are called "soft skills" or "employability skills".

These are:

- Communication skills
- Teamwork Skills
- Problem-solving skills
- Initiative and enterprise skills
- Planning and organising skills
- Self-Management
- Learning Skills
- Technology Skills

Think about the various things you might have done at school, at sport, at home or elsewhere that demonstrate those skills. Have you organised a fund-raising event, a school play, a concert? This is the type of activity that can highlight these skills.

Employers are also looking for these attributes:

- Loyalty
- Commitment
- Honesty & integrity
- Enthusiasm
- Reliability
- Personal Presentation
- Common Sense
- Positive Self Esteem
- Sense of Humour
- Balanced attitude work and home life
- Ability to deal with pressure
- Motivation
- Adaptability

Once again, think of ways that you have demonstrated these skills and brainstorm some examples of how you have shown these with your family or someone close to you. It's good to come up with examples that have a positive or tangible outcome.

Your personal presentation can make a big difference to your odds of finding a job. Clothing, body art and piercings – rightly or wrongly – affect the way people feel and act towards us. These are the ways we express our individuality or culture or personality. Here are some good comments from some young people who have had to address these issues in their workplace.

“Vixn has numerous tattoos and her nose, lip, eyebrow and wrist are pierced. For her clothing and piercings are self-expression “I am standing out” she says. Though she feels strongly about her identity, Vixn understands the need “to make money to survive”. Working in a competitive retail sales environment she finds by respecting her employers dress code and conforming to the corporate culture she’s more valuable to the company and accessible to her customers, so she takes out her piercings to go to work. Vixn find this frustrating but says money for food and rent are the priority. “The ends are sometimes more than the means and besides, I know who I am and nothing’s going to change that” – she says.

Tyson (19) who works at a fast food outlet, says he can separate his work identity from his personal identity. “I go to work to make money, not be fashionable” he says “ With the extra money I make from work, I can buy the street clothes that I like to wear to express myself in my time”.

Find out about a company’s dress codes when you go for the job interview. Look around at the employees and note what they’re wearing – you’ll have to wear the same thing.

If you are currently having problems with your employer’s dress code – make a plan for change. Try negotiating with your boss – if you’re prepared to give a bit you’ll probably find they will too.

For more info on overcoming issues with your employer look at [Employers Guide](#) – although this is an employers guide , it will give you some ideas on what you might be able to negotiate on to come to some agreement. Most of the time it is perceptions rather than the reality that is the problem.

Lastly, make the best use of work experience and voluntary work – it’s a great way to get checkable references, which is what you need when applying for jobs. Check the section on work experience or voluntary work in the Work & Employment section of this website.