What Are Soft Skills?

Soft skills are character traits and [interpersonal skills](#) that characterize a person's relationships with other people. In the workplace, soft skills are considered to be a complement to hard skills, which refer to a person's knowledge and occupational skills.[1]

Sociologists may use the term "soft skills" to describe a person's emotional intelligence quotient (EQ) as opposed to intelligence quotient (IQ).

Soft skills have more to do with who people are than what they know. As such, they encompass the character traits that decide how well one interacts with others and usually are a definite part of an individual's personality. In a competitive [labor market](#), employees who demonstrate that they have a good combination of hard and soft skills often see a greater demand for their services.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Soft skills include attributes and personality traits that help employees interact with others and succeed in the workplace.
- Examples of soft skills include the ability to communicate with prospective clients, mentor your co-workers, lead a team, negotiate a contract, follow instructions, and get a job done on time.
- Hard skills are measurable and usually obtained through formal education and training programs.
- Workers with good soft skills can help companies achieve higher levels of efficiency and productivity.
- In contrast to hard skills, soft skills are more difficult to acquire through training.

Understanding Soft Skills

Employers look for a balance of hard skills and soft skills when [making hiring decisions](#). For example, employers value skilled workers with a track record of getting jobs done on time. Employers also value workers with strong communication skills and a strong understanding of company products and services. When communicating with prospective clients, workers with soft skills can put together compelling presentations even if their specific job is not in sales or marketing. Another valued soft skill is the ability to coach fellow co-workers on new tasks.