

The Purpose of a “Top Ten” List is to...

- Explore career possibilities, especially through informational interviews.
- Identify suitable positions without worrying about job titles. For example, you may tell people the skills/qualities you wish to utilize. They can then suggest options.
- Show an employer you have a sense of career direction even though you may not yet have focused on a particular position.
- Be able to present your strengths to employers in a resume, cover letter, or interview.

What Goes Into a “Top Ten” List?

A “Top Ten” list includes both personal qualities and skills. What are qualities and skills? Qualities relate to your personality, example: assertive, sincere, hard working. Skills relate to your ability to deal with data, people, things, or ideas, example: editing publications, researching information, and coordinating events.

Creating Your “Top Ten” List

Step 1

- Choose a method for recording your favorite skills and qualities.
- Brainstorm on your own or with the help of friends or family.
- Focus on the skills and qualities that you enjoy using and those in which you take pride.
- Don't limit yourself to those skills and qualities which are most developed.
- Draw from many experiences, not just paid positions, and focus on tasks or roles you particularly enjoyed.

Step 2

- After each skill or quality, be sure to list one or more supporting examples to provide credibility.

Step 3

- Prioritize the list. Reorganize your list by recording the most important items first. When creating a list for a particular position, always include an item related to your career/job interest and move it to the top of the list.

Other Tips

- Your list can be general or specific. It can be a generic list to guide your thinking or to use in an informational interview. This generic list can also be focused into a targeted “Top Ten” list for use in a resume, letter, essay, or interview as you approach a particular employer or graduate school.
- Remember that your list(s) will change over time. Although some items may remain constant since your skills and qualities may be transferable to different positions and employers, you will inevitably develop other skills to be included on your “Top Ten.”

Sample Top Ten Categories and Descriptions:

Each of the following categories is a sample that you can include in your own “Top Ten” list. Each category should be accompanied by two or three sentences of explanation.

1. **Career Interest:** Explain what your career focus is and how this position helps you to meet that focus.
2. **College Preparation:** Explain the coursework that is relevant to the position, as well as your current status in college.
3. **Demonstrated Interpersonal Skills:** Use this section to highlight significant leadership and communication experience.
4. **Professional Development:** Show how you are involved in organizations related to your degree area or activities and how these have increased your level of professionalism.
5. **Organizational Skills:** Illustrate any projects or activities that show exemplary organizational skills.
6. **Willingness to Travel:** Highlight any traveling you have done for past positions or projects, as well as any cultural skills (i.e., language fluency, international living experiences, and cross-cultural skills).
7. **Determination:** This area could be used to illustrate obstacles you have overcome either in a work situation or at school. For example, showing the percentage of education you personally funded through working would be an illustration of determination.
8. **Dependability:** This section should show your consistency either in school or work. Past performance reviews or outstanding class attendance may be mentioned here.
9. **Design Experience:** Use this section to highlight significant class projects that utilize skills related to the position.
10. **Communication Skills:** This section should focus upon both written and oral communication abilities. Use examples of written documents you have submitted for projects in your career field as well as outlines of presentations you have delivered.