



**Florida National University**  
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OPENS DOORS TO THE FUTURE

# Soft Skills 101

What Are Soft Skills?

Why Are Soft Skills So Important?



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# Introduction

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As you prepare and get ready to start your journey as a university student, remember that your number one job as a student is to study and learn!

## **Learn! Learn! Learn!**

You will be learning many facts, concepts, philosophies, and theories from many sources, including faculty, assignments, textbooks, classmates, case studies, lab hours, internet research, projects, and others. Learning is an art.

In addition to attending and participating in class, along with reading, studying, and learning the material covered in your university's courses, you should also be cognizant of the fact that you need to learn and develop many skills that aren't necessarily found in your textbooks or course syllabi.

## **What I'm talking about is SOFT SKILLS!**



# Defining Soft Skills

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What are “soft skills?” SOFT SKILLS are those intangible skills that you learn, acquire, and develop over time. There are many soft skills. The list is long, and depending on your career or area of study, you will need to focus on certain soft skills.

Besides reading and learning what is in the textbooks, you should know that it is important to not only memorize the material that you are studying, but to truly understand it, and be able to apply your knowledge.

Applying your knowledge is key.

Furthermore, you will need to develop a variety of soft skills, including communication skills, critical thinking skills, problem solving skills, analytical skills, and professional manners among others.

Ask your university professors to help you to develop these important soft skills!

Soft skills are sometimes referred to as “people skills” or “interpersonal skills.”

How do you (we) interact and relate with others?

SOFT SKILLS are necessary for everyday life, and for our professional roles in the workforce.



# The Importance of Soft Skills

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Why are SOFT SKILLS so important?

Employers are looking for qualified employees with soft skills.

You want to work on being well rounded and have the necessary skills, knowledge, and abilities (SKA's) to enter the workforce in your chosen field of study. You must know that you will be working with people and be able to interact with them effectively, whether it's with colleagues, superiors, subordinates, patients, clients, and the like.

In life, you will encounter many challenging situations. Learning how to deal with difficult people, situations, and circumstances is very important.

Regardless of your chosen field of study, there are certain set of soft skills that we should all have and practice.



# Soft Skills: Verbal / Oral Communication

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Verbal / Oral Communication Skills are very important to have! Even if you don't like speaking in public or making presentations, use the classroom to practice your communication skills.

Take any opportunity to practice your verbal communication skills. Actively participate in class discussions.

Ask questions!



# Soft Skills: Nonverbal Communication / Body Language

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Non-Verbal messages and body language sometimes speak louder than words and often send stronger and clearer messages.

For example: When someone rolls his/hers eyes...  
What message does this send?

Being aware of your non-verbal gestures and body language is important. Learning how to read others body language is also very helpful in understanding people.



# Soft Skills: Written Communication

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In addition to verbal / oral communication skills, you must also have good writing skills. Regardless of your chosen profession, you will likely have to communicate in writing via emails, reports, letters, memos, and others.

University-written class assignments and research projects are good ways to practice and enhance your written communication skills. Check with your university for writing labs.

At FNU, we have the “Write it Right” writing lab that focuses on helping students develop their writing skills.



# Soft Skills: Listening

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Listening Skills are very important components of communication. Enhance your listening skills and practice by truly listening to those around you. Learn how to paraphrase to ensure that you understand the message. Be empathetic.

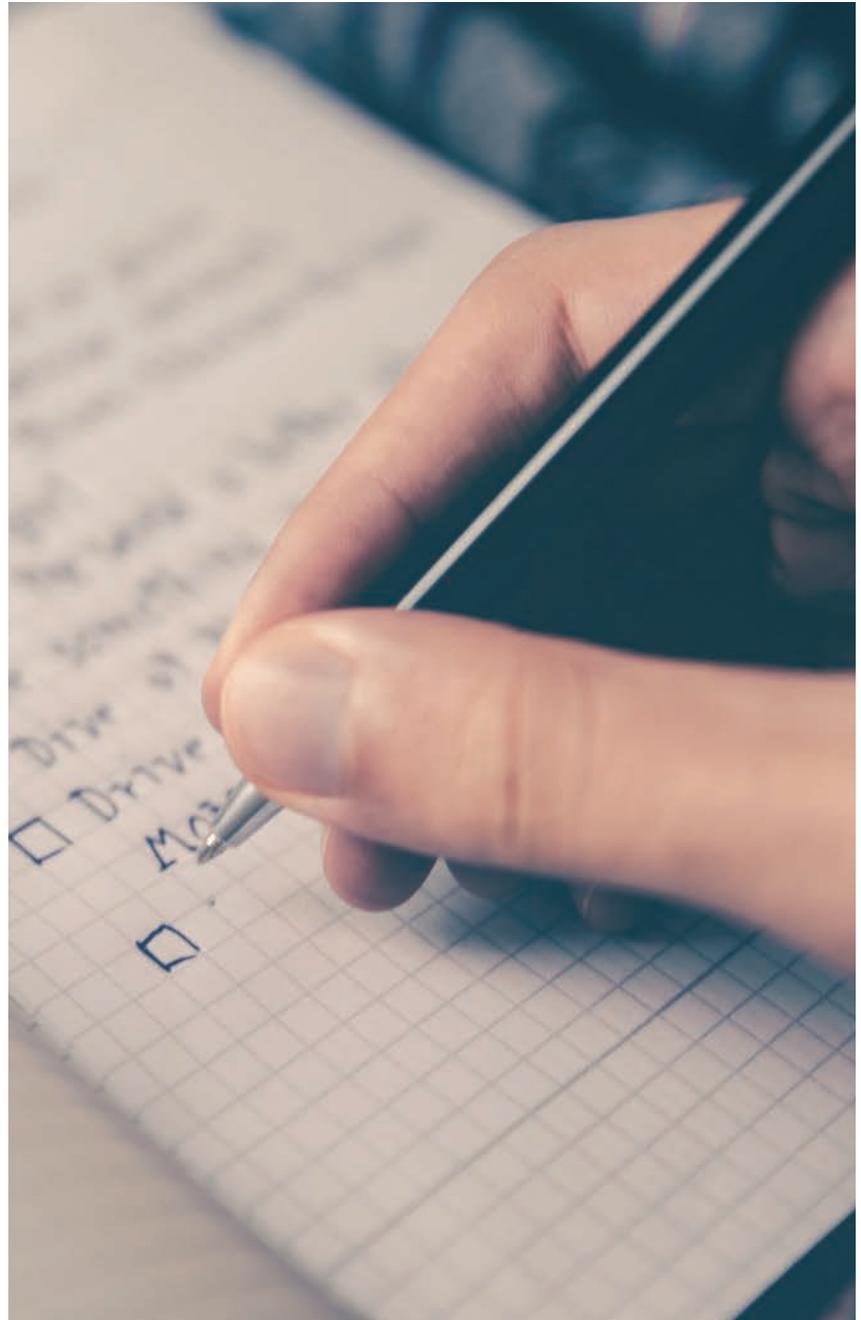
People have an intrinsic need to be heard, understood, and cared for. By listening carefully to the “messenger,” you are open to receive the other person’s ideas, concerns, and needs.



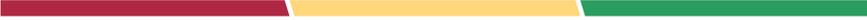
# Soft Skills: More Examples

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- Leadership
- Teamwork
- Collaboration
- Problem Solving
- Critical Thinking
- Analytical Skills
- Customer Service
- Respect
- Prudence
- Courteousness
- Politeness
- Time Management
- Creativity
- Adaptability



# Identify, Rate, & Assess Your Soft Skills



Which SOFT SKILLS do you have? Make a list of your current soft skills. Then you will be able to identify others.

Once you have identified your soft skills, then you must focus on developing them! Know that it will take much time to practice developing your soft skills while pursuing your degree.

In addition to making a list of your SOFT SKILLS, assess them on a scale of 1 – 10, ten being the highest. When doing this exercise, be realistic so that it can truly be helpful and beneficial to you.

## My Soft Skills

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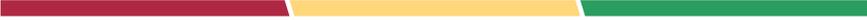
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# Identify the Soft Skills You Want to Develop



Make a list of the SOFT SKILLS that you should acquire and develop for your specific field of study. Reviewing your list and level of soft skills on a regular basis will help you to stay focused and keep track of your progress.

Additionally, identify those SOFT SKILLS that you should acquire based on your career. It is important to know what soft skills are necessary in your area of study so that you can start learning and acquiring them as soon as possible.

You want to enter the workforce prepared to succeed!

## Soft Skills I Want to Develop

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# Developing Soft Skills

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If you choose to develop your communication skills, then you should practice on a daily basis! The more you practice, the better your communication skills will be. Make a concerted effort to focus on and build your current communication skills!

Ask yourself:

What message are you trying to convey?

Which mode of communication will send your message?

Regardless of the Soft Skill you wish to develop, mastering a skill requires practice, practice, & more practice!



# Summary

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We live in an ever-changing environment and world. We must learn to be adaptable. Change is inevitable, and learning how to deal with change is critically important and part of life. Being able to adjust to new situations or conditions is absolutely necessary. This includes being able to have contingency plans, when “Plan A” doesn’t work or falls through. Thinking quickly, being flexible, and finding alternative solutions are all parts of being adaptable. Keeping up with changing technology and trends is important. Being open to thinking outside the box, and moving out of your comfort zone to explore new and different ideas, possibilities, and opportunities, is essential to growing professionally.

If at first you don’t succeed, try again! Don’t let yourself get discouraged by adversities, challenges, or crisis situations. Strive to be resilient and get back up as many times as it takes! Learn from your mistakes and difficult situations. Evaluate and move forward!

Remember to ask yourself:

“Which kind of soft skills should I acquire and develop?”

“How can I learn these necessary soft skills?”

Role models, mentors, and professors can be very helpful! You may also want to check out open sources on the internet. For example, “Ted Talks” and other educational sites can help build your SOFT SKILLS!

# Thank you for reading our FNU e-book on Soft Skills!



Questions & Feedback Welcome! Follow us!

- Do you have any questions or comments?
  - Would you like more information?
- Your feedback is welcome and much appreciated!

Please follow us on FNU's social media sites!

[www.fnu.edu](http://www.fnu.edu)

Wishing you much academic, professional, and personal success!