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Hard vs. soft nursing skills

The primary difference between hard skills and soft skills is how we gain them and how we put them to use. Your resume should include a combination of both hard and soft skills so you will stand out as a well-rounded candidate to potential employers.

- Soft skills relate more to the [personality traits](#)
- we have gained and developed throughout our lifetime.
- Hard skills are more technical and people can learn them through education or specialized training. Hard skills are the technical skills and knowledge to perform your job duties and soft skills are the personal characteristics that relate to how you perform in a [work environment](#)

Read more: [Hard Skills vs. Soft Skills](#)

Must-have hard skills for nurses

When reviewing a resume, employers look at [technical skills](#)

to gauge how prepared a candidate is to perform the essential job duties of the specific nursing role they are applying to. Here are five of the most important hard skills for nurses to have:

1. Urgent care and emergency care

Urgent care and emergency care skills involve the ability to respond promptly to medical issues a patient is experiencing. One example of urgent care and emergency care skills is the ability to properly care for and dress a wound. Even nurses who do not work in the emergency room (ER) may find themselves in situations where they need to apply basic urgent care and emergency care skills, making it a vital skill for all nursing professionals.

2. Checking and monitoring vital signs

One of the basic responsibilities of every nurse is to know how to check and monitor their patients' vital signs. Nurses should know how to check and monitor a patient's heart rate, respiration, blood pressure and temperature. Vital signs provide nurses with important information to determine which treatment protocols to follow, track how treatments are working and provide critical information to make life-saving decisions.

Read more: [15 Nursing Skills To Put on Your Resume](#)

3. Patient and family education

Proper patient and family education inform the patient and their family about their condition and how they should care for themselves upon discharge to prevent a return to the hospital. Patient and family education also allows patients to make informed decisions relating to their

care. Nurses play a critical role in educating their patients and the patient's family on important safety precautions, diagnosis and course of treatments.

4. Patient safety

Patient safety involves properly educating patients and their families, creating safe environments that minimize the risk of falls, preventing errors and learning from errors when they occur. Nurses play a vital role in keeping patients safe during their visits. Patient safety helps minimize the risk of patient harm, maximize recoveries and protect medical facilities and staff from liability issues.

5. Technology skills

[Technology skills](#)

involve the ability to use a wide range of technology to be successful in your work environment. It is very important for nurses to have a wide range of technology skills. Nurses may use technology to share patient and family education information, monitor vital signs and maintain patient records. More hospitals are moving towards electronic medical record systems. Electronic medical record systems are a digital version of a patient's medical chart. This means nurses must know how to use these electronic medical record systems to record their notes and information they gather from the patient.

Related: [Top 20 Nursing Interview Questions \(With Sample Answers\)](#)

5 must-have soft skills for nurses

Employers often look at a candidate's [soft skills](#)

to gauge whether the candidate will be successful in working with the rest of their team and their patients. Some employers may even prefer candidates with a stronger set of soft skills as hard skills are often easier to teach through on-the-job training. Here are some of the most important soft skills for nurses to have:

1. Communication

[Communication skills](#)

involve a combination of skills including active listening, observing, speaking and empathizing. These skills could be in the form of verbal communication, non-verbal communication and [written communication](#)

. Nurses need to communicate effectively with patients, the patients' families, doctors and other medical staff.

Because nurses are often communicating with patients and their families during times of confusion, worry or fear, having strong emotional intelligence and the ability to empathize are critical components of their [communication skills](#)

. Having an example of how you showed excellent communication skills during a difficult conversation in your prior work experience is a great way to highlight these skills.

Read more: [Interview Question: "How Do You Handle Confidential Information?"](#)

2. Critical thinking and problem solving

Critical thinking and [problem-solving skills](#)

involve the ability to handle complex situations in the workplace and calmly develop creative solutions. Nurses work in dynamic environments with many variables. Being able to think quickly, weigh pros and cons and make informed decisions with their patient's life on the line is critical for nurses.

Critical thinking and problem-solving skills are necessary for many parts of a nurse's role, such as making a conclusion about a patient's condition and determining when emergency medical care is necessary.

Read more: [Problem-Solving Skills: Definitions and Examples](#)

3. Time management and stamina

[Time management](#)

skills help you complete your work responsibilities in a timely manner before deadlines. The ability to organize your day and prioritize tasks is vital to a nurse completing all of their job responsibilities each day. Nurses also need stamina. Stamina is the ability to work long hours in high-pressure situations while maintaining your composure. Time management skills and stamina are necessary for nurses because it is common for them to work extended shifts with limited breaks and numerous patients to care for.

Read more: [Time Management Skills: Definitions and Examples](#)

4. Ethics and confidentiality

Ethics are a set of moral principles used to guide an individual's behavior and decision making. Nurses have a strict code of ethics they must follow. Because the decisions and actions nurses take can be the difference between life and death, ethics are a fundamental skill to a career in nursing. Nurses must also uphold strict patient confidentiality standards to ensure they don't release sensitive and personal medical information without a patient's permission.

Related: [10 Best Skills to Include on a Resume](#)

5. Teamwork and dependability

Teamwork and dependability are [interpersonal skills](#)

that help nurses work together with doctors and other medical staff in a positive environment. The ability for doctors, nurses and other medical staff to work together as a team is critical to

patients receiving the care they deserve. To have good teamwork skills, you must also be dependable. Dependability means your team can rely on you in any situation.

Read more: [Interpersonal Skills: Definitions and Examples](#)

How to use an RN skills list

You can use the RN skills list you create in several ways throughout your job search:

In your resume

You can use your RN skills list in a few different areas of your resume. You may use them as keywords throughout your resume summary and descriptions of responsibilities in your prior work history. You may also have a section in your resume which highlights your strongest skills. Review the job description for which you're applying for more skills and other keywords you should include.

Related: [How To Write a Skills Based Resume: Template and Examples](#)

In your cover letter

You can choose a few of your strongest skills and provide specific examples of how you have shown those skills in your prior work experience. You should keep your cover letter brief, so it is important to only choose one or two skills to highlight.

Related: [10 Skills for Cover Letters](#)

During an interview

Using keywords from your RN skills list can help you stand out during an interview. You should have specific examples of how you have proven these skills to provide to the hiring manager.

Make sure you read the job description carefully and create your list using the skills identified within the job posting and skills you know are crucial to your specialization. You will often find the skills the employer is seeking within the descriptions of the "education", "requirements" and "desired skills" sections of the job posting.

Related: [Interview Question: "What Skills Can You Bring to This Job?"](#)

Do you need help with your resume?

Sample resume with RN skills

Here is a sample resume that shows how to use your RN skills list when writing your resume:

Samuel Martinez

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania | (384) 521-8514 | s.martinez@email.com

Summary

Highly skilled nurse with five years of experience providing excellent patient care within the emergency room of a busy hospital and advocating to improve patient and family education within the healthcare industry.

Education

University of Pennsylvania

2010-2014

Bachelor of Science in Nursing

Experience

Community Hospital of Pittsburgh, Registered Nurse

August 2014 – Present

- Assess and monitor patient vital signs upon entrance to the emergency room
- Collect and review patient symptoms to assist doctors with diagnosis
- Educated patients and their families about their diagnosis and patient safety
- Accurately maintain patient charts and update electronic charting system daily
- Assist in preparing patients being admitted to the hospital to be transported to their room

Skills

- Patient and family education
- Checking and monitoring vital signs
- Emergency room care
- Patient transport
- Patient safety
- Communication
- Time-management
- Critical thinking and problem-solving
- Maintains patient confidentiality and upholding professional ethics
- Teamwork skills displayed through experience collaborating with other nurses and doctors to improve patient and family education programs