

TRANSLATING MILITARY SKILLS TO CIVILIAN CAREERS

If you served in the military, you've lived and worked in environments that are specific to military culture and structure. The skills you've developed as a service member are truly valuable and transferable to the civilian sector, but describing those skills to a prospective employer can be difficult. For instance, you may have trouble communicating without using military jargon or are unsure of how to bridge the culture gap that exists between military and civilian workplaces.

This lesson aims to identify your military skills and values and be able translate them into civilian career equivalents. The exercises in this lesson are designed to highlight your skills and values.

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS INVENTORY

In this section you will have an opportunity to reflect on your past experience and identify the transferable skills that you can utilize in a variety of positions, occupations, and workplaces.

As you analyze your skills, do not just think about the job titles you have held; think about the specific tasks you did on each job.

When you are done, compare your skills with the skills required in the jobs that interest you. This will enable you to understand how well you qualify for a position. Also, you will learn what additional training or experience you need.

Exercise: Begin Your Transferable Skills Inventory

- Step 1: Read the Skills column and rate all the skills that you possess.
- Step 2: Skip over skills that you do not possess.
- Step 3: If you have skills that are not listed, add them to the inventory.
- Step 4: Select several skills on the list and create STAR statements for them.

Competency Rating:

Skills	Rating
1 = Very competent 2 = Moderately competent 3 = Somewhat competent 4 = Not competent	
Adapt to change	
Administer programs	
Advise people/peers/job seekers	
Arrange meetings/events/training programs	
Assemble apparatus/equipment	
Audit financial records/accounts payable	
Coach team members	
Communicate with others/groups	
Compile statistics/survey data	
Confront people/difficult issues	
Construct buildings	
Control costs	
Counsel subordinates	
Create new programs/internet sites/data system	
Delegate authority	
Develop or revise instructional materials	
Direct administrative staff/projects	
Dispense medication/information	
Establish objectives/guidelines/policies	
Evaluate programs/solutions/instructors/peers/students	
Illustrate storyboards/concepts/print	
Handle detailed work/data/complaints/toxins	
Improve maintenance schedule/systems	
Improvise action	
Implement registration system/new programs	
Install software/plumbing or electrical systems/parts	
Initiate production/changes/improvements	
Interpret languages/new laws/schematics/codes	
Interview people/new employees	
Investigate problems/violations/fraud	
Maintain transportation fleet/aircraft/diesel engines	
Manage an organization/a mail room/a retail store	
Market products/services/programs	

Negotiate contracts/sales/ disputes	
Operate vehicles or equipment	
Persuade others/customers	
Plan agendas/conferences	
Prepare reports/meals/presentations	
Program computers	
Protect property/people	
Purchase equipment/supplies/services	
Repair equipment items/mechanical devices	
Set goals/objectives	
Supervise others	
Train others	
Write or edit publications/proposals/technical documents/videos	

The STAR Method

Select several of the skills for which you gave yourself a Very Competent rating and think of situations in which you used the skill to achieve significant results. The STAR Method helps you describe—in terms an employer will understand and appreciate— how you have used the skills to deliver results.

S—Situation: The context you were operating in, include the challenge or opportunity you faced

T—Task: The mission or objective you were given, the objective or project you were assigned, or the idea you were trying to act on

A—Action: The steps you took or the approach you used to complete the tasks

R—Results: The impact you had, the difference you made, the benefits you generated, the before-and-after changes you created

TRANSLATING MILITARY TERMINOLOGY INTO CIVILIAN TERMS FOR STAR

One of the easiest ways to help employers understand your military experience is to substitute civilian equivalents for military terms, titles, ranks and acronyms in your STAR statements and later in resumes and interviewing. Here are examples and ideas for accomplishing this.

Terms and Acronyms Military:		Possible Civilian Titles:
NCOIC, Watch Captain, Petty Officer of the Watch	→	Supervisor, Manager, Coordinator
Commander, Chief	→	Division Head, Director, Senior Manager
Executive Officer (XO)	→	Deputy Director, Assistant Manager
Action Officer (AO)	→	Analyst (or Senior Analyst if applicable)
TDY/TAD	→	business travel
PCS	→	relocation
OER/NCOER	→	performance appraisal
MOS/MOC	→	career field
Commanded	→	supervised, directed
Battalion, Unit, Platoon	→	organization, agency, department
Mission	→	responsibility, task, objective, job
Combat/War	→	hazardous conditions, conflict
Headquarters	→	headquarters, corporate office
Subordinates	→	employees, co-workers
Service members	→	employees, co-workers, colleagues, personnel, individuals
Military Personnel Office (MILPO) Personnel Action Center (PAC)	→	personnel office
Regulations	→	guidance, policy, instructions
Reconnaissance	→	data collection, survey, analysis
TDA/MTOE	→	organizational structure, material resources, manpower

SAMPLE STAR STATEMENT

Skill: Training

Situation: My unit received new portable generators

Task: I was tasked with ensuring team members were able to follow new maintenance procedures

Action: Conducted hands-on training

Result: Team members achieved 95% pass rate on first proficiency test. 100% on re-test.

STAR Statement: After my unit was issued a new model of portable generators, I was given the mission of ensuring team members were able maintain them. I trained team members on maintenance procedures. They achieved a 95% pass rate on the first proficiency test and 100% on the re-test.

STAR Statement converted to bullet point: Designed and delivered generator technical training, resulting in 100% mastery of skills by trainees.

ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES:

Example 1: When my unit was alerted for an overseas deployment, I was tasked with developing a load plan for all unit equipment. After intensive coordination over a two-month period with airlift and sealift staff, I developed a plan that enabled all of our equipment to arrive on schedule in operational condition.

STAR Statement converted to bullet point: Developed plans that ensured timely and damage-free transportation by air and sea.

Example 2: Tasked with devising a solution to rising costs and errors that were negatively impacting our clients, I introduced a quality control program that enabled us to generate \$10,000 in savings and reduced errors by 50%.

STAR Statement converted to bullet point: Implemented quality control program that generated \$10,000 in savings and a 50% reduction in errors.

YOUR STAR STATEMENTS

Consider the STAR Statements below in order to develop your resume.

1st Skill

Situation:

Task:

Action:

Result:

Star Statement:

Star Statement Converted to Bullet Points:

2nd Skill

Situation:

Task:

Action:

Result:

Star Statement :

Star Statement Converted to Bullet Points:

3rd Skill

Situation:

Task:

Action:

Result:

Star Statement:

Star Statement Converted to Bullet Points:

RESOURCES

FIND A USDVA FACILITY

Use the [facility locator](#) or call 1-877-222-VETS (8387).

CONTACT YOUR COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE

CalVet strongly recommends you work with the CVSO nearest you. Your CVSO can guide you through the benefits and services available as well as help connect you with other local resources.

The County Veterans Service Offices (CVSO) are locally funded agencies established to assist veterans and their families in obtaining benefits and services accrued through military service.

These County Veteran Service Offices promote the interest and welfare of veterans, their dependents, and their survivors by enhancing their quality of life through counseling, education, benefits assistance, and advocacy. They connect veterans to their benefits by assisting in their interactions with the USDVA.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Visit the [CalVet](#) website for more information, OR

Find the [CVSO](#) closest to you.

VA HOTLINES

Veterans Crisis Line

- 800-273-TALK (8255), or
- Text: 838255

Combat Call Center

- 877-WAR-VETS (927-8387)

Women Veterans Call Center

- 855-VA-WOMEN (829-6636)

SOURCES

<https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/VETS/files/TAP-EW-Participant-Guide.pdf>