

# How to Write an Effective Skills-Based Job Posting

Crafting a job posting with a skills focus might require a new mindset. Here's a step-by-step resource to help you write a skills-based job posting that attracts the right candidates for your business:

- 1 Start with a clear job purpose.** In one or two sentences, summarize why the role exists and how it contributes to your organization. (E.g. “We’re seeking a cloud security engineer to safeguard our SaaS platform used by millions of customers.”) This sets the context for the skills that follow.
- 2 List essential skills and competencies – not tasks.** Instead of starting with “Responsibilities include...”, lead with “Key Skills & Qualifications” focusing on abilities. Identify the must-have hard skills first: the technologies, tools, or domain knowledge without which someone cannot do the job. Use specific terms (e.g. “proficient in Python and TensorFlow” or “expertise in AWS architecture and cost optimization”). Next, list the critical soft skills (e.g. “strong collaboration in cross-functional teams” or “ability to explain technical concepts to non-experts”). Keep this list concise and focused on true requirements. Avoid filler criteria like “10+ years’ experience” or “Master’s degree” unless they are absolute necessities (which in tech, they often aren’t). As McKinsey experts put it, if a degree isn’t genuinely needed to perform the job, it “shouldn’t be a barrier” in hiring.
- 3 Describe role responsibilities in terms of skills.** In the job duties section, frame key responsibilities to emphasize skills in action. For example, rather than “manage IT projects”, say “Use agile project management skills to lead cross-team cloud migration projects to on-time completion.” This shows the skill (agile project management) and the context (cloud migration). For an AI role, instead of “develop machine learning models”, you might write “Apply machine learning skills to develop and refine models for predictive analytics (using tools like X and Y).” By wording responsibilities this way, you reinforce the skills focus and help candidates visualize using their skills on the job.
- 4 Include your value proposition to the candidate.** As mentioned earlier, a standout job posting sells the role. Add a brief “What We Offer” or “Why You’ll Love This Role” section that might highlight learning opportunities, the innovative projects they’ll tackle, the team culture, or growth paths. For example: “You’ll work with a seasoned team of cybersecurity experts and have a budget for ongoing training/certifications,” or “Opportunity to pioneer AI solutions in a greenfield project, with mentorship from our Head of Data Science.” This not only attracts candidates but also signals that you value skill growth (which resonates especially with high performers who are eager to learn).
- 5 Review for bias and clarity.** Before publishing, do a final scrub. Remove jargon or acronyms that might confuse or deter outsiders (spell them out or use common terms). Ensure the language is inclusive – e.g., avoid phrasing like “young and energetic team” or unnecessarily gender-coded terms. Check that you’re not inadvertently requiring something not truly needed. If possible, have someone else review the JD, possibly using HR or tools to flag biased language. The goal is a clear, inviting description that any qualified person reading it can understand and imagine themselves succeeding in – regardless of how they obtained their skills.

By following these steps, you’ll create a job posting that stands out for the right talent.

In today’s talent landscape, where skilled candidates are in high demand, a skills-first approach is not just inclusive, it’s a competitive necessity. By prioritizing the skills required for an organization’s success, while highlighting development opportunities, and showcasing company culture, you attract top talent who are eager to contribute their abilities. Focus on the ‘what’ and ‘how’, and emphasize the skills they bring and the impact they’ll make to build a team driven by capability, not just credentials.