

International skills are acquired gradually, starting in the first years of college. International skills are unique and the earlier you begin to build them, the better. You need to gain international experience over time to truly develop them, but keep two points in mind: firstly, you can gain international experience **before** you even travel abroad, and secondly, that there's **no limit** to the possibilities once you have it.

You can greatly improve your odds of getting a full-time professional job after graduation if you consider adding an international component.

GAINING INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

- **Joining clubs, organizations and volunteering on campus where you will gain cross-cultural exchange**
 - Volunteer for their events and gain organizational and valuable cross-cultural work skills. Make friends and get exposed to new cultures.
- **Enrolling in the Global Citizenship Milestone program**
 - This is a 12 credit-hour program designed for students who are interested in deepening their understanding of a diversity of cultures, societies, and systems within an international globalized context.
 - To learn more, visit www.clcillinois.edu/global-citizenship-milestone
- **Becoming an International Peer Mentor**
 - Serve as an International Peer Mentor for 5+ new international students at the College of Lake County.
 - Assisting with the implementation and oversight of the international student peer mentor program for incoming international students.
 - Plan and implement cultural activities (U.S. focused, social events and/or possible field trips each semester for international students.)
 - To learn more, visit <https://www.clcillinois.edu/student-services/tutoring-and-academic-support/peer-mentor-programs/mentor>
- **Attend international events**
 - Seek out local international events, attend study abroad fairs and International Education Week events on and off campus, or attend international-focused conferences.
- **Studying abroad**
 - The College of Lake County provides students with a variety of courses as well as short-term international study tours, which contribute to an understanding of the relationships between the cultural, economic and political systems of other nations and our own. The college also participates in foreign study programs that give students an opportunity to reside and study in another country for an extended period.
 - Befriend students who have been abroad and ask for their advice.

- For more information on current available programs, visit <https://www.clcillinois.edu/programs-and-classes/degrees-and-certificates/study-abroad>

SEARCHING FOR EMPLOYMENT

Employers are looking for people who have cross-cultural experience and skills. It is especially important to demonstrate this knowledge if you are just starting out in your international career. You must prove that you can survive and be successful in a work setting while abroad. Tell employers where and how you acquired your international experience—some acquired **domestically**, and some **abroad**.

Samples of cross-cultural skills

- Able to cope with constant change
- Broad background and knowledge of world affairs and cultures
- Diplomatic skills and sensitivity to different management styles
- Understanding of work within the culture of the group, including multicultural work groups
- Sensitive to the dynamics of a cross-cultural workplace
- Able to organize and work in a sensitive manner with people from other cultures

Employers are seeking out employees with *intercultural competence*. This is the ability to engage effectively and appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts. Intercultural competence has real business value.

TAKE AN INVENTORY OF YOUR INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Consider the following:

Study abroad courses: If you studied for *less than* one full semester abroad, the subject of your broader international experience is more important. Nonetheless, take note of the course(s) you completed and be prepared to describe the school you attended while abroad. Consider the following: Did you study in a highly accredited academic program, or was it a study-and-travel session? Was the student body international or comprised predominantly of students from your own country?

Country-specific skills: Can you speak about the specific cultural traits of your host country nationals? Imagine the impact on potential employers when you are able to contrast the work habits of your Japanese host with US citizens. You also gain points with employers if you have traveled independently or lived with a host family. In all these cases, prepare descriptions that support your professional and intercultural skills.

Universal cross-cultural skills: While abroad, you developed a unique set of cross-cultural skills. These are transferable skills! You can take these and apply them to any new country. You are familiar with culture shock and can professionally describe it. You understand the cycle of stress and exhilaration that comes with living in a new country. You are more adaptable, open minded, and observant. You can spot cultural differences and change your behavior to accommodate local norms. You have a better understanding of yourself and you can use this self-knowledge when making decisions in a culture other than your own. You are curious, brave, and have a sense of adventure. At the same time, you are streetwise and can function in unfamiliar environments.

General work skills: When speaking to employers, recognize the value of the general skills you developed while abroad. You are adept at managing change; you are independent and have self-discipline while being sensitive to the needs of others. Dozens of work-related characteristics are developed abroad, such as:

- An Ability To Deal With Ambiguities
- An Ability To Deal With Stress
- An Ability To Take On Challenging Work
- An Observant And Calm Demeanour
- And Tenacity.
- Awareness Of Interpersonal Politics
- Broad And Strategic Thinking
- Courage
- Diligence
- Flexibility
- Listening And Observing Skills
- Loyalty
- Multifaceted Skills In Communications
- Open-Mindedness
- Persistence
- Resourcefulness
- Respect For Protocol And Hierarchy
- Sense Of Humor
- Tact
- Versatility
- Resourcefulness

All of these skills and traits are valuable to you when contacting domestic as well as international employers.

CREATING YOUR RESUME

If you studied abroad, you definitely need to include it on your resume!

There are different ways to show your study abroad experience on a resume, depending on your type of program. It could look differently for an internship program, semester program, or summer program. *Did you win a scholarship to study abroad? Did you take your classes in a foreign language or at a foreign university?* You can include those experiences.

Here are some verbs that you might use to describe your experience:

- Adapted
- Cooperated
- Developed
- Exchanged
- Immersed
- Improved
- Lived
- Managed
- Organized
- Overcame
- Practiced
- Realized
- Represented
- Recognized
- Shared
- Traveled
- Translated
- Visited

You can incorporate your study-abroad experience into your resume in a variety of ways:

- List the name of the program/institution in the “education” section of your resume, just as how you list College of Lake County.
- Consider listing coursework if it is related to your internship/job search. You might describe relevant projects or any work, intern, or volunteer experience you had during your time abroad.
- Depending on the level of detail you want to include, you can list these study-abroad-related experiences in the “education” section, the “related experience” section, or perhaps in an “international experience” section, if you plan to conduct a search with an international focus.

If you are unsure about where to best highlight your program and additional international experiences, you can schedule an appointment with a Career Specialist in the Career and Job Placement Center (Room C111)

Resume Format Examples

International Education Exchange, Matsuyama, Japan May 2022 – June 2022

- Studied Japan’s history, customs, traditions, and language.
- Presented research focused on linguistic comparative analysis between American and Japanese sign language.
- Participated in language exchange, homestay experience, and socio-cultural understanding

Study Abroad Participant, Ehime University Matsuyama, Japan through College of Lake County January 2018 – April 2018

- Studied Japan’s history, customs, traditions, and language.
- Performed research regarding linguistic comparative analysis between American and Japanese sign language.
- Participated in language exchange, homestay experience, and socio-cultural understanding

DEVELOPING A COVER LETTER

You can also write about your study abroad experience in your cover letter.

Identify a skill from the job description that the company is looking for. Think of an example of a time when you demonstrated this skill while abroad, and then consider how it relates to the position. Use that example within your cover letter to show your skills. Make sure to use only examples that are appropriate and would be appreciated by a job recruiter.

THE JOB INTERVIEW

You must be able to speak about your experiences in terms of the transferable skills gained. Below are some examples of interview questions that can easily relate to the experiences you had abroad:

- Describe a time in which you had to adapt to a new situation
- Provide an example of your ability to work independently
- Tell me about a time when you had to work under pressure
- Describe your time management skills

CONTINUING YOUR INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE AT CLC

Your experiences abroad does not have to end when you set foot on your home country's soil again. Here are some examples of how you can continue your international experience on campus and beyond:

- Set up an appointment to speak with someone in the Career Job Placement Center
- Volunteer to be an English conversation partner through the English Language Exchange program through the Department of Global Engagement
- Consider completing the Global Citizenship Milestone program
 - Visit the Department of Global Engagement for more information
- Participate in international activities on campus such as a international education week or social events lead by the Department of Global Engagement
- Research your transfer schools to see what study abroad programs they offer so you can go abroad again
- Consider pursuing your undergraduate degree or future degrees at a university abroad

DOCUMENTING YOUR INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

LinkedIn

A key point to consider when applying your abroad experience to a work setting is mentioning how adaptable and flexible you were when living in another country.

How to update your LinkedIn to reflect your abroad experience:

- Upload banner photo of when you were abroad
- Mention your international experience in your about section
- Add study abroad experience in education section
- Update skill section (helps with LinkedIn's algorithm)

Much like on your résumé, there are a few ways to document your international experience on your LinkedIn profile, although the pre-determined sections on your profile make it a little bit easier to parse out where your international experience should be listed.

- **Study Abroad** - If you participated on a formal study abroad program sponsored through a community college or university (either your own or a partner institution), you might consider listing your experience under your "Education" section, either as a description listed under the relevant degree, or as its own education entry entirely. Coursework or research completed abroad can also be included in this section.
- **Internships/Professional Positions** - If you have completed a formal work assignment or internship abroad, these types of experiences fit well under your "Experience" section.
- **Volunteer Experience** - LinkedIn has a designated area to list volunteer experience that you may possess. While you may want to highlight volunteer positions under your regular "Experience" section if you have little to no other professionally-oriented positions to showcase, most volunteer positions should be listed under the specific "Volunteer Experience" section.

5 Reasons for highlighting international experience:

- Shows curiosity, openness to new experiences, flexibility and the ability to survive and thrive in new challenging environments.
- Highlights your ability to work in diverse groups and stakeholders
- With increasing globalization, you stand out as an asset that could lead or be part of the company's global expansion to new markets.
- You can be seen as a local expert with relevant knowledge and networks for a particular market or region
- In terms of problem solving, you come across as someone who can look at the bigger picture and develop universally applicable solutions.

5 ways to highlight your international experience:

- Highlight the languages you can speak and at what level. Add in any certifications you might have from language institutions. Reinforce that with a concrete example in your cover letter, especially if that's a requirement for the position. You get bonus points for using your second/third language in a professional setting!
- Don't forget to add in your study-abroad Universities to the resume. Provide just as much detail there of the courses/GPA/ activities you engaged in, as you do for your home University. This shows the extent to which you maximized your time abroad.
- Specify the city/country/region you've worked and lived in to showcase you as the right person for a region-specific role.
- Give concrete examples of how studying or working abroad have developed your soft skills such as communication and teamwork in your cover letter and interview. Prepare a list of situations and scenarios, which really highlight the skills in question.
- Provide references that can vouch for your international experience