

Are You Experienced?

I can still hear Jimmy Hendrix crooning that psychedelic anthem. But you may have heard that question more recently from potential employers. With a better understanding of the different types of experience, you might be able to say Yes! when before you thought you had to say no.

The type of experience that first comes to mind is “paid experience”. This can be actual experience, but it can also be related experience, or experience you picked up while in the military. If you were paid for doing work where you used similar skills that will be needed in the new job, you have experience.

There is also “unpaid experience”. This could include informal experience, volunteer experience, and experience derived from engaging in a hobby. You may have skills you have acquired just from being an involved person that you have forgotten about. If organizing meetings and handling reservations are a part of the new job, you may have experience organizing family outings, or activities for your church that could come into play here. Plug that into the interview.

Volunteering is a great way to get experience, if you need to add some skills that employers seem to want in the field you want to work in. Need computer skills? Many non-profits will take the time to teach volunteers computer skills in exchange for getting the newsletter out on time. It doesn't really matter if you got paid to do the work. All that matters is that you got the skills somewhere and you can document it.

There is also “educational experience”, or the amount of time you spent in school to learn those skills. It can be any kind of education that taught you those skills, continuing education classes, college, classes from a community group, mentoring, or military training. You can and should combine all of these different types of experience in to one experience statement, so that you can show as much potential as possible to the employer.

It might look something like this: “I have several years experience helping buddies work on their cars. I have two years of educational experience in auto mechanics, and a year's experience helping my uncle in his service station.”

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