

# Developing Psychological Skills

A **Skill** may be defined as proficiency, facility or dexterity that is acquired or developed through training and experience.

**Webster definition:** Possession of the qualities required to do something or get something done.

Skills essential for professional psychologists:

1. Assessment of individual differences
2. Behaviour modification skills
3. Counselling and guidance skills

Basic skills/competencies identified for becoming an effective psychologist:

1. General Skills: These are generic skills needed in all psychologists irrespective of their area of specialization- clinical health, industrial /organizational, social, educational in environmental setting or working as consultants. These are qualifying skills which are a must for any field to further build and hone the specialization field related competencies:
2. Interpersonal skills- listen and be empathetic
3. Cognitive skills- Problem solving, critical thinking and organized reasoning, intellectual curiosity and flexibility.
  - Affective skills: emotional control and balance, tolerance, understanding of interpersonal conflicts, ambiguity and certainty.
1. Expressive skills: Ability to express and communicate one's ideas, feelings, information in written and verbal forms.
2. Reflective skills: Ability to examine and consider one's own motives, attitudes and behaviours.
3. Personal skills: personal organization, personal hygiene, time management and appropriate dressing.
  - Knowledge of Self and sensitivity towards and ability to understand, work with and promote diversity ( cultures, beliefs, norms, backgrounds, genders, segments)
1. **Observational Skills:** Ability to observe and pay attention, watch and listen using all senses. From environment, surrounding to human behaviours and actions, their demographic features (age, gender, stature, race etc).  
Technique:

2. Observe patiently.
3. Pay close attention to your physical surroundings- who what when where how
  - Be aware of people's reactions, emotions, motivations
1. Ask questions that can be answered while observing
2. Be yourself, give information about yourself, if asked.
3. Observe with an optimistic curiosity.
  - Be ethical, you have to respect privacy and protect the information about your client you observe.

### **Types of Observation:**

**Naturalistic Observation:** is one of the primary ways of learning about the way people behave in a given setting.

Eg. How people behave in a mall when things are offered on discount. One can visit a mall and observe them in the shops where discounted items are on display.

**Participant Observation:** Here the observer also become an active member of the process and part of the setting being observed.

e.g Take a part time job in the mall to have an insider's knowledge on the behaviour of people during discount sales.

### **Advantages and Disadvantages of Observation method:**

#### **Advantages:**

- Allows behaviours to be seen and studied in its natural settings.
- People from outside or from the inside of setting can be trained to carry out the process.

#### **Disadvantages:**

- Personal biases of the people observing and involved.
- General and day to day activities are fairly routine in a given setting hence can go unnoticed by the observer.
- Sometimes the behaviours can be influenced by the presence of an observer and hence defeat the purpose of observation.

### **c. Specific Skills:**

Core /basic to the field of psychological service.

e.g.

Clinical setting- techniques of therapeutic interventions

Organizational psychologists- skills of assessment

Some common Specific skills relevant to most fields are:

1. Communication skills
2. Psychological testing skills
3. Interviewing skills
4. Counselling skills