

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS BRIEFING

INITIATIVE AND DETERMINATION

This PDF supports the short video about initiative and determination skills and it's one of nine paired videos and PDFs on Tunnelworks, each covering a common employability skill.

The main aim with these resources is to help you understand what these skills are, and how they are used. You might be surprised to realise that you're probably using many of these skills in your school, social and family lives already.

So, even if you don't have lots of working experience, you do have relevant work skills to talk about when applying for jobs. Use these resources to help identify your skills and practise writing and talking about them. Then you'll be interview ready!

What is a good general definition of initiative and determination skills?

A good definition of initiative and determination skills is the ability to do what needs to be done, without being asked, then not giving up: working hard to finish your tasks and reach your goal.

What does that mean in practice on the Thames Tideway Tunnel project?

The Thames Tideway Tunnel project is a large and complicated construction project where lots of things are happening at the same time. This means that many employees will be juggling lots of different tasks, all at the same time. Tideway encourages employees to think of new ways of doing things and sharing their ideas with managers and colleagues.

Equally, some tasks involve lots of concentration and effort and can involve working in challenging environments so employees must often show a real determination to get a task done effectively, efficiently, on time and to budget.

What are two typical examples of initiative and determination skills in action on the Thames Tideway Tunnel project?

One example could be when a worker identifies a more efficient way for a particular process to be completed. They explain to managers how the new process would work, have the determination to see the suggestion through testing, and then through to an actual change to the current process.

Another example could be if the communications team spots an area where communication could be improved between certain departments. They suggest inviting the relevant people to an informal meeting to discuss a better communication flow. It would need determination to see this through as some people don't find changes easy.

What are the individual elements in initiative and determination skills?

The individual elements of initiative skills include: adapting to new situations; developing long-term vision; identifying opportunities not obvious to others; translating ideas into action and generating a range of options. The determination skills involve many attitudes and abilities including: self-awareness; assertiveness; creativity; pride in yourself, your work and what you do; problem solving and self-advocacy skills. Determination skills also include being able to set goals, evaluate options, make choices and then work to achieve your goals.

At school or at home, what sort of activities might help me to develop initiative and determination skills?

Typical initiative and determination skills you might have used and developed include: identifying new and healthier products your school tuck shop could sell, suggesting how this could be accomplished and seeing this through; creating a school committee for fundraising (maybe for local charities or for school activities such as the school prom), enlisting friends to join the committee and then creating an event; being set a project as part of your school work and coming up with a new way of tackling it and then, even though the project was hard work, being determined to produce the best work you could and meet the deadline set by your teacher.

If I'm applying for a job and the employer says they want individuals with good initiative and determination skills, how could I talk about things I've done and make them relevant?

Think about and write down things you've done that show off your initiative and determination skills. Practice and be ready to talk about them in an interview.

You could give an example of when you had a big project to complete for school. Explain that you had to juggle this particular project alongside your usual studies and had to balance this with being sociable with your friends and family. You could say that because you wanted to succeed, you were determined to produce a really high standard project, even though that meant you had to sometimes choose between getting project work completed and seeing your friends.

Another example could be that you have a Saturday job in a small shop and have been learning lots of new processes and tasks. Explain how you identified a possible new way of restocking some products which meant that time could be saved. You could describe how you explained your idea to the manager who agreed to you testing your idea on a couple of products. The test went well so you were able to include more relevant products and show your colleagues this new process.