



Essential skills for BUDDING RESEARCHERS

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Many people are interested in research and it is not uncommon for young people, especially recent graduates, to join think tanks or research centres to try their luck at expanding the frontier of knowledge. Research, however, is not limited to any designated job; rather it remains embedded into the annals of daily work for many of us. Research is an integral part of today's globalized workforce and routinely dictates what is happening and what ought to be done in the context of the time we are living in. Research experience is always a plus when it comes to applying for higher education as it stands as a testament to all the skills a candidate supposedly has.

As the pandemic engulfs us all in another bout of insecurity, jobs pertaining to research seem to be on an uptick with many young undergraduates and graduates lapping the opportunity up. Research is never concentrated on a specific field, rather it is consistent in being two things always: interdisciplinary and expanding. Before heading onto an exciting career of research, interested candidates need to know the basic know-how before gearing up their brainboxes for what is definitely an inescapably challenging yet exciting job.

Harnessing the power of the written word

Writing is a major boon when it comes to research jobs, be it in the starting intern phase or higher positions. Good writing symbolises a grasp of the topic at hand, cements a strong flow of ideas, and showcases strong attention to detail.

Selima Kabir, an Assistant Research Coordinator at BRAC James P. Grant School of Public Health, says, "Writing skills are helpful - not only for writing the final reports and such - but also because if you have an interest in good story-telling, you will have more of an instinct to ask the right kinds of follow-up questions to ensure you're getting in-depth, well-rounded data from your respondents." This is particularly helpful in qualitative research which involves in-depth interviews, content analysis, and case studies.

Hence, anyone who is willing to make contours to the world of research should engage in some form of wordplay to experiment with the flow of writing as well as the untrammelled engagement with ideas. A writing portfolio comes in handy to showcase the list of written samples or work one has, be it newspaper articles, or published papers. Honing

one's writing also helps in presentations, and networking with fellow researchers and audiences.

Getting updated with software

Research encompasses a wide array of software from the usage of Microsoft Office/Google Suite in the management of files and information to dabbling in R/Julia software to streamline analysis to realigning papers on Latex. This is fruitful when conducting quantitative research.

Added to that is the current normal of remote working where it is incumbent on researchers to have a good grasp of communications platforms such as Zoom, BlueJeans, and Microsoft Teams.

Samira, a Research Assistant at a private university, found working with diverse software a daunting process in the beginning. "It helps to always have more than the basic idea of the software your research work might be needing as it helps to save a lot of time and smoothen the process of work since there is always an impending deadline to give you sleepless nights," remarked Samira.

Learning the basics of software is fairly easy with introductory certified courses available on sites like Udemy, Coursera, DataCamp, Google Digital Academy, and IBM. Youtube tutorials also

provide a leeway to hone one's skills and have a plethora of options of tutorials allowing one to choose and continue at one's pace and comfort. Knowing the technical know-how of psychometric and econometric tools and devices enables better feasibility when juggling all sorts of data and information.

The golden key of communication and empathy

Research is a long process that might seem alternately monotonous and exciting at times. Research work done in organisations is mostly a group project with each person specialising in the work they are most comfortable with or generally doing the same amount of work in separate timeframes.

Teamwork is the key to working in almost every group and this is no different. Good communication helps to clear out the fog for a reasonable and feasible work-life schedule and balance. Empathy in conjunction with research helps to humanise the targeted audiences helping proper planning of any research that is in the pipeline. The common denominator in all of the above skills is practise and it is never late to start. Bon Voyage!



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