



**DISCOVERING
THE SOFT SKILLS
NEEDED FOR
FUTURE SUCCESS**

SKILLSROAD.COM.AU[®]

THE WORLD OF WORK IS CHANGING

We'll all have to learn new skills to adapt to the future workplace – but which of these “new” skills are important, and why?

This guide will help you start a conversation with youth about how they can think differently about the value of their skills.



THE AUSTRALIAN LANDSCAPE

The Education Council's recently released report, **“Looking to the Future - Report of the review of senior secondary pathways into work, further education and training”**, emphasises what will be needed for future success, and how the way we educate young people may have to change to support this:

“**Today's students face a range of challenges due to technological change, globalisation and automation. Senior secondary graduates will need a broader and different mix of skills compared to previous generations, including stronger problem solving, communication and digital skills, as well as critical and creative thinking. They will also need the skills to navigate an increasingly complex range of options and pathways into further education and training. School leavers do not just need to be employable. They need to be adaptable, flexible and confident. Education must provide students with the essential attributes they require for lifelong learning in whatever fields of endeavour they may choose. The professional and applied skills they need will change significantly over their lives. The jobs they do will be transformed. Some, driven by entrepreneurial ambition, will want to set up their own businesses. Most will switch careers. To achieve this – for all young Australians – profound challenges need to be overcome.**”

BE OPEN TO CHANGE THE WAY YOU THINK ABOUT PREPARING YOUNG PEOPLE FOR THE FUTURE. THIS MAY INCLUDE:

- Not focusing on the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) as the ultimate and most important outcome of school education,
- Embracing innovation and flexibility in finding new ways to educate and develop students,
- Preparing the “whole person” for their future, no matter what career path they choose, as opposed to only focusing on academic achievement,
- Creating citizens with the capability and enthusiasm to keep on learning throughout their lives,
- Making regular and explicit pathway discussions with educators and parents/carers the norm,
- Recognising the value of the broader set of skills, capabilities and experience that a young person has gained by the time they leave school, and not just focusing on “academic achievement”,
- Respecting all pathways equally – the workforce of the future needs a range of skills and people with different types of qualifications. Looking down on certain professions or educational pathways is no longer a good look, and neither is not delivering all school pathways to the same high standard.
- Giving all young people the opportunity to participate in meaningful career education and work exploration activities (such as work experience placements, SBATs etc.),
- Making quality career guidance non-negotiable.

FIRST THINGS FIRST: DON'T PANIC

Young Australians are seeing old ways of working and living swept away in exchange for an increasingly insecure future. This causes stress, fear and anxiety: so, it's important to start any conversations about a young person's future by reminding them that the idea of preparing for jobs that don't exist yet may seem challenging but can be done. Why? Because of two key human features:

- We all have the inherent "soft" skills needed to become more agile: we must simply start honing these "tools", developing our existing skills and learning new ones as we go.

BECOMING AN EXPERT GENERALIST

Being multi-disciplined and multi-skilled is important for thriving in the future workplace, says Amir Orad, CEO of business analytics software Sisense – but he also points out that we have challenges to overcome to get there. "Our tradition of schooling from the Industrial Age makes you really, really good at one thing. I think that's very dangerous."

Orit Gadiesh, management consultancy Bain & Company London's Chairperson, coined the term "expert generalist" to speak to the idea of becoming multi-skilled. **SHE DEFINES EXPERT GENERALIST AS: "SOMEONE WHO HAS THE ABILITY AND CURIOSITY TO MASTER AND COLLECT EXPERTISE IN MANY DIFFERENT DISCIPLINES, INDUSTRIES, SKILLS, CAPABILITIES, COUNTRIES, AND TOPICS."**

Encourage young people to explore widely and open their minds to different education and career pathways – having a variety of experience will prove valuable in the future. We need to expect the unexpected. Artificial intelligence, automation and the effects of the pandemic and climate crisis will change the jobs landscape in ways we can't anticipate. Start by staying up to date with both cultural developments and the latest technology.

- Humans are endlessly curious and have the capacity to never stop learning – something that will be crucial to surviving in the future. It is important to encourage a capability to and enthusiasm for lifelong learning in all young people from a very early age. The benefits of constant learning include becoming more adaptable and able to master new tasks – and it keeps your brain healthy, too!

Encourage youth to be curious about the world around them and think about the different things they can offer to the future.

There are various ways to keep learning new skills, such as:

- School-based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (SBATs)
- Work experience placements
- Volunteering
- Involvement in Community Projects
- Entrepreneurial activities
- Cultural exchanges
- Earn-and-learn apprenticeships and traineeships
- TAFE courses
- Online courses (short or longer, paid or unpaid)
- University courses
- Normalising day-to-day research and reading
- Webinars, TED Talks, podcasts
- Pursuing new hobbies
- Taking part in debating and forum discussions

The trick is to keep an open mind to the endless possibilities out there.

THE MOST IMPORTANT SOFT SKILLS

There are certain universal skills that will be very important for future work. These are the so-called "soft skills", and they include learning more about fields such as art, philosophy, history, sociology, psychology and neuroscience.

Besides these areas, literacy, numeracy and digital literacy will also be essential skills going forward, given the challenges young people will have to deal with, according to the **Education Council report**. states that given the challenges young people will deal with going forward, literacy, numeracy and digital literacy must also be recognised as essential skills for every student.

According to the World Economic Forum's latest **"The Future of Jobs"** report, the most important skills needed to thrive in the future are:

- Complex problem solving
- Critical thinking and analysis
- Creativity, innovation, ideation, originality, and initiative
- People management
- Coordinating with others
- Emotional intelligence

THE TYPES OF WORK

Marty Neumeier, Director of CEO Branding for Liquid Agency, defines four types of work:

- Creative: Unique, imaginative, non-routine, and autonomous.
- Skilled: Standardised, talent-driven, professional, and directed.
- Rote: Interchangeable, routinised, outsourceable, and managed.
- Robotic: Algorithmic, computerised, efficient, and purchased.

- Judgment, reasoning, analytical thinking, and decision making

- Service orientation

- Negotiation

- Cognitive flexibility

- Active learning and learning strategies

- Technology design and programming

- Leadership and social influence

- Systems analysis and evaluation

Avil Beckford (**The Invisible Mentor**) adds two very important skills to this list:

- Cultural awareness and sensitivity – We should all become more aware and accepting of difference, and how to respectfully engage with it to open valuable opportunities for growth and agile collaboration.

- The importance of reading widely, or "reading the world" – but also of being able to analyse and interpret what you read. The value of encouraging a love of reading and gaining knowledge should never be underestimated for future success.

THE HAYSTACK METHOD

It's not just enough to encourage young people to be curious and discover widely: they should also be taught how to effectively analyse and synthesise information to proactively help them to make better decisions about their future. Rohit Bhargava's "Haystack Method" is a tool that can help with this.

The model has five components. In the example below, it's used to broadly answer the question "What career will I be happiest in?"

1. GATHERING:

Important information, stories and interesting ideas related to different career paths found while reading, listening, seeing and experiencing, which you then make note of and save or collect somewhere. The results of Career Quizzes and chats with industry experts or family members can form part of "gathering the hay".

2. AGGREGATING:

Take individual ideas and disconnected thoughts you discovered really appeal or "speak" to you, or really repel you, and group them together to identify a broader theme or possibilities. What underlying need of yours do these themes or ideas speak to? Is there a vague trend towards liking outdoor work, or the idea of working with animals? Are you attracted to stories or ideas about making a difference? Do you have a bias against working with your hands?

3. ELEVATING:

Identify underlying themes that align a group of ideas to describe a single bigger concept. This is the tricky part: condensing all you've learnt so far to find a key, non-obvious insight into something: the specific industries that might suit you best, for example. Does it look like working for a non-profit might be your thing? Or do you want to be an entrepreneur?

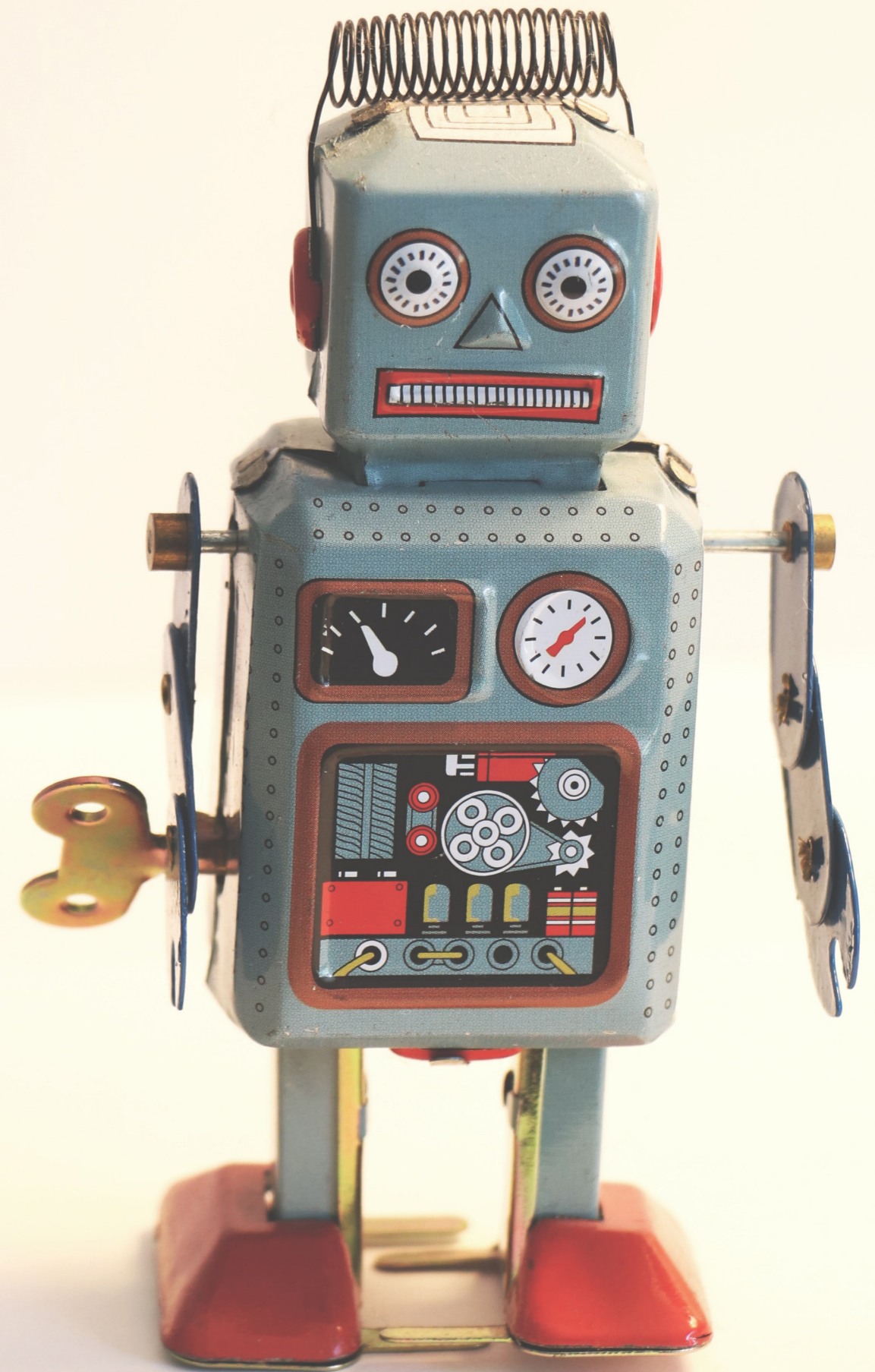
4. NAMING:

Describe a collection of your powerful ideas in a memorable way to make it easy to understand. This could be condensing each "idea collection" into a "role name": Creative Director at World Wildlife Fund, or Fire Station Chief, or Sustainable city planner and architect, or "Surf Instructor working with people with a disability" – try to describe what is core to you in a few actionable words.

5. PROVING:

Validate your ideas. Think about the roles you "named" – what speaks to you? What doesn't? Do you need more information? "Test" your ideas by talking to friends, family, career advisors, thinking about pros and cons – and if you're unsure, do more research (start gathering the hay again!)

Once you've run through this process, it's time to apply the ideas, or make the decisions.



The background features several light blue brushstroke-like lines that sweep across the page from the top-left and bottom-left towards the right. A solid black rectangle is positioned in the center-right area, containing the text.

SKILLSROAD.COM.AU®