Employers mainly hire based on three key things:

1) Skills
2) Motivation
3) Fit

THE GOOD NEWS
Your experiences have taught you many transferable skills

THE CHALLENGE
These experiences may need to be translated for non-academic audiences
**What can make academic experiences tough to explain?**

1) Specificity and jargon
2) Lack of emphasis on transferable skills
3) Context and Values around the experience
4) Misperceptions about the experience

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**Key Areas for Skills**

- Research
- Teaching
- Service/Leadership/Volunteering

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**Strategies for Decoding Your Research**

- Develop a short explanation of your project that is accessible to someone with little to no prior knowledge of the field
- Hint: grant applications often require this kind of explanation—how do you talk about your work in those contexts?
- You will likely have to sacrifice details—people can ask if they want more specifics
- Analogies can be very useful
- Be prepared to explain why this research matters in terms as concrete as possible
- Focus on the what and the why—less on the how
- Decide how much the employer needs to know about the technical skills you gained from doing your research
• Think beyond the technical skills: were you writing grants? Planning timelines? Mentoring students? Tracking outcomes? Troubleshooting problems?
• Focus on your specific responsibilities and contributions, not the project overall.
• Part of Decoding is presenting skills in language others will recognize!

**Strategies for Decoding Your Teaching**

• Don’t assume that people will necessarily know what a teaching assistant or course instructor does
• Be specific: they will have no idea that you lecture to 200 people 3 times a week unless you tell them
• Highlight the diversity of tasks
• Describe different student populations: introductory, non-specialists/non-majors, continuing education, advanced upper-year etc.
• Describe impact: awards, feedback, enrollment, grades, etc.
• Highlight any innovative practices or adaptations
• If you were collaborating (other TAs, course coordinator, etc.), mention the teamwork aspect
• Mention specific concepts or skills you explained or taught

**Other Experiences and Skills**

• Think broadly: if you can explain why something is important, you can convince an employer that it is.
• What were the deliverables? What impact did this work have?
• Non-academic jobs tend to value a well-rounded professional!