

## Vocabulary for Job Interviews: Ability, Skill, Talent, and Certification

Before you listen to the recording, take a piece of paper and fold it into four parts. In each of the parts, write one of the following words: ability, skill, talent, certification. If you already have an idea what the words mean, write your idea in the part next to the word. As you listen, you will want to check if your definition is the right one.

Now listen to the recording. As you listen, use the paper to make notes on the meanings of the words.

### How Did You Do?

How did it go? Did you know the meaning of all the words? If you did, that's great. If you didn't, I hope you were able to learn a few words. If you want, you can listen to the recording again or read the descriptions below.

Now that you're finished, take your paper and turn it over. Write the words in the four parts of the paper again, and then start writing down *your* abilities, skills, talents and certifications. When you can't think of anymore, put them into sentences. As always, remember that if you post your sentences as a comment on Bite-Sized-English.com, I'll be glad to correct them for you. As a last writing exercise, pick one talent and one skill and write three things that you could do to refine each of them. (You should have six things.)

Let us know! I think we're all ready to hear them!

### Vocabulary

**Ability:** An ability is a thing that you can do. This word covers a lot of things, from things you can do, but don't, like jumping off a bridge, to things you do automatically, like breathing, to the things you've spent years learning how to do, like speaking English. They are all abilities. You can use this word in a lot of contexts like "I have a lot of abilities that would make me a good electrician." Or, "I think I have the right abilities for the job." Or, "I'm always interested in developing new abilities."

**Skill:** Because you can use the word '**ability**' for so many things, we have some words that are more specific. A skill is an ability, but breathing isn't a skill! Skills are things that you needed to learn: speaking English, working with computers, typing are all skills. What did you spend time learning? These are your skills. You can use this word in sentences like "I have the right skills for the job." Or, "In my last job, I was able to **refine** my skills as an accountant." "Or, I am a *skilled* carpenter." (The word 'skilled' means that you worked hard to become good as a

carpenter.)

**Talent:** I have to work hard to play the piano. I wasn't born able to play it. But, some people—my friends—seem to have been born playing the piano. It's a talent of theirs. A talent is something that you're naturally good at. Usually, a talent is something that most people are naturally good at: you don't say 'I have a talent for breathing' because everyone does that! You can use the word talent in sentences like “I have a talent for helping people.” Or, “Network installation is a talent of mine.” Or, “I'm talented with children.” (The word 'talented' means 'naturally good'.)

**Certification:** In the language school where I teach English, we give a test at the end of each level and then send the students a certificate. The students can then show the certificate in a job interview, as proof that they can speak English. When you have a certificate of an **ability**, it's a 'certification.' Some jobs only accept certifications: they don't care if you know how to speak English if you don't have a certificate, other jobs prefer them. In general, a certification is better than 'only' a skill. You can use the word certification—and 'certified'—in sentences like these: “I spent six months getting an English certification.” Or, “I'm a certified electrician.” Or, “I went to university to be certified as an accountant.” ('Certified' means you have a certificate, to 'be certified' means to get a certificate.)

**Refine:** When people dig for gold, it's not normal to get it, 100% pure, from the ground. Instead, they get gold mixed with other things and then they work to make it pure. They *refine* the gold. The word 'refine' normally means to 'make pure,' but we use it when we talk about **skills** and **talents** when we mean to make them better. For example, my sister always had a talent as an artist, but she refined it with two years in the university. You can use the word refine in sentences like “I want this job to refine my skills as a teacher.” Or, “in my last job, I was able to refine my public speaking skills.” Or, “the years I spent as a salesman really refined my customer service skills.”