



NONTECHNICAL SKILLS

This guide is designed to give you advice on expanding your repertoire of nontechnical or “soft” skills, as they are often referred to. Most of these are required in all professional sectors. Below are a few suggested discussion prompts and resources. Use only the resources that will aid you in making progress toward the goals you have set with your mentor.

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- 2** Time management ▶
- 2** Self-regulated learning ▶
- 3** Maintaining professional contacts ▶
- 3** Résumés 101 ▶
- 3** Online job applications ▶
- 4** Interview success ▶
- 4** Salary negotiations ▶
- 4** Communicating in the workplace ▶
- 5** Plainspoken science ▶
- 5** Using social media as a scientist ▶

Time management

Time management is a necessity in any professional field. One way to get the most out of your day is to avoid responding to email throughout the workday. Designate a window of time to read and respond to email each day, and refrain from checking email outside of that time. Close out of email completely when not within the designated window to focus on other tasks and reduce distractions. Additional tips for graduate students can be found on the Finish Your Thesis blog post [10 Surprising Time Management Strategies To Help You Graduate](#). Science also has a great resource, [Five sneaky motivation killers to avoid in graduate school](#). While these resources are geared toward graduate students, they can be adapted for undergraduate students and professionals alike.

Self-regulated learning

Transitioning from undergraduate- to graduate-level work often requires that you become a self-regulated learner and take charge of your educational experience. In graduate school, there may be a project or assignment that will require you to teach yourself a new skill or technique in order to complete a task. A common example for students pursuing graduate studies in STEM is coding in R or MATLAB. Most students enter graduate school with minimal coding experience, but coding and, more broadly, technical literacy are needed for many research projects. Check out this introductory guide to programming in the geosciences, [The Undergraduate Guide to R](#), prepared by biomedical researcher, Trevor Martin, Ph.D.



Maintaining professional contacts

Once you establish a great professional contact, communication often ceases after the first few exchanges. It can be tricky to continue engagement with your network. Check out tips on [maintaining professional contacts](#) from Career Attraction for helpful advice on how to navigate professional relationships. Ask your mentoring partner how they maintain their contacts.



Résumés 101

How effective is your résumé or CV? A clear, succinct résumé or CV is critical to landing any professional opportunity. Learn how to create a stellar résumé by watching AGU's past webinar video [Resumes 101: Building a Resume That Will Catch Their Eye](#). Also, ask your mentor to provide feedback on your current draft.

Online job application

Today, physical job boards are a thing of the past, with most positions being listed online. Applying to jobs online can be a daunting task. How do you make your résumé stand out and seem personal when you submit through an online platform? AGU's blog On the Job has a post dedicated to just that, called [Guardian of the Gate: Conquering your fear of online job applications](#). Create a free member account with the [AGU Career Center](#) to stay up to date and apply for new jobs.



Interview success

Whether you are a graduate student or in the workforce, you will be interviewed countless times throughout your professional career. Check out AGU's [blog post](#) for practical tips on preparing for and nailing interviews.

Salary negotiations

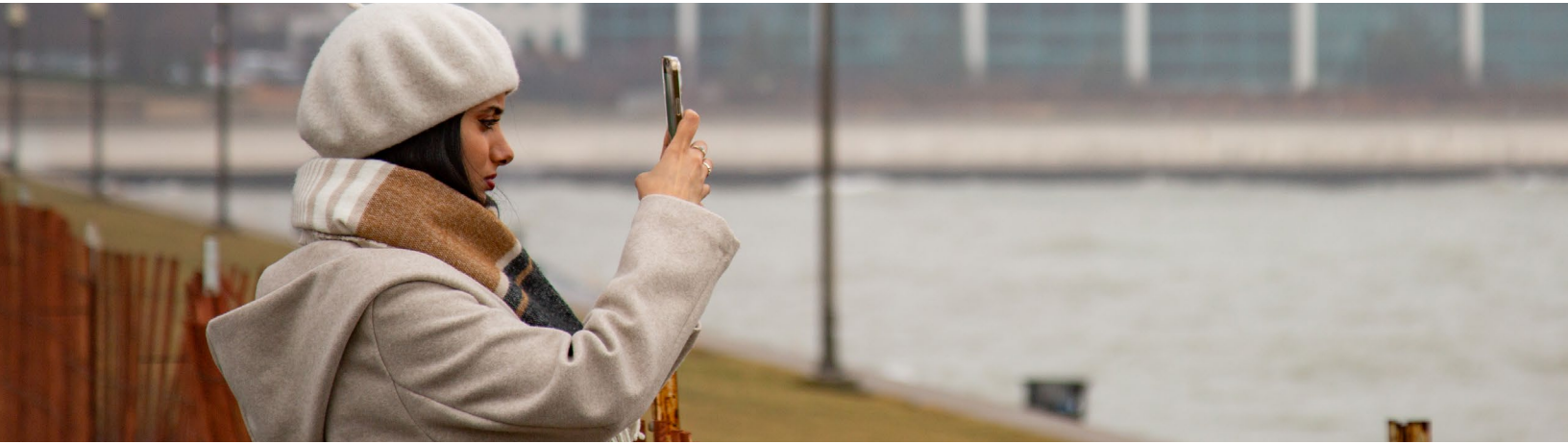
The salary you accept with a job offer is the anchor point for your time at that organization, as well as with future employers. Check out AGU's On the Job blog [Salary Negotiations: The First Steps](#) to ensure you put yourself in a competitive position.

Communicating in the workplace

Between lab mates and colleagues, learning to work collaboratively is essential in any workplace, in academia or industry. Check out [this](#) piece by communications consultant Marjorie Lee North on communicating effectively in the workplace.

Plainspoken science

The complex, technical terms you are comfortable rattling off in your sleep are often unfamiliar to most people (even other scientists) outside your discipline. It takes practice to remove jargon when communicating about your research, but it is imperative for successful grant proposals, and even for abstracts and journal submissions. Check out AGU's Sharing Science post about [Creating a Plain Language Summary](#).



Using social media as a scientist:

Do you use social media in a professional capacity? Maybe you have a blog or an X (formerly Twitter) or Instagram account. Regardless of the medium, keeping a productive and beneficial social media presence requires careful thought and planning. Learn how to write successful scientific posts from AGU's blog post about [using social media effectively](#).