



# How to Set Long-Term Career Goals

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled “All Psyched Up” for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of “Life is An Adventure...every step of the way” and “Open for Business Success” is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email [office@drlindahancock.com](mailto:office@drlindahancock.com)

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One time I was out walking with two friends and was very surprised when one of them said "Linda, you are always reinventing yourself". It sounded as though she thought that I kept changing from one thing to the other. The way that I viewed it, however, was that I was merely building the foundation for my professional life piece by piece.

You see, if you want to build a career, you will need to break your long-term goals down into manageable and achievable pieces or steps:

1. Consider your interests - Often people state that they want to have a career in something where they have obvious skills or a fascination for learning more. It is much easier to plan a career if you begin by thinking about what you like and how you can monetize that. If you are not sure about what direction to take, there are many aptitude and career tests that can help narrow the options down for you.
2. Research the duties and benefits - You might become envious of the neighbourhood doctor's new car and decide he has the career you want - until you learn that he does brain surgery and just know that you would never want to do that. You can make many assumptions about different careers but the best thing to do is to actually find out the facts about what is required of the person in that field and how they will be rewarded for doing the work.
3. Interview people who have experience in that career - It's one thing to read about a career and another to actually talk with people who perform the duties every day. Ask good questions about both the advantages and disadvantages of working in the specific career in which you are interested. Make sure that you understand exactly what things you will need to acquire in order to gain future employment in that field.
4. Learn about the educational requirements - There are so many ways to study these days. You might be able to begin your career with a diploma and study at a higher level during your employment. Some careers require a degree. Do you want to have a full-time in-class program or would you consider distance education? A part-time study course would allow you to work and pay for your education as you go. Ask people in the field to recommend the educational program that is most respected.
5. Consider unique ways to build your portfolio - Every bit of experience that you get should help you in some way in your future career. You can choose how you will build your portfolio but always think about the knowledge, skills and abilities that you will need when you look for opportunities to gain experience. Volunteer work is as valued as paid opportunities.
6. Set a date for completion - Once you know all the academic and practical requirements you need, set a goal date for achievement. Make sure that it is far enough away to be practical but close enough to challenge you.
7. Break tasks into achievable tasks - If you break the goals down into sub-goals that each have a deadline, you will find it easier to stay motivated.
8. Begin - Nothing happens unless you take the first step. Today is the day that you can move towards your dream career!