



# Build Your Future

choices...  
connections...  
careers



## Authors

Debra Barrett, MAEd, Extension Educator, Michigan State University  
Frank Cox, MS, Extension Educator, Michigan State University  
Barbara Duvall, MS, Extension Educator, Michigan State University  
Kathy Jamieson, MEd, Extension Educator, Michigan State University  
Alan Jaros, Program Instructor, Michigan State University  
Sara Keinath, MS, Extension Educator, Michigan State University  
Melissa Payk, MEd, Extension Educator, Michigan State University  
Dave Radloff, BS, Extension Educator, Michigan State University  
Laurie Rivetto, MA, Extension Educator, Michigan State University  
Sienna Suszek, BS, Extension Educator, Michigan State University  
Janice Zerbe, MAEd, Extension Educator, Michigan State University

## Project Directors

Cyndi Mark, Ph.D., Program Leader Emeritus,  
Michigan State University

Tara D. M. Wheeler, MPA  
National 4-H Council

## Editor

Anita C. Stuever CAE, Communication Works

## Layout and Design

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**"It takes more than you think to open a business."**

—Teen participant in pilot test of curriculum

**"I learned that I have to balance jobs and college; I learned that organizing the goals you have is a great way to start."**

—Teen participant in pilot test of curriculum

The curriculum was written by a team of Michigan State University Extension educators responsible for Career Exploration and Workforce Preparation in the MSU Extension Children and Youth Institute. The writing team includes MSU Extension educators Deb Barrett, Frank Cox II, Barbara Duvall, Kathy Jamieson, Sara Keinath, Melissa Payk, Dave Radloff, Laurie Rivetto, Sienna Suszek, and Janice Zerbe, plus MSU Extension program instructor Alan Jaros. The editor is Anita Stuever and project coordinator Cyndi Mark.

Pilot testing two of the nine activities supported the design and development of all activities. Sixty-one teens in five urban and rural Michigan sites gave feedback which was incorporated in the final design. Feedback was positive; as one teen participant said, "this was a very cool way to learn."

Additional resources to support the curriculum are a certificate of completion and two evaluation instruments—a short form for teens completing all nine activities and a longer form divided by activity.

# Introduction

INTRO

## Build Your Future: Choices...Connections...Careers

The National 4-H Curriculum, *Build Your Future: Choices...Connections...Careers*, is a part of the 4-H Citizenship Mission Mandate and supports the Leadership and Personal Development area. The curriculum consists of nine activities that target high school students from 14 to 19 years of age.

The purpose of the curriculum is to help youth develop skills and knowledge in career exploration. Using identified learner outcomes and success indicators, facilitators can easily lead fun, interactive learning experiences. Participants experience a variety of learning methods such as developing a business plan, competing in a quiz bowl, creating a portfolio, analyzing case studies, and discussing questions that reflect on their experiences. These interactive activities enhance learning and retention. Most activities range from 30 to 90 minutes and include accompanying handouts.

The nine activities are:

1. **Skills...Choices...Careers**—connecting experiences, personal interests, skills, values, and personality to career options and college majors.
2. **Making Career Connections**—increasing knowledge of careers by researching and exploring careers through interviews, internships, and volunteering.
3. **Build Your Future Through Portfolios**—learning about career and employment portfolios and following the steps to create their own portfolio.
4. **Education Pay\$**—exploring how education and training affect employment opportunities, earning potential, and lifetime earnings.
5. **Career FUNds**—understanding the various types of postsecondary education and training, plus ways to fund it.
6. **Turn Your 4-H Passion Into Profits**—learning the advantages and disadvantages of becoming an entrepreneur, as well as the parts that make up a business plan.
7. **Pounding the Pavement**—learning employability skills such as writing résumés and interviewing for jobs.
8. **Putting the Pieces Together: Goals for the Future**—pulling the pieces together, focusing on career goals and steps necessary to reach those goals.
9. **Pathways to Success**—analyzing scenarios to understand how actions on the job can affect one's career and advancement.

Build Your Future: Introduction

### Skill Level

- Beginning, for members with little or no experience in career exploration, age 14–19

### Learner Outcome

- Youth will increase their knowledge of careers by researching and exploring careers through various methods

### Educational Standards Supported

- ESS01.01.01: Identify training, education, and certification requirements for occupational choice
- ESS03.04.02: Gather technical information and data using a variety of resources
- ESS09.03.06: List the standards and qualifications that must be met in order to enter a given industry (States' Career Cluster Initiative, 2012)

### Success Indicators

- Select and explore a career
- Describe the experience and the knowledge gained

### Life Skills

- Learning to learn
- Critical thinking
- Decision making
- Marketable skills

### Time Needed

- First group session: 30–45 minutes
- Individual study session: varies
- Final group session: 30–45 minutes

### Materials List

- Pens and pencils
- Internet access for youth completing Worksheet 1, Careers Research, in the first group session
- Youth Career Journals

### Space Needed

- Classroom setting

### Suggested Group Size

- 4–20 youth

# Making Career Connections

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ACTIVITY

## Introduction to Content

This activity is one of nine in the National 4-H Curriculum, *Build Your Future: Choices...Connections...Careers*. Before engaging youth in **Making Career Connections**, consider having them complete the **Exploring Career Pathways: Get to Know Yourself Worksheet** in Activity 1 or another personal assessment tool. That exercise will help youth identify which career pathways and careers to explore.

This activity consists of three sessions: two group sessions and one individual study session. The first group session introduces the activities. During this session, youth complete the **Career Research Worksheet** and are prepared to complete the **Interview a Worker Worksheet**. The individual study session allows for research and experience between the two group sessions. In the final group session, participants report their individual study experiences to the group and debrief the activity. They also complete the **Job Shadow a Worker Worksheet** and **Volunteer or Internship Worksheet**.

The information gathered in these worksheets will be used in other activities in the *Build Your Future: Choices...Connections...Careers* curriculum.

Career planning or career exploration is much more than job searching. Job searching is a short-term pursuit of a position that matches one's financial and career goals. Career planning is an ongoing process of choosing education, training, and jobs that fit one's interests and skills. The planning process should include exploring career possibilities. Deciding what type of work to pursue requires that individuals know and understand their interests, their values, their motivation, and the skills they most enjoy using. It also requires individuals to learn about careers by exploring and researching the possibilities.

# Before Conducting the Activity

Note these pages to use in the Career Journal:

- **Careers Research Worksheet** – pages 16-17
- **Interview a Worker Worksheet** – pages 18-20
- **Job Shadow a Worker Worksheet** – pages 21-23
- **Volunteer or Internship Worksheet** – pages 26-27

## Opening Question

How long has it been since you asked yourself what you want to be when you grow up?

- If you haven't considered the question since you were 5 years old, it's time to think about who you are and what you want to be.
- The process of uncovering what you are meant to do and finding your career direction is a journey on a path you choose and research.
- It starts by exploring the vast array of opportunities in front of you and matching them to your talents, strengths, and interests.
- There are many ways to gain information about and insight into careers and determine what career would be a good fit for you.

Some ways to explore careers are:

- Research specific career pathways.
- Interview people who are employed in an occupation.
- Job shadow someone in a career that appeals to you.
- Serve an internship with a business or organization.
- Volunteer with an organization, doing tasks relevant to your possible future career.
- Attend a career fair or a job fair.



## Experience

### First Group Session

1. Ask participants to name an exotic place they'd like to visit or an adventure they'd like to take. Let the group offer a few suggestions, then choose one that's far away and not easily accessible. It might be New Zealand, China, or an African safari. Ask participants how they would plan the trip and what tools they would need in the process. Explain that to reach their trip or adventure, they need a route to follow and activities to do when they get to their destination. Explain that just as they need to plan a route for a trip, they need to plan their journey toward attaining the career they desire. Planning a career is like planning a vacation. You have to research career possibilities or pathways, talk with people who have experience, and possibly get some hands-on experience to see whether you enjoy the type of work that's done in a career.
2. Conduct a group discussion about career choices, following these guidelines for discussion:
  - a. Emphasize the value of all work.
  - b. Stress that careers and job choices should be based on an individual's interests and talents.
  - c. Explain that adults are most successful in careers and jobs in which they enjoy their work.
  - d. Point out that it is important that career choices reflect the lifestyle people intend to lead.
3. Briefly explain that there are many ways to explore a career; we will use four worksheets to guide our exploration:
  - a. **Careers Research Worksheet** (found on pages 16-17 in the Career Journal) guides youth to various websites where they can do research about careers.
  - b. **Interview a Worker Worksheet** (found on pages 18-20 in the Career Journal) outlines how to interview someone who works in a career of interest.
  - c. **Job Shadow a Worker Worksheet** (found on pages 21-23 in the Career Journal) describes job shadowing and provides an outline for following and observing someone who works in a career of interest.
  - d. **Volunteer or Internship Worksheet** (found on pages 26-27 in the Career Journal) offers helpful hints for finding volunteer or internship opportunities and provides a format to record the experiences and skills gained.

*Making Career Connections:  
Careers Research Worksheet  
Full size pages can be found in the  
Career Journal on pages 16-17.*

**Making Career Connections: Careers Research Worksheet(cont.)**

LIST THE CAREER YOU WANT TO RESEARCH

Find and list at least one position in this career that's available now.	
What are the benefits (such as health and travel) of this career?	
What are the future prospects and	

Activity 2: Making Career Connections

**Making Career Connections: Careers Research Worksheet**

Complete this table using one of the careers you identified in Activity 1, Skills...Choices...Careers, using the worksheet Exploring Career Pathways: Get to Know Yourself.

LIST THE CAREER YOU WANT TO RESEARCH

Describe this career. What do people in this profession do?	
What personal characteristics, qualities, skills, and abilities are needed to work in this career?	
What education is required for this career? Are there any special requirements such as licensing or certification?	
What education programs and institutions could prepare you for this career?	
What is the average annual salary for this career?	
What are the working conditions and physical demands of this career? (Examples include location inside or outside, hours, flexibility, stress level, lifting requirements, danger level.)	

Build Your Future: Choices, Connections, Careers

Activity 1: Making Career Connections



## Career Pathways

- Arts and Communications
- Business, Management, Marketing, and Technology
- Engineering, Manufacturing, and Industrial Technology
- Health Sciences
- Human Service
- Natural Resources and Agriscience

- To start the exploration, have the youth choose one career to explore from one of the careers they identified in the inventory **Exploring Career Pathways: Get to Know Yourself Worksheet** from **Activity 1, Skills...Choices...Careers**.
- Tell participants they will use the **Careers Research Worksheet** to research careers and record the findings of their exploration. Review the introduction at the top of the **Careers Research Worksheet** Youth may work individually or in pairs.
- After participants have completed their research on the **Careers Research Worksheet**, organize participants into groups by their chosen career based on the six career pathways (listed at top right) identified in **Activity 1, Skills...Choices...Careers**.
- Have individuals share what they recorded and discuss the following with their group:
  - What are the similarities and differences among the careers in the pathway?
  - What interests you about the career?
  - What did you learn about the career that surprised you?
  - Do you still want to pursue this career? Why or why not?
- After a short discussion period, have one individual from each pathway group share their group's findings with the full group. Emphasize that youth may want to research other careers and should save their **Careers Research Worksheet** for future use.
- Tell the group that the next step in the process is to interview someone who works in the career of interest. Have participants go to the **Interview a Worker Worksheet** which outlines how to conduct a career interview.

*Making Career Connections:  
Interview a Worker Worksheet*  
Full size page can be found in the  
Career Journal on pages 18-19.

### Making Career Connections: Interview a Worker Worksheet (cont.)

What did you learn in school that has helped you most on your job?

What technology do you use in your work?

### Making Career Connections: Interview a Worker Worksheet

You can find a wealth of information about a career by speaking with someone already working in the career. Find a person in one of your identified careers to interview by asking your current connections (friends, parents, teachers, neighbors, or others) for suggestions. Or expand your connections by seeking out people in the local chamber of commerce, professional associations, community organizations, or Internet searches. Once you've identified someone to interview, call the individual, tell him or her that you want to explore their career, and ask to make an appointment for an interview. Use the following questions to guide you as you prepare your own list of questions.

Person Interviewed: \_\_\_\_\_ Career: \_\_\_\_\_

What are the general duties of your occupation?

Describe your typical workday or workweek.

How did you get into this career?

What do you like most about your career?

How much and what type of education did you need for this job? Did you need any special license or certification?

10. Reviewing the **Interview a Worker Worksheet**, prepare the group to find and interview a worker.
  - a. Explain how to find someone to interview.
  - b. No matter how you interview a person, practice basic rules of interview etiquette: be polite, be attentive, and do not chew gum.
11. If interviewing in person, set a time to meet, and then arrive on time. Smile and maintain eye contact.  
(You may wish to practice the “perfect business handshake,” which is taught in **Activity 7, Pounding the Pavement**.)
  - a. Share your name and reason for the interview: you want to learn more about their job.
  - b. Ask your questions, one at a time, and do not interrupt the person talking.
12. As a general practice, never ask someone how much money he or she makes. **Activity 4, Education Pay\$**, will help you learn about salary and wage information.
  - a. Thank the interviewee when you are done and consider writing a note of thanks for their time.
13. The interview could be done in person or by email, mail, or telephone. After sharing ways to interview, you may wish to divide the group into pairs to role-play the process.

**Making Career Connections: Interview a Worker Worksheet (cont.)**

What problems occur most frequently in your job?

What current issues are people in your field facing?

What advice would you give someone pursuing a career in your field?

**REFLECTION:**

*Answer the final two questions yourself after the interview.*

What appeals to you most about this position or career pathway?

What steps must you take to prepare yourself for this position or career pathway?

Build Your Future: Choices, Connections, Careers

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*Making Career Connections:  
Interview a Worker Worksheet  
Full size page can be found in the  
Career Journal on page 20.*

## Individual Study Session

Participants make connections with someone in their selected career pathway and complete the **Interview a Worker Worksheet**.

## Final Group Session

1. Have the youth report the findings of their interview to the group. The **Interview a Worker Worksheet** contains reflection questions, so participants should have reflected on their experiences.
2. Have participants go to **Job Shadow a Worker Worksheet** (found on pages 21-23) and **Volunteer or Internship Worksheet** (found on pages 26-27) and discuss how youth might use them to do further career exploration.
  - a. While reviewing the **Job Shadow a Worker Worksheet**, highlight that finding a job shadowing experience is similar to finding someone to interview.

### Making Career Connections: Job Shadow a Worker Worksheet (cont.)

What did the person spend the most time doing while you observed him or her?

From your observations, what personal characteristics are needed for someone to be successful in this occupation?

What kind of people did this person interact with while you were observing him or her?

What did you learn about the personality type that would be successful interacting with coworkers and supervisors, or with clients and customers?

What kind of technology and equipment did the person you observed use?

### Making Career Connections: Job Shadow a Worker Worksheet (cont.)

What problems or obstacles did this person encounter while you were shadowing him or her?  
How was the problem solved?

What does this person enjoy about their job?

### Making Career Connections: Job Shadow a Worker Worksheet

Job shadowing is a lot like interviewing, except you get to observe the professional in action. During a job shadowing experience, you follow a professional through his or her workday. You get firsthand knowledge of the demands of the job, the culture of the workplace, the tasks performed, and the people encountered. And you still get to ask lots of questions!

You can job shadow someone for a few hours, a day, a week, or even longer, depending on what you can arrange with the person you've chosen to shadow.

Person shadowed: \_\_\_\_\_ Career field: \_\_\_\_\_

In the chart below, list three work activities the person performed during your shadowing experience. Then answer the questions: Would you enjoy doing these tasks every day? Why or why not?

Work Activity	Would you enjoy doing this every day?	Why or why not?

*Making Career Connections:  
Job Shadow a Worker Worksheet  
Full size pages can be found in the  
Career Journal on pages 21-23.*

- b. While reviewing the **Volunteer or Internship Worksheet**, lead a discussion about the difference between volunteering and internships. Emphasize that volunteer opportunities and internships are both great ways to get an understanding of a career path as well as tangible work experience that can be listed on a résumé. (See **Activity 4, Pounding the Pavement**, for more on writing a résumé.)
3. Debrief the research and interview experience using the **Share/Process/Generalize/Apply** discussion questions, selecting those most appropriate for your group.
4. If participants continue their exploration with worksheets **Job Shadow a Worker Worksheet** and **Volunteer or Internship Worksheet**, provide an opportunity for them to share their experiences.

## Share/Process/Generalize/Apply

### Share

1. What career did you research?
2. What did you find out, observe, or do during your exploration?
3. What did it feel like to learn more about a career pathway?
4. What did you enjoy most about the activity?

### Process

1. What are two characteristics of the career you researched that appeal to you?
2. What type of training or education is required to pursue the career you researched?
3. What was the most important thing you learned about the career you researched?
4. What did you find challenging about your career exploration activities?

### Generalize

1. What skills do you have that make the career you researched a good fit for you?
2. Why is it important to know about careers at this time in your life?
3. Why is it important to have plenty of information before making decisions?
4. What advice would you give to someone who wants to pursue the career you researched?

### Apply

1. What can you do now to prepare for the career you researched?
2. Do you think you want to pursue this career path? What factors influenced your decision?
3. If you were to conduct this activity again, what would you do differently?

**Making Career Connections: Volunteer or Internship Worksheet**

Task or project	Skills gained or developed	Did you enjoy the task or project? Why or why not?

  

**Making Career Connections: Volunteer or Internship Worksheet (cont.)**

**REFLECTION:**

How did you locate your volunteer or internship opportunity?

Do you think you would like to do the job you observed? Why or why not?

How did you like the work environment (the type of organization you worked for, the location, and atmosphere of the worksite)?

What did you learn about your personality as you dealt with coworkers and supervisors, or with clients and customers, if applicable?

What was the most important thing you learned from this experience?

Remember not to make a career choice based on one bad experience. Keep your mind open to possibilities.

Acting 2: Making Career Connections

*Making Career Connections: Volunteer or Internship Worksheet*  
Full size pages can be found in the Career Journal on pages 26-27.

## Did You Know?

- Most people will spend more than 80,000 hours of their life working! Why spend it doing something you don't enjoy?
- Career exploration helps youth learn about themselves. Learning about one's interests and preferences helps youth form more meaningful relationships with friends and significant others.
- Good decision makers take time exploring options and are able to make informed, satisfying decisions.
- Youth who engage in career exploration programs report higher grades and feel better prepared for the future than youth who don't.
- Youth who have completed career exploration activities have more confidence in themselves and are more motivated to achieve their goals.

- Instead of having youth explore the careers they identified in **Activity 1**, either:
  - Assign youth specific careers to explore (helpful if you want them to work in groups).
  - Allow teens to select their own choices.
- Encourage youth to attend a local job fair or career fair.
- Assign participants to interview parents, guardians, and others about their career paths and find out whether—and if so—how and why their career paths changed.
- Assign youth to develop a formal presentation about one of their chosen careers.
- Have youth create a visual representation of a career they explored, using posters, electronic slides, diorama, flash cards, job uniform or work attire, or other props.

*(Adapted from TCC Career Services, Tulsa Community College, n.d.)*

## Discovery

**Career fair:** an event that emphasizes education and training opportunities for particular fields or career paths. Employers; recruiters from colleges, universities, technical and vocational institutions; and representatives from the military and public-service sectors are invited to participate.

**Career field:** an area for pursuing consecutive progressive achievement, especially in public, professional, or business life; a profession for which one trains and which is undertaken as a calling.

**Career pathway or cluster:** a grouping of jobs and industries requiring similar knowledge and skills.

**Career planning or career exploration:** investigating career possibilities, determining options, outlining the necessary training or education, and defining goals toward a specific career path.

**Career:** an occupation, profession, or job that someone holds for a long period of his or her life with opportunities to advance or progress, especially one that requires special training and is followed as one's life work.

**Informational interview:** talking with people who are employed in a career of one's choice, asking questions to learn about their career.

**Internship:** a formal or informal work experience for entry-level job seekers involving working in one's planned career field during a semester or school break. Participants gain practical experience, are exposed to the business environment, obtain valuable references, build a network of professional contacts, and have something tangible to show on their résumé.

**Job fair:** an event that brings together employers and the public, creating opportunities for job seekers and employers to interact in one place.





Learn more at  
[www.4-H.org/curriculum/careers](http://www.4-H.org/curriculum/careers)

**Job shadowing:** spending time with a worker on the job, observing workplace tasks, in order to explore a career interest. Career explorers can job shadow for a few hours, an entire workday, or several days.

**Job:** full-time or part-time employment for which one is paid; it may or may not be seen as one's life work. Used interchangeably with several similar words, including employment, occupation, position, and work.

**Occupation:** the work in which one is regularly employed; the principal business of one's life; a craft, trade, profession, or other means of earning a living.

**Vocation:** an occupation that a person is specifically drawn to or for which he or she is suited, qualified, or trained.

**Volunteering:** providing services without expecting to be paid for the work.

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## Authors

Sara Keinath, MS, Michigan State University Extension Educator.

Dave Radloff, BS, Michigan State University Extension Educator.