

Exploring Your Interests

Middle School
Career Exploration

To be happy in a job or career, you need to do something that you like.

When determining which careers might be a good fit for you, it's important to think about your interests—what you like to do and what you find interesting.

Considering your interests when exploring careers will help ensure that you'll spend your life doing something you love.

Think about it!

What are your two favorite school subjects?

Name two hobbies or activities you enjoy.

Name one activity you become so involved in that you lose track of time.

When and where are you the happiest?

Exploring Your Abilities

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You're more likely to be happier and more successful in a career that focuses on your strengths.

One of the first steps in choosing a career is to think about your abilities—what you are good at or have a talent for. Of course, what you're good at doing will change and develop as you grow, but considering your abilities now can help you identify what career areas you may want to explore first.

Think about it!

What subjects do you do well in?

Name two things you're good at doing.

Name two subject areas or skills you'd like to improve.

Exploring Career Clusters

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When you are exploring careers, begin by considering each of the Career Clusters.

Career Clusters are categories of different types of careers. Exploring the 16 Career Clusters will help you figure out which career areas might be a good fit for you.

Below are the 16 Career Clusters, along with the kind of work people do in each. Put a ✓ by any Career Cluster you might be interested in.

- Agriculture, Food, & Natural Resources:** farm, fish, and work to improve the environment
- Arts, A/V Tech & Communication:** design, create, perform, and produce multimedia content
- Architecture & Construction:** design, build, and maintain homes and structures
- Business Management & Administration:** plan, oversee, and organize a business
- Education & Training:** teach in schools, libraries, museums, and businesses
- Finance:** manage and work with money
- Government and Public Administration:** make laws and provide public services
- Health Science:** work in the healthcare field treating people and animals

Researching a Career

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Researching a career will help you determine if it's a career that might be right for you.

Researching a career means that you learn everything you can about that career. It's very important to research any career before you seriously consider it.

Information to find

When researching a career, look for and think about the following:

- ▶ **Tasks and responsibilities** – What does someone with this career actually do? Is this something you think you would enjoy doing every day?
- ▶ **Amount of education needed** – What kind of education/training does this career require? Are you willing to complete the education necessary for this career? For example, if you want to be a veterinarian, you will need 7-9 years of college.
- ▶ **Pay** – What is the average starting pay? Will this pay meet your needs?
- ▶ **Outlook** – Is this a growing career? Will it be easy to find a job in this career?

Healthcare and "green" careers (e.g., solar panel technician) are fast growing career fields. This means that there will be a big demand for careers in these fields in the years to come.

Preparing for a Career

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When exploring careers, it's also important to learn about the ways you can prepare for a career.

Most careers require education and/or training beyond a general high school education. In many cases, your career choice will determine which education option is most appropriate for you.

There are basically six ways that you can prepare for a career. Read about each of these options and think about which one might be best for you.

1. High School Career & Technology Education

Most high schools offer a variety of career and technology programs. These are particularly good for students who prefer a more practical, "hands on" approach to learning. Students in these programs spend much of their time "learning by doing."

Career and technology programs are primarily available to high school juniors and seniors. If you are interested in learning about the career and technology opportunities available in your school district, talk to your counselor.

2. Community and Technical Colleges

These colleges provide affordable, career-oriented programs that enable students to begin their careers after two years of college or less.

Students can also start at a community or technical college and then transfer to a four-year college after a year or two.

Building Soft Skills

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Having good soft skills will help you be more successful in any career.

Soft skills are a combination of people skills, social skills, and communication skills. Soft skills also include character traits such as having a good work ethic and a positive attitude.

Certain soft skills may be essential for success in a specific career. For example, to be a doctor, you need a strong work ethic and the ability to work under pressure.

Having good soft skills will help you succeed in school, in your career, and in your personal life. Work on developing these skills now!

Below is a list of soft skills that employers value. Think about your skills and put a ✓ in the box of the skills you feel good about. Put an X in the box of the soft skills you need to work on.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communication skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Strong work ethic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership | <input type="checkbox"/> Positive attitude |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teamwork | <input type="checkbox"/> Problem solving skills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adaptability/flexibility | <input type="checkbox"/> Friendliness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conflict resolution | <input type="checkbox"/> Listening skills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creativity | <input type="checkbox"/> Ability to deal with pressure |