

CHOOSING A CAREER





Dear Student,

Choosing the right career is very important. It can also be very confusing. There are hundreds of careers to choose from and many different ways to prepare for a career.

This book will help you sort through your career choices and show you how to choose a career that will be a good fit for you. It will also explain how to get the education or training you need to be successful.

This book will help you plan and prepare for your future!

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Introduction

You wouldn't go on a trip without knowing where you are going, or without a map or GPS providing directions. If you did, who knows where you would end up?

It's the same in the journey of life. To prepare for your future, you need to know where you're going and how you're going to get there.

To help you choose a career and plan for your future, this booklet will first have you do a short self-assessment. You will then investigate your career choices, go over the various ways to prepare for a career, and finally make a career plan.



Step 1 Self-Assessment

Choosing a career can be difficult. On one hand, there is you, a unique individual with specific interests, abilities, talents, and values. On the other hand are the hundreds of careers from which you can choose.

In order to find a career that's a good match for you, you need to first take a look at who you are. You need to think about what you're good at, what activities you enjoy, and what's important to you. *You need to do a self-assessment.*

A self-assessment will help you identify the following:

- ▶ what you like to do (interests)
- ▶ what you have a natural talent for (aptitudes)
- ▶ what you're good at (abilities)
- ▶ what's important to you (values)

The questions on the next three pages will give you an opportunity to think about all of the above.

A Short Self-Assessment

Directions: Complete each of the following 10 items. Take your time, and think about your responses.

1. Imagine that you've been hired by **World Cruises** to work on a large cruise ship.



Go through the jobs listed below, and put a ✓ by the three jobs you would most like to have. Put an X by any job you wouldn't want.

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> captain | <input type="checkbox"/> accountant | <input type="checkbox"/> security officer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> cook/chef | <input type="checkbox"/> social director | <input type="checkbox"/> child care director |
| <input type="checkbox"/> photographer | <input type="checkbox"/> medical assistant | <input type="checkbox"/> gift shop manager |
| <input type="checkbox"/> musician | <input type="checkbox"/> electrician/plumber | <input type="checkbox"/> tour guide |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fitness director | <input type="checkbox"/> captain's assistant | <input type="checkbox"/> computer technician |

2. In the middle of the ocean, your ship springs a leak. Everyone on board jumps into the lifeboats and heads for a nearby island.

Go through the list below and put a ✓ by the three tasks you'd most like to have on the island. Put an X by any task you wouldn't want to have.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> build a hut | <input type="checkbox"/> organize supplies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> take care of the injured | <input type="checkbox"/> repair the lifeboats |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hunt and fish | <input type="checkbox"/> lead a rescue strategy meeting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> plan a social activity | <input type="checkbox"/> make tools or pottery |
| <input type="checkbox"/> use parts to build a radio | <input type="checkbox"/> reassure those who are scared |
| <input type="checkbox"/> teach groups of children | <input type="checkbox"/> keep a journal or log of events |
| <input type="checkbox"/> design a lookout tower | <input type="checkbox"/> develop a work schedule |
| <input type="checkbox"/> settle arguments | <input type="checkbox"/> study island plants and animals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> prepare meals | <input type="checkbox"/> figure out why the boat sank |

3. What are your two favorite school subjects?

Name two hobbies or activities you enjoy.

4. Name one thing you do better than most of your friends.

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

5. Put a ✓ by the statements that reflect how you feel. Put an X by those that are not true for you. Skip those you feel neutral about.

I would like to have a career that would allow me to...

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> work with children | <input type="checkbox"/> work with animals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> help people who are sick | <input type="checkbox"/> make a difference |
| <input type="checkbox"/> work outdoors | <input type="checkbox"/> work with computers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> travel | <input type="checkbox"/> talk or perform in public |
| <input type="checkbox"/> work with my hands | <input type="checkbox"/> work indoors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> work by myself | <input type="checkbox"/> create art or music |
| <input type="checkbox"/> be in charge | <input type="checkbox"/> work in nature |
| <input type="checkbox"/> work at a desk | <input type="checkbox"/> be physically active |
| <input type="checkbox"/> build or fix things | <input type="checkbox"/> make a lot of money |
| <input type="checkbox"/> work with numbers | <input type="checkbox"/> work with other people |

6. How many years do you want to go to school after you graduate?

less than one year one or two years four or more years

7. Pretend that you have a crystal ball and can see into the future. What do you see yourself doing ten years from now? _____

8. What do you get excited about doing? _____

When and where are you the happiest? _____

What have you always dreamed of doing? _____

9. In the first column, write down three words you would use to describe yourself. Then ask two adults who know you well to choose three words they would use to describe you. Write these words in the second and third columns.

1. _____	1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____	3. _____

10. What careers have others suggested you consider? _____

When you were young, what careers did you think about having?

Consider your responses to the above questions.

- 1.** Do your responses indicate that you prefer activities in which you work with people, things, or information?
- ___ people (helping and working with people)
 - ___ things (hands-on activities using objects or tools)
 - ___ information (computer and desk-type activities)



2. Which career area(s) do your responses point to?

- ___ Business
- ___ Healthcare
- ___ Education
- ___ High-tech/computers
- ___ Human services (child care, law enforcement)
- ___ Skilled trades (plumbing, carpentry)
- ___ The arts (music, dance, art, theater)



If you need additional help identifying careers that might be a good match for you, visit mynextmove.org. There you can take an interest inventory and learn more about your career options.



Step 2

Explore Your Career Options

To help you find a career or career field that might be right for you, 1) consider careers related to the subjects you like; 2) identify the career clusters that sound interesting; and 3) consider the career fields that are in demand. Then learn all you can about the careers you'd like to know more about.

Careers by Subject Area

Choose your favorite subject and read through the list of related careers. Circle any that you'd like to learn about.

English

Administrative asst.
Advertising manager
Broadcaster
Editor
Journalist
Lawyer
Librarian
Paralegal
Reporter
Salesperson
Writer/author

The Arts

Actor/actress
Artist
Commercial artist
Composer
Dancer/choreographer
Fashion designer
Graphic artist
Illustrator
Interior designer
Landscape architect
Musician
Photographer
Sound engineer
Web developer

World Languages

Flight attendant
International business
Interpreter
Nurse
Peace Corps worker
Social worker
Teacher/professor
Tour guide
Translator
Travel agent

Math

Accountant
Actuary
Bank teller/manager
Carpenter
Computer programmer
Electrician
Engineer
Financial planner
Loan officer
Statistician
Stockbroker
Surveyor
Systems analyst
Tool and die maker
Web developer

Science

Biologist
Dentist
Engineer
Environmentalist
Medical technician
Meteorologist
Nurse
Optometrist
Paramedic/EMT
Pharmacist
Physical therapist
Physician
Veterinarian
Zoologist

Social Studies

Corrections officer
Criminologist
Geographer
Lawyer
Newscaster
Paralegal
Police officer
Politician
Psychologist
Social worker
Urban planner

Career Clusters

*Career clusters are groups of careers with similar features.
Put a ✓ in the boxes of the career clusters that sound interesting.*

- Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources:** farm, fish, and work to improve the environment
- Architecture & Construction:** design and build structures
- Arts, A/V Tech & Communication:** design, create, perform, and produce multimedia content
- Business Management & Administration:** plan, oversee, and organize a business
- Education & Training:** teach in schools, libraries, and businesses
- Finance:** manage and work with money
- Government & Public Administration:** make laws and provide public services
- Health Science:** work in healthcare treating people and animals
- Hospitality & Tourism:** work in restaurants, hotels, and casinos
- Human Services:** help people with their personal needs
- Information Technology:** work with computers and software
- Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security:** enforce laws and keep people safe
- Manufacturing:** make products using machines and tools
- Marketing:** promote and sell goods and services
- Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics:** use math and science to do research, design products, and solve problems
- Transportation, Distribution & Logistics:** transport people and goods from one place to another by car, truck, airplane, or train

For more information on career clusters,
watch this short video.



Hot Careers

When choosing a career field, be sure to consider the job outlook. Career fields that are growing provide greater opportunities.

Below are some of the careers that are most in-demand today.

Health-related careers

Clinical lab technician
Dental assistant/hygienist
Epidemiologist
Licensed practical nurse
Medical assistant
Nurse practitioner
Occupational therapist
Paramedic (EMT)
Physical therapist
Physical therapy assistant
Physician assistant
Radiologic/MRI technologist
Registered nurse
Veterinarian

High-tech/computer careers

Computer support specialist
Computer systems analyst
Database administrator
Information security analyst
Software developer
Web developer

Service-related careers

Event planner
Financial advisor
Massage therapist
Mental health counselor
Personal care/home health aide
Social worker
Taxi driver

Other hot careers

Actuary
Animal care & service worker
Athletic trainer
Chef/cook
Construction manager
Data scientist
Electrician
Forensic science technician
Marketing manager
Operations research analyst
Solar cell installer
Statistician
Wind turbine technician

Fast-growing career fields

Healthcare – *As our population ages, our healthcare needs increase.*

“Green” careers – *Interest in protecting the environment makes this a growing career field.*

STEM careers – *Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math careers – Many of the fastest-growing careers are in these four areas. For more on STEM careers, watch this short video.*



Learn All You Can

Once you've identified a career area you're interested in, take the time to learn as much as you can about the careers in that field.

Research careers

Many resources are available to help you learn about the careers you're interested in. Libraries, guidance/counseling offices, and bookstores have a variety of resources, and there's a wealth of information online.



The best resource for career information is the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*. This book provides excellent information on hundreds of careers. The information from the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* is available online at www.bls.gov/oon. On this website, you are able to learn about specific careers and/or do a search to find the careers that might be right for you.

What to look for

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

- ▶ **Tasks and responsibilities** – What does someone in this career actually do? Is this something you think you would enjoy doing every day?
- ▶ **Education and training** – What kind of education/training does this career require? Is the amount of education required something you could do? For example, to be a veterinarian, you need 7–9 years of college.
- ▶ **Pay** – What is the average starting pay? Will this pay meet your needs?
- ▶ **Work environment** – Where do people in this career field work? What are the working conditions and work schedules like?
- ▶ **Job outlook** – Is this a growing career? Will it be easy to find a job in this career? For example, our nation's healthcare needs are increasing, making healthcare a career field with lots of jobs available.

Get some related experience

The best way to learn about a career is to obtain some firsthand experience, like taking a course or getting involved in a related extracurricular activity. If you want to be a musician, play in the school band. If you want to be a programmer, take a computer or coding course.

Volunteering is also an excellent way to learn about a career field. If you're considering a career in health-care, volunteer at a hospital or clinic. If you're interested in the building trades, volunteer for Habitat for Humanity. You can also get some great firsthand experience by working at a part-time job.



Talk to people

Speak with people who are knowledgeable about the careers you're interested in. Talk to your counselor and to teachers who teach related subjects.

If possible, meet with someone who is working in a career field you're considering and ask the following questions:

- ▶ What do you do on a typical day?
- ▶ How did you prepare for your career?
- ▶ How did you get your present job?
- ▶ What qualifications and personal characteristics does someone need in order to be successful in this career?
- ▶ What do you like most about your job/career?
- ▶ What do you dislike about it?
- ▶ What courses should I take to prepare for this career?
- ▶ Is this a career field that's growing?
- ▶ Are there opportunities for advancement?
- ▶ Are there any related careers I should consider?
- ▶ Would you go into this career field again?

If possible, "job shadow" someone for a few hours. It's a great way to get an idea of what it's like to work in a specific career!



Step 3

Find a Career Match

You have completed the self-assessment process and investigated your career options. You should now be able to identify one or two career areas that might be a good match for you.

Here's how Josh found a career match for himself.

During his junior year, Josh decided that he should try to find a career that would be right for him.

Josh did a self-assessment and determined that he 1) likes "hands-on" activities; 2) loses track of time when he listens to music and when he works on his car; 3) only wants to go to school for a year or two after high school; and 4) likes math, history, and industrial arts classes. From this, Josh concluded that he should investigate careers in the skilled trades.



Josh read about a number of careers. Then he talked to his counselor, one of his teachers, and his father's mechanic. After thinking about everything he'd learned, Josh decided that he might like to be an auto mechanic. Josh also realized that he should learn more about automotive engineering technology.

If you have a career or career area you're interested in, you're ready to think about how you are going to prepare for your career. You're ready for Step 4: Investigate Ways to Prepare for Your Career.

As you explore your education choices, you may come across a career you haven't considered. Remember, choosing a career is a process. While going through each step of this process, keep an open mind and continue to learn as much as you can about yourself, the careers you're investigating, and the education/training programs that are available to you.

No career path is permanent

It's important to understand that no career path is permanent or irreversible. In fact, most people change careers several times during their lives. Make your career and education choices based on who you are today, but know that you can always pursue a different career path in the future.



Step 4

Learn How to Prepare for a Career

Most careers require education and/or training beyond a general high school education. Some careers require two or four years of college; others require only one year of training. In many cases, your career choice will determine which education option is best for you.

Two-Year 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.



Four-Year Colleges

A four-year college education can open doors and prepare students for financially rewarding careers. While all colleges hope to attract bright, well-prepared students, colleges vary greatly in their size, costs, admission requirements, and in the majors they offer. Students who want to go to a four-year college should take college prep courses in high school and try to earn the best grades possible.

Career and Trade Schools

Career and trade schools offer training in a wide variety of career fields. Some programs last only a few weeks; others take up to two years.

The Military

As the nation's largest employer, the military offers enlistees a salary, benefits, and free job training in over 2,000 careers.

Apprenticeships

Students who prefer a hands-on approach to learning may want to consider an apprenticeship program. Apprentices learn their trade through a combination of classroom instruction and on-the-job training.



Step 5

Create a Career Plan

You have identified a career or career field that would be a good fit for you, and you've learned about your educational choices. You are now ready to make a career plan.

To create a career plan, state your career goal, and then list the things you need to do to reach your goal. (It's a good idea to also make a "back-up plan.") Here is an example of one high school junior's career plan.

Sophia's Career Plan



My career goal is to become a paralegal.

To reach my career goal, I will:

- ▶ choose courses for my senior year that will help prepare me for the paralegal program at City Community College.
- ▶ find a summer job in an office to get some related work experience.
- ▶ apply to City Community College in the fall of my senior year.
- ▶ complete the FAFSA my senior year.
- ▶ live at home and attend college as a full-time student.
- ▶ complete the paralegal program in two years with an A/B average.
- ▶ work with the college's job placement office during my last semester.
- ▶ start my career as a paralegal as soon as I get my associate degree.

Final Words

Sometimes when people are confused about what to do, they do nothing. They decide to wait and see what "comes along." These people later realize that doing nothing is in itself a choice.

Things happen for people who make them happen. Take control of your life, make a plan, and work hard. You are sure to find both happiness and success!

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a career path that's right for you!

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