



MAKING CAREER CHOICES

A career differs from a job in that it is a series of progressively more responsible jobs in one field or a related field. You will need to learn some special skills to choose a career and to help you in your job search. Choosing a career and identifying career opportunities require careful thought and preparation.

STEPS TO MAKING A CAREER DECISION

The *Career Plan Project Workbook* is available at this book's Online Learning Center at glencoe.com. It provides information and worksheets that can help you develop the essential elements of a career plan. You can use this workbook to explore the three core areas of career decision making: self-assessment, career exploration, and goal setting. Then you can follow step-by-step directions to create your own career plan. These are the five basic steps to making a career decision:

1. Create a self-profile with these headings: lifestyle goals, values, interests, aptitudes, skills and abilities, personality traits, learning styles. Fill in information about yourself.
2. Identify possible career choices based on your self-assessment.
3. Gather information on each choice, including future trends.
4. Evaluate your choices based on your self-assessment.
5. Make your decision.

After you make your decision, create a career plan that explains how you will reach your goal. Include short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals. In making your choices, explore the future opportunities in this field or fields over the next several years. What impact will new technology and automation have on job opportunities in a rapidly evolving workplace environment? Remember, if you plan, you make your own career opportunities.



COLLEGE AND CAREER PORTFOLIO

A college and career portfolio is a collection of information about a person, including documents, projects, and work samples that show a person's skills, talents, and qualifications. It includes information needed for a job search or to apply for college. Turn to the end of this Career Skills Handbook for more information and instructions for creating your own college and career portfolio.



CAREER RESEARCH RESOURCES

In order to gather information on various career opportunities, there are a variety of sources to research:

- **Libraries.** Your school or public library offers books, magazines, pamphlets, videos, and other print, online, and multimedia reference materials on careers. The U.S. Department of Labor publishes the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT)*, which describes about 20,000 jobs and their relationships with data, people, and things; the *Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH)*, with information on more than 200 occupations; and the *Guide for Occupational Exploration (GOE)*, a reference that organizes the world of work into interest areas that are subdivided into work groups and subgroups.
- **The Internet.** The Internet is a primary source of research on any topic. It is especially helpful in researching careers.
- **Career Consultations.** Career consultation, an informational interview with a professional who works in a career that interests you, provides an opportunity to learn about the realities of a career.
- **On-the-Job Experience.** On-the-job experience can be valuable in learning firsthand about a job or career. You can find out if your school has a work-experience program, or look into a company or organization's internship opportunities. Interning gives you direct work experience and often allows you to make valuable contacts.



THE JOB SEARCH

To aid you in your actual job search, there are various sources to explore. You should contact and research all the sources that might produce a job lead, or information about a job. Keep a contact list as you proceed with your search. Some job search resources include:

- **Networking with family, friends, and acquaintances.** This means contacting people you know personally, including school counselors, former employers, and professional people.
- **Cooperative education and work-experience programs.** Many schools have programs in which students work part-time on a job related to one of their classes. Many also offer work-experience programs that are not limited to just one career area, such as marketing.
- **Newspaper ads.** Reading the Help Wanted advertisements in your local papers will provide a source of job leads, as well as teach you about the local job market.
- **Employment agencies.** Most cities have two types of employment agencies, public and private. These employment agencies match workers with jobs. Some private agencies may charge a fee, so be sure to know who is expected to pay the fee and what the fee is.
- **Company personnel offices.** Large and medium-sized companies have personnel offices to handle employment matters, including the hiring of new workers. You can check on job openings by contacting the office by telephone or by scheduling a personal visit.
- **Searching the Internet.** Cyberspace offers multiple opportunities for your job search. Many Web sites provide lists of companies offering employment. There are thousands of career-related Web sites, so find those that have jobs that interest you. Companies that interest you may have a Web site, which may provide information on their benefits and opportunities for employment.



APPLYING FOR A JOB

When you have contacted the sources of job leads and found some jobs that interest you, the next step is to apply for them. You will need to complete application forms, write letters of application, and prepare your own résumé. Before you apply for a job, you will need to have a work permit if you are under the age of 18 in most states. Some state and federal labor laws designate certain jobs as too dangerous for young workers. Laws also limit the number of hours of work allowed during a day, a week, or the school year. You will also need to have proper documentation, such as a green card if you are not a U.S. citizen.

JOB APPLICATION

You can obtain the job application form directly at the place of business, by requesting it in writing, or over the Internet. It is best if you can fill the form out at home, but some businesses require that you fill it out at the place of work.

Fill out the job application forms neatly and accurately, using standard English, the formal style of speaking and writing you learned in school. You must be truthful and pay attention to detail in filling out the form.

PERSONAL FACT SHEET

To be sure that the answers you write on a job or college application form are accurate, make a personal fact sheet before filling out the application:

- Your name, home address, and phone number
- Your Social Security number
- The job you are applying for
- The date you can begin work
- The days and hours you can work
- The pay you want
- Whether or not you have been convicted of a crime
- Your education
- Your previous work experience
- Your birth date

- Your driver's license number if you have one
- Your interests and hobbies, and awards you have won
- Your previous work experience, including dates
- Schools you have attended
- Places you have lived
- Accommodations you may need from the employer
- A list of references—people who will tell an employer that you will do a good job, such as relatives, students, former employers.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Letters of recommendation are helpful. You can request teachers, counselors, relatives, and other acquaintances who know you well to write these letters. They should be short, to the point, and give a brief overview of your important accomplishments or projects. The letter should describe your character and work ethic.

LETTER OF APPLICATION

Some employees prefer a letter of application, rather than an application form. This letter is like writing a sales pitch about yourself. You need to tell why you are the best person for the job, what special qualifications you have, and include all the information usually found on an application form. Write the letter in standard English, making certain that it is neat, accurate, and correct.

RÉSUMÉ

The purpose of a résumé is to make an employer want to interview you. A résumé tells prospective employers what you are like and what you can do for them. A good résumé summarizes you at your best in a one- or two-page outline. It should include the following information:

- 1. Identification.** Include your name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address.
- 2. Objective.** Indicate the type of job you are looking for.
- 3. Experience.** List experience related to the specific job for which you are applying. List other work if you have not worked in a related field.

4. Education. Include schools attended from high school on, the dates of attendance, and diplomas, degrees, licenses, or certifications earned. A professional certification is a designation earned by a person to assure qualification to perform a job or task. You may also include courses you are taking or have taken that are related to the job you are applying for.

5. References. Include up to three references or indicate that they are available. Always ask people ahead of time if they are willing to be listed as references for you.

A résumé that you put online or send by e-mail is called an electronic résumé. Some Web sites allow you to post them on their sites without charge. Employers access these sites to find new employees. Your electronic résumé should follow the guidelines for a print résumé. It needs to be accurate. Stress your skills and sell yourself to prospective employers.

COVER LETTER

If you are going to get the job you want, you need to write a great cover letter to accompany your résumé. Think of a cover letter as an introduction: a piece of paper that conveys a smile, a confident hello, and a nice, firm handshake. The cover letter is the first thing a potential employer sees, and it can make a powerful impression. The following are some tips for creating a cover letter that is professional and gets the attention you want:

- **Keep it short.** Your cover letter should be one page, no more.
- **Make it look professional.** Key your letter on a computer and print it on a laser printer. Use white or buff-colored paper. Key your name, address, phone number, and e-mail address at the top of the page.
- **Explain why you are writing.** Start your letter with one sentence describing where you heard of the opening. "Joan Wright suggested I contact you regarding a position in your marketing department," or "I am writing to apply for the position you advertised in the Sun City Journal."

- **Introduce yourself.** Give a short description of your professional abilities and background. Refer to your attached résumé: “As you will see in the attached résumé, I am an experienced editor with a background in newspapers, magazines, and textbooks.” Then highlight one or two specific accomplishments.
- **Sell yourself.** Your cover letter should leave the reader thinking, “This person is exactly who we are looking for.” Focus on what you can do for the company. Relate your skills to the skills and responsibilities mentioned in the job listing. If the ad mentions solving problems, relate a problem you solved at school or work. If the ad mentions specific skills or knowledge required, mention your mastery of these in your letter. (Also be sure these skills are included on your résumé.)
- **Provide all requested information.** If the Help Wanted ad asked for “salary requirements” or “salary history,” include this information in your cover letter. However, you do not have to give specific numbers. It is okay to say, “My wage is in the range of \$10 to \$15 per hour.” If the employer does not ask for salary information, do not offer any.
- **Ask for an interview.** You have sold yourself, now wrap it up. Be confident, but not pushy. “If I would be an asset to your company, please call me at [insert your phone number]. I am available for an interview at your convenience.” Finally, thank the person. “Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.” Always close with a “Sincerely,” followed by your full name and signature.
- **Check for errors.** Read and re-read your letter to make sure each sentence is correctly worded and there are no errors in spelling, punctuation, or grammar. Do not rely on your computer’s spell checker or grammar checker. A spell check will not detect if you keyed “tot he” instead of “to the.” It is a good idea to have someone else read your letter, too. He or she might notice an error you overlooked.

INTERVIEW

Understanding how to prepare for and follow up on interviews is critical to your career success. At different times in your life, you may interview with a teacher or professor, a prospective employer, a supervisor, or a promotion or tenure committee. Just as having an excellent résumé is vital for opening the door, interview skills are critical for putting your best foot forward and seizing the opportunity to articulate why you are the best person for the job.

RESEARCH THE COMPANY

Your ability to convince an employer that you understand and are interested in the field you are interviewing to enter is important. Show that you have knowledge about the company and the industry. What products or services does the company offer? How is it doing? What is the competition? Use your research to demonstrate your understanding of the company.

PREPARE QUESTIONS FOR THE INTERVIEWER

Prepare interview questions to ask the interviewer. Some examples include:

- “What would my responsibilities be?”
- “Could you describe my work environment?”
- “What are the chances to move up in the company?”
- “Do you offer training?”
- “What can you tell me about the people who work here?”

DRESS APPROPRIATELY

Nonverbal communication is 90 percent of communication, so dressing appropriately is of the utmost importance. Wear clothing that is appropriate for the job for which you are applying. In most situations, you will be safe if you wear clean, pressed, conservative business clothes in neutral colors. Pay special attention to grooming. Keep makeup light and wear very little jewelry. Make certain your nails and hair are clean, trimmed, and neat. Do not carry a large purse, backpack, books, or coat. Simply carry a pad of paper, a pen, and extra copies of your résumé and letters of reference.

EXHIBIT GOOD BEHAVIOR

Conduct yourself properly during an interview. Go alone; be courteous and polite to everyone you meet. Relax and focus on your purpose: to make the best possible impression.

- Be on time.
- Be poised and relaxed.
- Avoid nervous habits.
- Avoid littering your speech with verbal clutter such as “you know,” “um,” and “like.”
- Look your interviewer in the eye and speak with confidence.
- Use nonverbal techniques to reinforce your confidence, such as a firm handshake and poised demeanor.
- Convey maturity by exhibiting the ability to tolerate differences of opinion.
- Never call anyone by a first name unless you are asked to do so.
- Know the name, title, and the pronunciation of the interviewer’s name.
- Do not sit down until the interviewer does.
- Do not talk too much about your personal life.
- Never bad-mouth your former employers.

BE PREPARED FOR COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

You can never be sure exactly what will happen at an interview, but you can be prepared for common interview questions. There are some interview questions that are illegal. Interviewers should not ask you about your age, gender, color, race, or religion. Employers should not ask whether you are a parent, married or pregnant, or question your health or disabilities.

Take time to think about your answers now. You might even write them down to clarify your thinking. The key to all interview questions is to be honest, and to be positive. Focus your answers on skills and abilities that apply to the job you are seeking. Practice answering the following questions with a friend:

- “Tell me about yourself.”
- “Why do you want to work at this company?”

- “What did you like/dislike about your last job?”
- “What is your biggest accomplishment?”
- “What is your greatest strength?”
- “What is your greatest weakness?”
- “Do you prefer to work with others or on your own?”
- “What are your career goals?” or “Where do you see yourself in five years?”
- “Tell me about a time that you had a lot of work to do in a short time. How did you manage the situation?”
- “Have you ever had to work closely with a person you didn’t get along with? How did you handle the situation?”



AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Be sure to thank the interviewer after the interview for his or her time and effort. Do not forget to follow up after the interview. Ask, “What is the next step?” If you are told to call in a few days, wait two or three days before calling back.

If the interview went well, the employer may call you to offer you the job. Find out the terms of the job offer, including job title and pay. Decide whether you want the job. If you decide not to accept the job, write a letter of rejection. Be courteous and thank the person for the opportunity and the offer. You may wish to give a brief general reason for not accepting the job. Leave the door open for possible employment in the future.

FOLLOW UP WITH A LETTER

Write a thank-you letter as soon as the interview is over. This shows your good manners, interest, and enthusiasm for the job. It also shows that you are organized. Make the letter neat and courteous. Thank the interviewer. Sell yourself again.

ACCEPTING A NEW JOB

If you decide to take the job, write a letter of acceptance. The letter should include some words of appreciation for the opportunity, written acceptance of the job offer, the terms of employment (salary, hours, benefits), and the starting date. Make sure the letter is neat and correct.



STARTING A NEW JOB

Your first day of work will be busy. Determine what the dress code is and dress appropriately. Learn to do each task assigned properly. Ask for help when you need it. Learn the rules and regulations of the workplace.

You will do some paperwork on your first day. Bring your personal fact sheet with you. You will need to fill out some forms. Form W-4 tells your employer how much money to withhold for taxes. You may also need to fill out Form I-9. This shows that you are allowed to work in the United States. You will need your Social Security number and proof that you are allowed to work in the United States. You can bring your U.S. passport, your Certificate of Naturalization, or your Certificate of U.S. Citizenship. If you are not a permanent resident of the United States, bring your green card. If you are a resident of the United States, you will need to bring your work permit on your first day. If you are under the age of 16 in some states, you need a different kind of work permit.

You might be requested to take a drug test as a requirement for employment in some states. This could be for the safety of you and your coworkers, especially when working with machinery or other equipment.

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

You will need employability skills to succeed in a rapidly evolving workplace environment. These skills include personal and interpersonal skills, such as functioning effectively as part of a team and demonstrating leadership skills, no matter what position you are in. There are also certain qualities and behaviors that are needed to be a good employee.

- Attend work regularly.
- Be prompt.
- Make the most productive use of your time.
- Be cooperative, responsible, and honest.
- Obey company rules.
- Have a positive attitude.
- Show enthusiasm and pride.
- Tolerate differences.
- Be open-minded.

- Show respect.
- Be flexible.
- Take initiative.
- Be willing to learn new skills.
- Listen attentively.
- Use an appropriate voice.
- Demonstrate planning and time-management skills.
- Keep your workplace clean and safe.
- Understand the legal and ethical responsibilities related to your job.
- Understand the relationship between health and achievement.
- Understand and avoid the implications of substance abuse.

LEAVING A JOB

If you are considering leaving your job or are being laid off, you are facing one of the most difficult aspects in your career. The first step in resigning is to prepare a short resignation letter to offer your supervisor at the conclusion of the meeting you set up with him or her. Keep the letter short and to the point. Express your appreciation for the opportunity you had with the company. Do not try to list all that was wrong with the job.

You want to leave on good terms. Do not forget to ask for a reference. Do not talk about your employer or any of your coworkers. Do not talk negatively about your employer when you apply for a new job.

If you are being laid off or face downsizing, it can make you feel angry or depressed. Try to view it as a career-change opportunity. If possible, negotiate a good severance package. Find out about any benefits you may be entitled to. Perhaps the company will offer services for finding new employment.



TAKE ACTION!

It is time for action. Remember the networking and contact lists you created when you searched for this job. Reach out for support from friends, family, and other acquaintances. Consider joining a job-search club. Assess your skills. Upgrade them if necessary. Examine your attitude and your career choices. Decide the direction you wish to take and move on!



BUILD YOUR COLLEGE AND CAREER PORTFOLIO

A college and career portfolio is a collection of information about a person, including documents, projects, and work samples that showcase a person's academic and professional skills, talents, accomplishments, and qualifications. It includes the information needed for a job search or for applying for college. Your portfolio can be a paper portfolio in a folder, a digital portfolio with electronic files, or a combination of both. You can use your college and career portfolio throughout your life to keep track of your academic and career goals and accomplishments.

- **Personal Fact Sheet** When you apply for a job, you will probably fill out an application that asks for information that may not be on your résumé. For that reason you should include a personal fact sheet in your college and career portfolio. Include all of the items listed on pages 426–427.
- **Evaluate Yourself** The information you know about yourself can help you choose a career that is right for you. Update your self evaluation periodically to make sure you are on the right path.
- **Conduct Career Research** Create a section for your portfolio called Career Research. Include information about career clusters and careers that interest you and sources of information you find helpful. Also include notes from career interviews and career evaluations. Update the Career Research section of your portfolio as you continue to explore your career options.
- **Prepare a Career Plan** After you have made a career decision, you can make a career plan. Create a section for your portfolio called career plan. Your first step in making your career plan is setting a career goal. Then you can set the short-term goals, medium-term goals, and long-term goals that will lead you to your career goal. Include goals related to education or training and other experiential learning. Review, update, or create new career plans as you continue to explore your career options.
- **Résumé and Cover Letter** Your college and career portfolio should include your résumé and a sample cover letter that you can use when following up job leads. When you find a job that interests you, note the qualifications required. Then customize your cover letter and résumé so that they are tailored to the job. Relate the skills you have to the skills required for the job.
- **Develop References** You should supply references when you apply for a job. You may also need them when applying for college. Include a list of your references in your college and career portfolio. Include each person's name, title and company, address, phone number, and e-mail address. If your references will provide written letters of reference, include copies in your portfolio. People to ask include former managers, teachers, counselors, or other trusted adults in the community who can comment on your reliability and attitude.
- **Showcase Your Technology Skills** The best way to show an employer what you know about technology is by demonstrating your technology skills! As you research the career that interests you, take note of the hardware, software, and other technology tools that are current in the field. Then, learn to use the technologies and include examples that show your mastery of these tools in your college and career portfolio. Include a list of hardware and software that you know how to use.
- **Awards, Honors, and Certifications** If you have received awards or honors, include any relevant information about them in your college and career portfolio. Also, if you have any licenses or certifications related to your continuing education or job search, also include these in your portfolio.

REVIEW KEY CONCEPTS

1. What are the five steps to making a career decision?
2. What three types of goals should a career plan include?
3. Why is a personal fact sheet useful?
4. What are employability skills?
5. What is the role of professional certifications in a career search?
6. What is the role of a career and college portfolio?
7. What are the functions of résumés and portfolios?
8. Why is it important to demonstrate leadership skills?
9. What are five positive work qualities?
10. What are three questions you should be prepared to answer in a job interview?

CRITICAL THINKING

11. Compare and contrast the role of a résumé and a cover letter.
12. Analyze why your career choice might change as you get older.
13. Predict the consequences of choosing a career that conflicts with your personal values.
14. Evaluate how tracking employment trends and technology trends can help you manage your own career.
15. Explain why you think it is important to think critically, demonstrate strong communication skills, and function effectively as part of a team in order to be successful in the workplace.
16. Analyze the importance of time management and project management skills in your chosen career field. Explain your answer.

CHALLENGE YOURSELF!

17. Imagine that you have been asked to work on a project team either at school or where you work.
 - Think about the leadership and teamwork skills that you would need to be a successful member of the project team.
 - Demonstrate your knowledge of leadership and teamwork skills by creating a checklist that outlines what these skills are.
 - Work with a partner to identify how you would demonstrate these skills and behaviors in a work or school environment. Relate the skills to the “Employability Skills” section elsewhere in this handbook. For example, offering to perform a task that another team member cannot complete may demonstrate initiative and support for a fellow team member.
18. Research careers of personal interest to you. Look at career Web sites to find job opportunities and accompanying duties.
 - Find out what type of education, certification, job training, and experience are required to meet your career goals.
 - Create a five-year plan that breaks down your goals.
 - What do you need to do now in order to meet your goals? What will you need to do next year? How will you assess your progress?



Go Online e-RESOURCES

glencoe.com

Go to the **Online Learning Center** to find career resources, including information about résumés, portfolios, and interview and workplace tips. Use the *Career Plan Project Workbook* to help you create a career plan.