

## 5.2.16: Stages of Career Development

### Learning Objectives

- Describe the stages of career development

Career experts say that people will change careers (not to mention jobs) five to seven times in a lifetime, so your career will likely not be a straight and narrow path. Be sure to set goals and assess your interests, skills, and values often.

In thinking about the values one finds in a career, there is the value of what the outcome is and the value of the way it is achieved. In searching for the right career, the employer match is better when both are aligned.

Various experts break down the broad phases of a career with different labels. Let's start with this interview with Brian Fetherstonhaugh from *Forbes* magazine. It helps us start to think about what phase of a career we are in while offering a reminder of how we will help others with their progression.

A link to an interactive elements can be found at the bottom of this page.

To pull career development in for closer examination, here are some more bite-size thoughts about the stages of a career. This is good to think about as we examine how to best benefit from the first growing stage of choosing a career.

See if you can remember a time in your childhood when you noticed somebody doing professional work. Maybe a nurse or doctor, dressed in a lab coat, was listening to your heartbeat. Maybe a worker at a construction site, decked in a hard hat, was operating noisy machinery. Maybe a cashier at the checkout line in a grocery store was busily scanning bar codes. Each day in your young life you could have seen a hundred people doing various jobs. Surely some of the experiences drew your interest and appealed to your imagination.

If you can recall any such times, those are moments from the beginning stage of your career development.

What exactly is career development? It's a lifelong process in which we become aware of, interested in, knowledgeable about, and skilled in a career. It's a key part of human development as our identities forms and our lives unfold.

There are five main stages of career development. Each stage correlates with attitudes, behaviors, and relationships we all tend to have at that point and age. As we progress through each stage and reach the milestones identified, we prepare to move on to the next one.

Which stage of career development do you feel you are in currently? Think about each stage. What challenges are you facing now? Where are you headed?

#	STAGE	DESCRIPTION
1	GROWING	This is a time in early years (4–13 years old) when you begin to have a sense about the future. You begin to realize that your participation in the world is related to being able to do certain tasks and accomplish certain goals.
2	EXPLORING	This period begins when you are a teenager, and it extends into your mid-twenties. In this stage you find that you have specific interests and aptitudes. You are aware of your inclinations to perform and learn about some subjects more than others. You may try out jobs in your community or at your school. You may begin to explore a specific career. At this stage, you have some detailed “data points” about careers, which will guide you in certain directions.

#	STAGE	DESCRIPTION
3	ESTABLISHING	This period covers your mid-twenties through mid-forties. By now you are selecting or entering a field you consider suitable, and you are exploring job opportunities that will be stable. You are also looking for upward growth, so you may be thinking about an advanced degree.
4	MAINTAINING	This stage is typical for people in their mid-forties to mid-sixties. You may be in an upward pattern of learning new skills and staying engaged. But you might also be merely “coasting and cruising” or even feeling stagnant. You may be taking stock of what you’ve accomplished and where you still want to go.
5	REINVENTING	In your mid-sixties, you are likely transitioning into retirement. But retirement in our technologically advanced world can be just the beginning of a new career or pursuit—a time when you can reinvent yourself. There are many new interests to pursue, including teaching others what you’ve learned, volunteering, starting online businesses, consulting, etc.

Keep in mind that your career-development path is personal to you, and you may not fit neatly into the categories described above. Perhaps your socioeconomic background changes how you fit into the schema. Perhaps your physical and mental abilities affect how you define the idea of a “career.” And for everyone, too, there are factors of chance that can’t be predicted or anticipated. You are unique, and your career path can only be developed by you.

## Career Support

### Career Development Office on Campus

Whether you are a student, a graduate, or even an employer, you can obtain invaluable career development assistance at your college or university. Campus career centers can support, guide, and empower you in every step of the career development process, from initial planning to achieving lifelong career satisfaction.

Many colleges open their career centers to current students or alumni.

### Books on Career Development

Going to college or taking courses for a certificate program is one of the best steps you can take to prepare for a career. But soon-to-be or recently graduated students are not necessarily guaranteed jobs. Staying educated about strategies for developing your career and finding new jobs will help you manage ongoing transitions. The book *The Secret to Getting a Job After College: Marketing Tactics to Turn Degrees into Dollars*, by Larry Chiagouris, was written specifically to help recent grads increase their chances of finding a job right after college. It speaks to students in all majors and provides tips and tactics to attract the attention of an employer and successfully compete with other candidates to get the job you want.

The following video provides an introduction to the book. You can [download a transcript of the video here](#).

A link to an interactive elements can be found at the bottom of this page.

## Career Roadmap

You can use the [Career Roadmap, from DePaul University](#), to evaluate where you are and where you want to be in your career/careers. It can help you decide if you want to change career paths and can guide you in searching for a new job. The road map identifies the following four cyclical steps:

1. Know yourself
2. Explore and choose options
3. Gain knowledge and experience
4. Put it all together: the job search process

## Internet Sites for Career Planning

There are many excellent, free resources available.

Visit the [Internet Sites for Career Planning](#) Web site at the National Career Development Association's site. You will find extensive, definitive, and frequently updated information on a wealth of topics there. What is fun and helpful are the number of self-assessment activities offered.

## Paid Agencies

As with all tasks in life, one may always pay a career placement firm or counselor for advice and support. These services will take time to evaluate and then require payment. In many instances, the same answers may be obtained from the other options listed here.

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