

CAREER/LIFE PLANNING AND PERSONAL EXPLORATION



Career/Life Planning and Personal Exploration

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About this Book

Career/Life Planning and Personal Exploration is designed to cover theories and concepts of values, interests, skills and personality as applied to the career/life planning process and its application to labor market trends. Short/long term career/life plans will be developed. Students will develop an awareness of diversity and its relationship to psychological, sociological and physiological forces within the workplace.

This course will take you through the exploration process in three themes:

Theme 1: *Identifying Your Career Profile* – this first phase will guide you through a self-assessment of your values, interests, personality, skills and lifestyle to examine your fit within different career options. (Chapters 1-4)

Theme 2: *Exploring Career Options* – this second phase will show you ways to research career information labor market trends. (Chapter 5)

Theme 3: *Creating Your Game Plan* – this final phase will help you make decisions and plan for action steps toward your future career. (Chapter 6-10)

Course Objectives

These are topics we will explore, discuss, and review throughout the course of the semester.

1. Career Development: Analyze theory and concepts of career and life planning
2. Personal Exploration: Acquire the concept of interest, personality, skills, and values, as they relate to human growth and life stage development.
3. Career Exploration: Develop a personal profile and relate it to labor market trends and resources.
4. Career Information: Analyze and clarify intrinsic and extrinsic goals as they relate to personal career evaluations. Select a career option or options. Develop a life plan to achieve individual goals.
5. Career Action: Employ a decision making process to implement or review a career/life plan, including an educational plan.

Student Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Articulate their interests, values, and feelings related to their career and educational goals.
2. Assess goals and objectives by analyzing skills and values.
3. Research career paths using interest and personality inventories and computer databases.
4. Create an educational plan to achieve an Associate Degree and/or transfer goal.
5. Employ a decision-making process in creating life direction including the ability to develop short and long-term goals.
6. Design a comprehensive career project involving personal reflection and career research.

To lead into **Theme I**, watch the following video as an introduction to your self-reflection and finding career happiness.

Listen to her discussion of the following three questions:

1. *What am I good at?*
2. *What do people tell me I'm good at?*
3. *What's holding me back?*

[Three Questions to unlock your authentic career: Ashley Stahl at TEDxBerkeley](#)



Video: Ashley Stahl at TEDxBerkeley 2014: "Rethink. Redefine. Recreate." Her talk is titled "3 Questions to Unlock your Authentic Career." <https://youtu.be/vMiSf7LpFQE>

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1: Identifying Your Career Profile

- 1.1: Career Development Process
- 1.2: Goals and Motivations
- 1.3: Values and Decision Making
- 1.4: Personality, Skills, and Interests

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1.1: Career Development Process



Desire! That's the one secret of every man's career. —Johnny Carson, entertainer

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe the stages of career development, and identify the stage you are currently in
- Identify career development resources in your school, community, and beyond

Career Development

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 identity forms and our life unfolds.

Stages of Career Development

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.

Table 1.1 CAREER DEVELOPMENT STAGES

#	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.

#	STAGE	DESCRIPTION
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.
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.

Activity 1.1: IDENTIFYING Your career development STAGE

Objective:

- To identify current career development stage(s), current obstacles, and next stage of development

Instructions:

- Review the 5 Stages of Career Development listed in the table above and answer the questions below.

1. Which stage of career development do you feel you are in currently?
2. Provide the 2 descriptions you identify with the most from your career development stage.
3. What challenges are you facing now in your career development?
4. Where are you headed next in your career development path?

Career Development Resources in Your College, Community, and Beyond

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. Seek opportunities for career growth and enrichment. And take advantage of the rich set of resources available to you. Below are just a few.

Career Development Center on Campus

Whether you are a student, a graduate, or even an employer, you can obtain invaluable career development assistance at your college. 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. Visit the Career Development/Career Technical Education (CTE) Student Success Center at Santa Ana College in room L-222. There you can work with career staff to explore your personality type and career paths; you can also find online resources listed on their website: <http://www.sac.edu/StudentServices/Counseling/CareerCenter/Pages/default.aspx>. As part of your career exploration, the Career/CTE Center also provides the following services:

- Access to resources on careers and training programs
- Employment Preparation Workshops (Resume, Interview, and LinkedIn)
- Undecided Majors Counseling Appointments
- Employment Services include job listings and on-campus interviews

Books on Career Development

Going to college 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 author 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](#).



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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

You will learn more about these four steps throughout this course.

Plan, Do, Check, Act

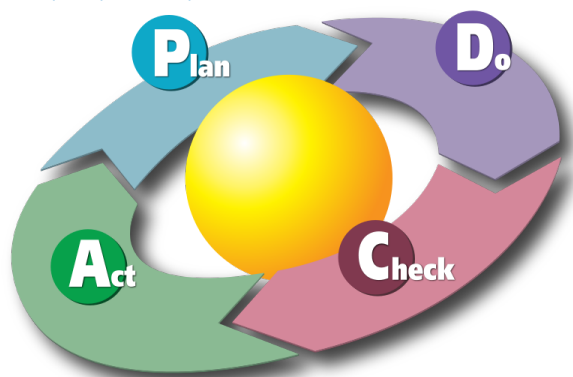


Figure 1. PDCA

PDCA (plan–do–check–act), shown in Figure 1, above, is a four-step strategy for carrying out change. You can use it to evaluate where you are in the career-development process and to identify your next steps. The strategy is typically used in the business arena as a framework for improving processes and services. But you can think of your career as a personal product you are offering or selling.

1. **PLAN:** What are your goals and objectives? What process will you use to get to your targets? You might want to plan smaller to begin with and test out possible effects. For instance, if you are thinking of getting into a certain career, you might plan to try it out first as an intern or volunteer or on a part-time basis. When you start on a small scale, you can test possible outcomes.
2. **DO:** Implement your plan. Sell your product—which is YOU and your skills, talents, energy, and enthusiasm. Collect data as you go along; you will need it for charting and analyzing in the Check and Act steps ahead.
3. **CHECK:** Look at your results so far. Are you happy with your job or wherever you are in the career-development process? How is your actual accomplishment measuring up next to your intentions and wishes? Look for where you may have deviated in your intended steps. For example, did you take a job in another city when your initial plans were for working closer to friends and family? What are the pros and cons? If you like, create a chart that shows you all the factors. With a chart, it will be easier to see trends over several PDCA cycles.
4. **ACT:** How should you act going forward? What changes in planning, doing, and checking do you want to take? The PDCA framework is an ongoing process. Keep planning, doing, checking, and acting. The goal is continuous improvement.

Internet Sites for Career Planning

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 the following topics: Online Employment; Self-Assessment; Career Development Process; Occupational Information; Employment Trends; Salary Information; Educational Information; Financial Aid Information; Apprenticeships and Other Alternative Training Opportunities; Job Search Instruction and Advice; Job Banks; Career Search Engines; Resources for Diverse Audiences; Resources and Services for Ex-Offenders; Resources and Services for Youth, Teen and Young Adults; Resources and Services the Older Client; Industry and Occupation Specific Information; Researching Employers; Social Networking Sites; Disabilities; Military.

Key Takeaways

- The five main stages of career development are unique for everyone and correlate with attitudes, behaviors, and relationships we all experience at certain points and ages in our lives.
- Since it's common for people to change careers five to seven times in a lifetime, it's important to set goals and examine your skills, interests, and values often.
- There are many career development resources available to you on campus, online, and beyond to assist you in identifying strategies and steps to creating a career path that works for you.

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1.2: Goals and Motivations

GOAL SETTING



If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.

–Henry David Thoreau

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain how time management plays a factor in goal setting, leading to short-term, medium-term, and long-term objectives.
- Identify your specific short, medium, and long-term goals.
- Identify and apply motivational strategies to support goal achievement.
- Explore the social aspects of achieving goals (networking, social media, etc.).
- Brainstorm factors that might hinder goal achievement and possible ways to address these issues.

Time Management and Goal Setting

There is no doubt that doing well in college is a sizable challenge. Every semester you have to adjust to new class schedules, instructors, classmates as well as learning objectives and requirements for each course. Along with that, you may be juggling school with work, family responsibilities, and social events. Do you feel confident that you can attend to all of them in a balanced, committed way? What will be your secret of success?

Success Begins with Goals

A *goal* is a desired result that you envision and then plan and commit to achieve. Goals can relate to family, education, career, wellness, spirituality, and many other areas of your life. Generally, goals are associated with finite time expectations, even deadlines.

As a college student, many of your goals are defined for you. For example, you must take certain courses, you must comply with certain terms and schedules, and you must turn in assignments at specified times. These goals are mostly set for you by someone else.

But there are plenty of goals for you to define yourself. For example, you decide what you would like to major in. You decide how long you are going to be in college or what terms you want to enroll in. You largely plan how you would like your studies to relate to employment and your career.

Goals can also be sidetracked. Consider the following scenario in which a student makes a discovery that challenges her to reexamine her goals, priorities, and timetables:

Janine had thought she would be an accountant, even though she knew little about what an accounting job might entail. Her math and organizational skills were strong, and she enjoyed taking economics courses as well as other courses in her accounting program. But when one of her courses required her to spend time in an accounting office working with taxes, she decided that accounting was not the right fit for her, due to the higher-stress environment and the late hours.

At first she was concerned that she invested time and money in a career path that was not a good fit. She feared that changing her major would add to her graduation time. Nevertheless, she did decide to change her major and her career focus.

Janine is now a statistician with a regional healthcare system. She is very happy with her work. Changing her major from accounting to statistics was the right decision for her.

This scenario represents some of the many opportunities we have, on an ongoing basis, to assess our relationship to our goals, reevaluate priorities, and adjust. Opportunities exist every day—every moment, really!

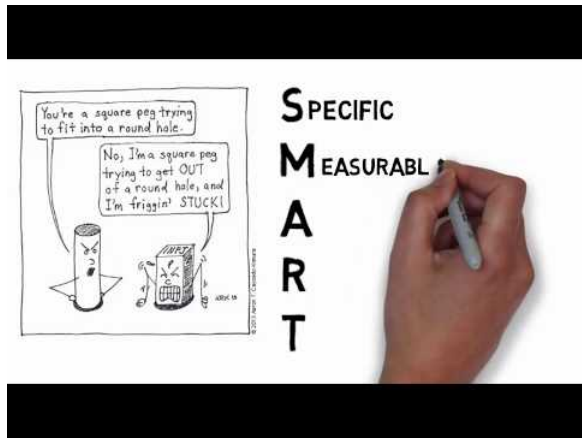
Below is a set of questions we can ask ourselves at any turn to help focus on personal goals:

1. What are my top-priority goals?
2. Which of my skills and interests make my goals realistic for me?
3. What makes my goals believable and possible?
4. Are my goals measurable? How long will it take me to reach them? How will I know if I have achieved them?
5. Are my goals flexible? What will I do if I experience a setback?
6. Are my goal controllable? Can I achieve them on my own?
7. Are my goals in sync with my values?

As you move through your college career, make a point to ask these questions regularly.

Aids to Successful Goal Setting

Watch the following overview of SMART goals – a memory aid in setting and evaluating goals to ensure that they are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time bound. After watching the video, complete Activity 2.1.



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <http://pb.libretexts.org/career/?p=28>

Activity 2.1: Identifying Your Goals

In order to achieve **long-term goals** (from college on), you will need to first achieve a series of shorter goals. **Medium-term goals** (this year and while in college) and **short-term goals** (today, this week, and this month) may take several days, weeks, months, or even a few years to complete, depending on your ultimate long-term goals. Complete the following **Goals Activity** to identify short and medium-term goals that will help you achieve your long-term goal.

Objectives

1. Identify 1 long-term academic or career goal.
2. Identify two related medium-term and two related short-term goals that will help you achieve your long-term goal.
3. Identify specific, measurable, achievable, relevant activities to achieve your identified goals by a certain timeframe.

Instructions

- Review the worksheet below, and fill in the blank sections to the best of your ability.

Guidelines

- *Phrase goals as positive statements:* Affirm your excitement and enthusiasm about attaining a goal by using positive language and expectations.
- *Be exact:* Set a precise goal that includes dates, times, and amounts, so that you have a basis for measuring your progress.

- *Prioritize*: Select your top goals, and put them in order of importance. This helps you understand the degree to which you value each of them. It will also help you better manage related tasks and not feel overwhelmed.
- *Take the lead*: Identify goals that are linked to your own performance, not dependent on the actions of other people or situations beyond your control.
- *Be realistic but optimistic and ambitious*: The goals you set should be achievable, but sometimes it pays to reach a little higher than what you may think is possible. Certainly don't set your goals too low.
- *Be hopeful, excited, and committed*: Your enthusiasm and perseverance can open many doors!

GOAL PRIORITIES	MY PRECISE GOALS	WHAT I AM DOING NOW TO ACHIEVE THESE GOALS
Example: Long-term goal	I plan to graduate with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. My major will be Radio-Television-Film, and my minor will be Spanish	I am attending the college of my choice and getting good grades in my major.
Example: Related medium-term goal	I would like to study abroad in Spain before I graduate.	I need to get busy with this! I will inquire this week about what I need to do next.
Example: Related short-term goal	I will need to get financial aid for at least a portion of my studies.	I have filled out the forms for financial aid. Last week I applied for a part-time job.
Identify your Long-term goal		
Identify a related medium-term goal #1		
Identify a related medium-term goal #2		
Identify a related short-term goal #1		
Identify a related short-term goal #2		

Motivational Strategies to Support You

Every day we make choices. Some are as simple as what clothes we decide to wear, what to eat for lunch, or how long to study for a test. But what about life-altering choices—the ones that leave us at a crossroads? How much thought do you give to taking Path A versus Path B? Do you like to plan and schedule your choices, by making a list of pros and cons, for instance? Or do you prefer to make decisions spontaneously and just play the cards that life deals you as they come?

The videos that follow are about choices for success. The first video introduces you to “growth mindset” by Carol Dweck and the second video discusses “grit” quality by Angela Duckworth. Watch them with a keen eye and ear. Take notes, too. You might pick up some good ideas for strategies that can help you reach your goals.

The power of “yet” by Carol Dweck

Carol Dweck is a professor at Stanford and the author of *Mindset*, a classic work on motivation and “growth mindset.” Her work is influential among educators and increasingly among business leaders as well. She researches “growth mindset” — the idea that we can grow our brain’s capacity to learn and to solve problems. In this talk, she describes two ways to think about a problem that’s slightly too hard for you to solve. Are you not smart enough to solve it ... or have you just not solved it yet?

https://www.ted.com/talks/carol_dweck_the_power_of_believing_that_you_can_improve

Passion and Perseverance or “Grit” by Angela Duckworth

Leaving a high-flying job in consulting, Angela Lee Duckworth took a job teaching math to seventh graders in a New York public school. She quickly realized that IQ wasn’t the only thing separating the successful students from those who struggled. Here, she explains her theory of “grit” as a predictor of success.

https://www.ted.com/talks/angela_lee_duckworth_grit_the_power_of_passion_and_perseverance

After watching the videos, reflect on how you can improve the ways you currently set goals to allow you the opportunity to apply “grit” and use your “growth mindset” in order to successfully accomplish your goals.

Social Aspects of Achieving Your Goals

Setting goals can be a challenge, but working toward them, once you’ve set them, can be an even greater challenge—often because it implies that you will be making changes in your life. You might be creating new directions of thought or establishing new patterns of behavior, discarding old habits or starting new ones. Change will always be the essence of achieving your goals.

You may find that as you navigate this path of change, one of your best resources is your social network. Your family, friends, roommates, coworkers, and others can help you maintain a steady focus on your goals. They can encourage and cheer you on, offer guidance when needed, share knowledge and wisdom they’ve gained, and possibly partner with you in working toward shared goals and ambitions. Your social network is a gold mine of support.

Here are some easy ways you can tap into goal-supporting “people power”:

- Make new friends
- Study with friends
- Actively engage with the college community
- Volunteer to help others
- Join student organizations
- Get an internship
- Work for a company related to your curriculum
- Stay connected via social media (but use it judiciously)*
- Keep a positive attitude
- Congratulate yourself on all you’ve done to get where you are

*A note about social media: More than 98 percent of college-age students use social media, says Experian Simmons. Twenty-seven percent of those students spent more than six hours a week on social media (UCLA, 2014). The University of Missouri, though, indicates in a 2015 study that this level of use may be problematic. It can lead to symptoms of envy, anxiety, and depression. Still, disconnecting from social media may have a negative impact, too, and further affect a student’s anxiety level.

Is there a healthy balance? If you feel overly attached to social media, you may find immediate and tangible benefit in cutting back. By tapering your use, you can devote more time to achieving your goals. You can also gain a sense of freedom and more excitement about working toward your goals.

Dealing with Setbacks and Obstacles

At times, unexpected events and challenges can get in the way of best-laid plans. For example, you might get sick or injured or need to deal with a family issue or a financial crisis. Earlier in this section we considered a scenario in which a student realized she needed to change her major and her career plans. Such upsets, whether minor or major, may trigger a need to take some time off from school—perhaps a term or a year. Your priorities may shift. You may need to reevaluate your goals.

Problem-Solving Strategies

Below is a simple list of four problem-solving strategies. They can be applied to any aspect of your life.

1. What is the problem? Define it in detail. How is it affecting me and other people?
2. How are other people dealing with this problem? Are they adjusting their time management skills? Can they still complete responsibilities, and on time?
3. What is my range of possible solutions? Are solutions realistic? How might these solutions help me reach my goal/s?
4. What do I need to do to implement solutions?

You may wish to also review the earlier set of questions about focusing with intention on goals.

Be confident that you can return to your intended path in time. Acknowledge the ways in which you need to regroup. Read inspiring words from people who have faced adversity and gained. Line up your resources, be resolved, and proceed with certainty toward your goals.

Key Takeaways

Success with goals (any goals—education, family, career, finances, etc.) is essentially a three-part process:

1. Identify your goals (specifically long-term, medium-term and short-term goals).
2. Set priorities to accomplish these goals.
3. Manage your time according to the priorities you have set.

By following these three straightforward steps, you can more readily achieve goals because you clearly organize the process and follow through with commitment. Focus your sights on what you want to acquire, attain, or achieve. Prioritize the steps you need to take to get there. And organize your tasks into manageable chunks and blocks of time. These are the roadways to accomplishment and fulfillment.

In the following passage from *Foundations of Academic Success: Words of Wisdom*, former political-science student Patricia Munsch—now a college counselor—reflects on how a structured, conscientious approach to decision-making and goal setting in college can lead to fulfillment and achievement.

What Do You Enjoy Studying?

There is a tremendous amount of stress placed on college students regarding their choice of major. Everyday, I meet with students regarding their concern about choosing right major; the path that will lead to a fantastic, high-paying position in a growth industry. There is a hope that one decision, your college major, will have a huge impact on the rest of your life.

Students shy away from subject areas they enjoy due to fear that such coursework will not lead to a job. I am disappointed in this approach. As a counselor I always ask—what do you enjoy studying? Based on this answer it is generally easy to choose a major or a family of majors. I recognize the incredible pressure to secure employment after graduation, but forcing yourself to choose a major that you may not have any actual interest in because a book or website mentioned the area of growth may not lead to the happiness you predict.

Working in a college setting I have the opportunity to work with students through all walks of life, and I do believe based on my experience, that choosing a major because it is listed as a growth area alone is not a good idea. Use your time in college to explore all areas of interest and utilize your campus resources to help you make connections between your joy in a subject matter and the potential career paths. Realize that for most people, in most careers, the undergraduate major does not lead to a linear career path.

As an undergraduate student I majored in Political Science, an area that I had an interest in, but I added minors in Sociology and Women's Studies as my educational pursuits broadened. Today, as a counselor, I look back on my coursework with happy memories of exploring new ideas, critically analyzing my own assumptions, and developing an appreciation of social and behavioral sciences. So to impart my wisdom in regards to a student's college major, I will always ask, what do you enjoy studying?

Once you have determined what you enjoy studying, the real work begins. Students need to seek out academic advisement. Academic advisement means many different things; it can include course selection, course completion for graduation, mapping coursework to graduation, developing opportunities within your major and mentorship.

As a student I utilized a faculty member in my department for semester course selection, and I also went to the department chairperson to organize two different internships to explore different career paths. In addition, I sought mentorship from club advisors as I questioned my career path and future goals. In my mind I had a team of people providing me support and guidance, and as a result I had a great college experience and an easy transition from school to work.

I recommend to all students that I meet with to create their own team. As a counselor I can certainly be a part of their team, but I should not be the only resource. Connect with faculty in your department or in your favorite subject. Seek out internships as you think about the transition from college to workplace. Find mentors through faculty, club advisors, or college staff. We all want to see you succeed and are happy to be a part of your journey.

As a counselor I am always shocked when students do not understand what courses they need to take, what grade point average they need to maintain, and what requirements they must fulfill in order to reach their goal—graduation! Understand that as a college student it is your responsibility to read your college catalog and meet all of the requirements for graduation from your college. I always suggest that students, starting in their first semester, outline or map out all of the courses they need to take in order to graduate. Of course you may change your mind along the way, but by setting out your plan to graduation you are forcing yourself to learn what is required of you.

I do this exercise in my classes and it is by far the most frustrating for students. They want to live in the now and they don't want to worry about next semester or next year. However, for many students that I see, the consequence of this decision is a second semester senior year filled with courses that the student avoided during all the previous semesters. If you purposefully outline each semester and the coursework for each, you can balance your schedule, understand your curriculum and feel confident that you will reach your goal.

—Dr. Patricia Munsch, *Foundations of Academic Success: Words of Wisdom*

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1.3: Values and Decision Making



When your values are clear to you, making decisions becomes easier.

Roy Disney

Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- Define your work values.
- Learn steps to a rational decision-making model.
- Understand how making decisions based on values can lead to career satisfaction.

Values

An essential part in your self discovery journey of your career exploration process is identifying what is most important to you—your values—and learn how they influence and motivate your goals. Values drive our actions and they motivate your goals. Your goals help you establish your priorities in life, guide your decision-making, and affect your evaluation of your success and happiness in life. Take time to reflect what being successful means to you. It will be different for you than for other people. Think of your values as you are thinking about becoming successful.

Values

As defined at [CareerOneStop](#), a source for employment information sponsored by the US Department of Labor:

- Values are your beliefs about what is important or desirable.
- When your values line up with how you live and work, you tend to feel more satisfied and confident.
 - Living or working in ways that contradict your values can lead to dissatisfaction, confusion, and discouragement. So there is good reason to clarify your values, and seek to match your work to them.

Identify Your Work Values

Watch the following video of the US First Lady Michelle Obama speaking to an audience of students and reminds each one to take their education seriously — and never take it for granted. Listen as she references the value of education throughout this video.



A TED element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <http://pb.libretexts.org/career/?p=30>

The best career choices are ones that match your values. So do you know what are your values are? Complete the following activity to review the work values that are most important to you.

Activity 3.1: Identify Your work Values

Complete the following three activities offered by [CareerOneStop](#) to review your work values:

1. Read about [six core work values](#) developed by the U.S. Department of Labor's O*NET program. Click on the ones that best describe you to see careers that highlight that value.
2. Do it yourself: download and print O*NET's [work values cards](#) (pdf). Cut your own cards and sort them into three piles, identifying whether each is "essential," "important," or "not important" for your career needs.
3. Take this [online assessment](#) to learn more about your own work values and related careers. This interactive assessment was developed by Virginia's Community Colleges.

After you have identified your top values, explore careers that would allow you to express your values from the following two online resources: (I) O*NET Online and (II) California Career Zone:

I. U.S. Department of Labor's O*NET Online:

O*NET OnLine is an application that was created for the general public to provide broad access to the O*NET database of occupational information. O*NET OnLine offers a variety of search options and occupational data. Go to O*NET OnLine to review the six core work values or global aspects of work that are important to a person's satisfaction. The 6 work values are: achievement, independence, recognition, relationships, support, and working conditions as you have read from Activity 3.1. Click on the ones that best describe you to see careers that highlight that value.

II. California Career Zone

Complete the [Work Interest Profiler](#) on CA Career Zone. Based on your results, you will discover how much you value achievement, independence, recognition, relationships, support, and working conditions. These are the same 6 work values listed above because it provides career exploration and planning, especially for students, from the wealth of information on 900 occupations from the O*Net database.

Making Decisions Based on Values

Decision making refers to making choices among alternative courses of action—which may also include inaction. Not all decisions in life have major consequences or even require a lot of thought. For example, before you come to class, you make simple and habitual decisions such as what to wear, what to eat, and which route to take as you go to and from home and school. You probably do not spend much time on these mundane decisions. However, decisions that are unique and important require conscious thinking, information gathering, and careful consideration of alternatives. In this case, making a decision about your future career is an important one that requires a thoughtful review of what you consider most important in life, your values. Increasing effectiveness in decision making is an important part of maximizing your effectiveness at work.

How do you normally make important decisions? Toss a coin? Take advice from trusted role-models? Or let fate decide for you? It is important to be self-aware, especially when it comes to making difficult and important life decisions. We will examine here the **rational decision-making model** which includes a series of steps that decision makers should consider to make the best choice.

Let's imagine that your old, clunky car has broken down, and you have enough money saved for a substantial down payment on a new car. It will be the first major purchase of your life, and you want to make the right choice. **The first step**, therefore, has already been completed—we know that you want to buy a new car.

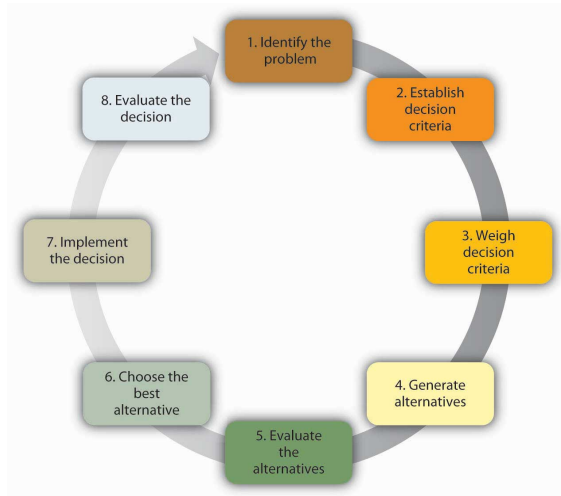
Next, in **step 2**, you'll need to decide which factors are important to you. How many passengers do you want to accommodate? How important is fuel economy to you? Is safety a major concern? You only have a certain amount of money saved, and you don't want to take on too much debt, so price range is an important factor as well. If you know you want to have room for at least five adults, get at least twenty miles per gallon, drive a car with a strong safety rating, not spend more than \$22,000 on the purchase, and like how it looks, you have identified the **decision criteria** which is a set of parameters against which all of the potential options in decision making will be evaluated. All the potential options for purchasing your car will be evaluated against these criteria.

Before we can move too much further, you need to decide how important each factor is to your decision in **step 3**. If each is equally important, then there is no need to weigh them, but if you know that price and mpg are key factors, you might weigh them heavily

and keep the other criteria with medium importance.

Step 4 requires you to generate all **alternatives** –all possible solutions to a problem in a decision-making process. Then, in **step 5**, you need to use this information to evaluate each alternative against the criteria you have established. You choose the best alternative (**step 6**), and then you would go out and buy your new car (**step 7**).

Of course, the outcome of this decision will influence the next decision made. That is where **step 8** comes in. For example, if you purchase a car and have nothing but problems with it, you will be less likely to consider the same make and model when purchasing a car the next time.



The rational decision-making model has important lessons for decision makers.

- First, when making a decision, you may want to make sure that you establish your decision criteria before you search for alternatives. This would prevent you from liking one option too much and setting your criteria accordingly. For example, let's say you started browsing cars online before you generated your decision criteria. You may come across a car that you feel reflects your sense of style and you develop an emotional bond with the car. Then, because of your love for the particular car, you may say to yourself that the fuel economy of the car and the innovative braking system are the most important criteria. After purchasing it, you may realize that the car is too small for your friends to ride in the back seat, which was something you should have thought about. Setting criteria before you search for alternatives may prevent you from making such mistakes. Another advantage of the rational model is that it urges decision makers to generate all alternatives instead of only a few. By generating a large number of alternatives that cover a wide range of possibilities, you are unlikely to make a more effective decision that does not require sacrificing one criterion for the sake of another.
- Second, despite all its benefits, you may have noticed that this decision-making model involves a number of unrealistic assumptions as well. It assumes that people completely understand the decision to be made, that they know all their available choices, that they have no perceptual biases, and that they want to make optimal decisions.
- Additionally, while decision makers can get off track during any of these steps, research shows that searching for alternatives in the fourth step can be the most challenging. Think about how you make important decisions in your life. It is likely that you rarely sit down and complete all eight of the steps in the rational decision-making model. For example, this model proposed that we should search for all possible alternatives before making a decision, but that process is time consuming, and individuals are often under time pressure to make decisions. Moreover, even if we had access to all the information that was available, it could be challenging to compare the pros and cons of each alternative and rank them according to our preferences.

Learning from these important lessons, you can use the work values you identified from Activity 3.1 as your criteria in your career exploration. This will help you focus on what is most important to you so that you can choose a career that will help you feel fulfilled and satisfied. Once you decide on a career, your decision will help guide the goals you set for yourself from your college education to your future career. For help to stay on track in this journey, you can seek assistance from the information and resources you learn in this class as well as counselors and career staff at the college to guide your search. To get started in practicing your decision-making skill, you can try this next activity from California Career Café, a virtual career center for California community college students.

Activity 3.2: Thinking Caps

Try the following decision-making exercise from [California Career Café](#):



Key Takeaways

Having a clear understanding of your life and career values will help make your decisions in school and work easier.

- First, identify your values, what you find most important and essential in life.
- Second, use your values to guide your decision making in your education and career options.
- Finally, practice a decision-making process that provides you the opportunity to discover all of your choices so that you can make the best decisions based on all the options you have.

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1.4: Personality, Skills, and Interests



Every artist was first an amateur. —Ralph Waldo Emerson, author

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Understand personality preferences based on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI).
- Explore the qualities of personality types that you most identify with.
- Research job titles that matches your preferred work styles.
- List specific skills that will be necessary for your career path
- List transferable skills that will be valuable for any career path
- Identify your skills and interests according to Dr. John Holland's Occupational Themes
- Determine career paths that align with your occupational code
- Explain how to acquire necessary skills, both in and out of class, for your career goals

Now that you have reviewed the concepts of goal setting and identified values most important to you, the next part of the career development process will help you to reflect on personal preferences. By doing this, you will understand the work environment that you will naturally find a greater fit in. The career development process is all about *you*. You are a unique individual with a distinct combination of personality traits, skills, and interests, skills. Self knowledge can help you in your career decision-making process to discover careers that are the best match for you.

Personality Type

Taking the time to ensure that your personality is compatible with your career choice is extremely important. If you do not invest the time now to figure out what makes you happy and keeps you motivated everyday, you could be very unhappy in the future. But why is personality so important? Learning about your personality allows you to think about your emotions, behaviors, and ways of thinking on a day to day basis. For example, do you prefer to work alone or do you prefer to work with others? Would you be content in a career that requires that you are extremely organized and have a set schedule? Or are you the type of person that likes to have an open, flexible schedule that allows you to be spontaneous? This information will assist you in deciding which career(s) match with your personality preferences.

To review personality preferences, one of the most common tools used to understand personality preferences is based on the personality theory from Myers and Briggs. Businesses use the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI) to find out more about the personalities of their potential employees (very commonly used by police departments), some universities use the MBTI to learn more about the personalities of potential graduate students considering psychology, counseling, and social work fields, and it commonly used in couples therapy (to help both individuals in a relationship understand each other and their behaviors better).

Watch the following video to get an introduction of four facets that comprise the 16 possible personality types.



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Personality Theory: The 4 Facets

- Extroversion-Introversion (EI): *how you get your energy and where you prefer to focus your attention*
- Sensing-Intuition (SN): *how you take in information about the world around you*
- Thinking-Feeling (TF): *how you like to make decisions*
- Judging-Perceiving (JP): *how you prefer to organize your life*

Complete the following activity to identify your personality type based on your own self reflection. As part of the course requirement, you will also be taking the MBTI personality test through our career center. Please check the syllabus for instructions. You can complete the following quick activity to self identify your personality type. Then compare the results with the actual MBTI assessment to see how your results are similar and different.

Activity 4.1: What's Your Type?

Read descriptions for the four facets. Pick which is more like you.

- **E** (Extraversion) **or** **I** (Introversion)?
- **S** (Sensing) **or** **N**? (Intuition)?
- **T** (Thinking) **or** **F**? (Feeling)?
- **J** (Judging) **or** **P**? (Perceiving)?

Could be described as:

- Talkative, outgoing
- Like to be in a fast-paced environment
- Tend to work out ideas with other, think aloud
- Enjoy being the center of attention

Then you prefer

(E) Extraversion

Could be described as:

- Reserved, private
- Prefer a slower pace with time for contemplation
- Tend to think things through inside your head
- Would rather observe than be the center of attention

Then you prefer

(I) Introversion

Could be described as:

- Focus on the reality of how things are
- Pay attention to concrete facts and details
- Prefer ideas that have practical applications
- Like to describe things in a specific, literal way

Then you prefer

(S) Sensing
Could be described as:

- Make decision in an impersonal way, using logical reasoning
- Value justice, fairness
- Enjoy finding the flaws in an arguments
- Could be described as reasonable, level-headed

Then you prefer

(T) Thinking
Could be described as:

- Prefer to have matters settled
- Think rules and deadlines should be respected
- Prefer to have a detailed step-by-step instructions
- Make plans, want to know what you're getting into

Then you prefer

(J) Judging
Could be described as:

- Imagine the possibilities of how things could be
- Notice the big picture, see how everything connects
- Enjoy ideas and concepts for their own sake
- Like to be describe in a way figurative, poetic

Then you prefer

(N) Intuition
Could be described as:

- Base you decision on personal values and how our actions affect others
- Value harmony, forgiveness
- Like to please others and point out the best in people
- Could be described as warm empathetic

Then you prefer

(F) Feeling
Could be described as:

- Prefer to leave your options open
- See rules and deadlines as flexible
- Like to improvise and make things up as you go
- Are spontaneous, enjoy surprise and new situations

Then you prefer

(P)Perceiving

What is your 4-letter personality type? _ _ _ _

The following are brief descriptions of the 16 personality types from [Humanmetrics](#). Click on your personality type or a similar type to see which describes you best.

The 16 personality types

ESTJ	ISTJ	ENTJ	INTJ
ESTP	ISTP	ENTP	INTP
ESFJ	ISFJ	ENFJ	INFJ
ESFP	ISFP	ENFP	INFP

Work Styles

O*NET OnLine provides an online tool that helps you to review your personal characteristics and how they can affect how well one performs a job. This tool is available via the [Work Styles](#) search function on O*NET OnLine. You can browse O*Net data by clicking on the quality that you think best represents you including achievement, innovation, and leadership to explore the different jobs that will require the specific characteristic.

Skills

In addition to personality, skills are also important to consider in the career development process. If you lived and worked in colonial times in the United States, what skills would you need to be gainfully employed? What kind of person would your employer want you to be? And how different would your skills and aptitudes be then, compared to today?

Many industries that developed during the 1600s–1700s, such as health care, publishing, manufacturing, construction, finance, and farming, are still with us today. And the professional abilities, aptitudes, and values required in those industries are many of the same ones employers seek today.

For example, in the health care field then, just like today, employers looked for professionals with scientific insight, active listening skills, a service orientation, oral comprehension abilities, and teamwork skills. And in the financial field then, just like today, employers looked for economics and accounting skills, mathematical reasoning skills, clerical and administrative skills, and deductive reasoning.

Why is it that with the passage of time and all the changes in the work world, some skills remain unchanged (or little changed)? The answer might lie in the fact there are two main types of skills that employers look for: hard skills and soft skills.

Hard Skills & Soft Skills

- **Hard skills** are concrete or objective abilities that you learn and perhaps have mastered. They are skills you can easily quantify, like using a computer, speaking a foreign language, or operating a machine. You might earn a certificate, a college degree, or other credentials that attest to your hard-skill competencies. Obviously, because of changes in technology, the hard skills required by industries today are vastly different from those required centuries ago.
- **Soft skills**, on the other hand, are subjective skills that have changed very little over time. Such skills might pertain to the way you relate to people, or the way you think, or the ways in which you behave—for example, listening attentively, working well in groups, and speaking clearly. Soft skills are sometimes also called “**transferable skills**” because you can easily transfer them from job to job or profession to profession without much training.

What Employers Want in an Employee

Employers want individuals who have the necessary hard and soft skills to do the job well and adapt to changes in the workplace. Soft skills may be especially in demand today because employers are generally equipped to train new employees in a hard skill—by training them to use new computer software, for instance—but it’s much more difficult to teach an employee a soft skill such as developing rapport with coworkers or knowing how to manage conflict. An employer might rather hire an inexperienced worker who can pay close attention to details than an experienced worker who might cause problems on a work team.

In this section, you will look at ways of identifying and building particular hard and soft skills that will be necessary for your career path. You will also learn how to use your time and resources wisely to acquire critical skills for your career goals.

Transferable Skills for Any Career Path

Transferable (soft) skills may be used in multiple professions. They include, but are by no means limited to, skills listed below:

- Dependable and punctual (showing up on time, ready to work, not being a liability)
- Self-motivated
- Enthusiastic
- Committed
- Willing to learn (lifelong learner)
- Able to accept constructive criticism
- A good problem solver
- Strong in customer service skills
- Adaptable (willing to change and take on new challenges)
- A team player
- Positive attitude
- Strong communication skills
- Good in essential work skills (following instructions, possessing critical thinking skills, knowing limits)
- Ethical
- Safety conscious
- Honest
- Strong in time management

For more extensive exploration, visit this [checklist of transferable skills](#) from Community Employment Services in Woodstock, Ontario.

These skills are transferable because they are positive attributes that are invaluable in practically any kind of work. They also do not require much training from an employer—you have them already and take them with you wherever you go. Soft skills are a big part of your “total me” package.

So, identify the soft skills that show you off the best, and identify the ones that prospective employers are looking for. By comparing both sets, you can more directly gear your job search to your strongest professional qualities.

ACTIVITY 4.2: IDENTIFYING YOUR SKILLS

Objective:

- To self identify your Top 5 transferable (soft) skills, skills you are good at, and those skills you wish to learn or develop further.

Instructions:

1. Review the list of transferable skills list and additional checklist of transferable skills above to complete the chart below.

	Top 5 Skills I Enjoy Using	Top 5 Skills That Come Naturally	Top 5 Skills I Want to Learn
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

10 Top Skills You Need to Get a Job When You Graduate

The following video summarizes the ten top skills that the Target corporation believes will get you a job when you graduate. You can read a transcript of the video [here](#).



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Assessing Your Skills and Interests

In this section you will continue to assess your skills and your interests in more depth. Most career assessment tests created to measure skills and interests are based on the career theory developed by Dr. John Holland.

The following video provides you with an introduction to the world of work and Holland’s Occupational Themes:



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As mentioned in the video, Holland defined six categories of people based on personality, interests, and skills:

1. **Realistic:** These people describe themselves as honest, loyal, and practical. They are doers more than thinkers. They have strong mechanical, motor, and athletic abilities; like the outdoors; and prefer working with machines, tools, plants, and animals.
2. **Investigative:** These people love problem solving and analytical skills. They are intellectually stimulated and often mathematically or scientifically inclined; like to observe, learn, and evaluate; prefer working alone; and are reserved.
3. **Artistic:** These people are the “free spirits.” They are creative, emotional, intuitive, and idealistic; have a flair for communicating ideas; dislike structure and prefer working independently; and like to sing, write, act, paint, and think creatively. They are similar to the investigative type but are interested in the artistic and aesthetic aspects of things more than the scientific.
4. **Social:** These are “people” people. They are friendly and outgoing; love to help others, make a difference, or both; have strong verbal and personal skills and teaching abilities; and are less likely to engage in intellectual or physical activity.
5. **Enterprising:** These people are confident, assertive risk takers. They are sociable; enjoy speaking and leadership; like to persuade rather than guide; like to use their influence; have strong interpersonal skills; and are status conscious.
6. **Conventional:** These people are dependable, detail oriented, disciplined, precise, persistent, and practical; value order; and are good at clerical and numerical tasks. They work well with people and data, so they are good organizers, schedulers, and project managers.

ACTIVITY 4.3: What's Your Occupational Type?

Objective:

- To determine your occupational types and code

Instructions:

1. Using the descriptions above, choose the three types that most closely describe you and list them in order in the following table. Most people are combinations of two or sometimes three types.
2. Then list the specific words or attributes that you feel describe you best.
3. After determining your primary, secondary, and tertiary occupational types, take the first initial for each type, in order, to establish your occupational code.

Occupational Type	Words and Attributes That Closely Describe Me
Primary type (the one I identify with <i>most closely</i>)	
Secondary type	
Tertiary type	

Note: Your occupational code is made up of the initials of the three personality types you selected, in order.

My occupational code: ___ ___ ___

(For example: if Social, Enterprising, and Conventional are your top three occupational types, your occupational code would be: SEC)



Exploring Careers and Your Occupational Type

Now that you have determined your top three occupational types, you can begin to explore the types of careers that may be best suited for you. Holland studied people who were successful and happy in many occupations and matched their occupations to their occupational type, creating a description of the types of occupations that are best suited to each personality type. Just as many individuals are more than one personality type, many jobs show a strong correlation to more than one occupational type.

This is a rough beginning to finding your occupational type, but you will soon be seeking out more detailed results from the Strong Interest Inventory assessment as a part of this course.

Use the top three occupation types you defined in Exercise 4.2 “What’s Your Occupational Type?” to help identify careers you may want to consider from the table below.

Table 4.1 Occupational Options by Type

Ideal Environments	Sample Occupations	
Realistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured • Clear lines of authority • Work with things and tools • Casual dress • Focus on tangible results or well-thought-out goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contractor • Emergency medical technician (EMT) • Mechanic • Military career • Packaging engineer
Investigative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonstructured • Research oriented • Intellectual • Work with ideas and data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pharmacist • Lab technician • Nanotechnologist • Geologist • College professor
Artistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonstructured • Creative • Rewards unconventional and aesthetic approaches • Creation of products and ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertising career • Architect • Animator • Musician • Journalist
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative • Collegial • Work with people and on people-related problems/issues • Work as a team or community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher • Geriatric counselor • Correctional officer • Coach • Nurse

Ideal Environments	Sample Occupations
Enterprising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typical business environment • Results oriented • Driven • Work with people and data • Entrepreneurial • Power focused
Conventional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orderly • Clear rules and policies • Consistent processes • Work with systems to manipulate and organize data • Control and handling of money

You can also check out Gottfredson and Holland’s *Dictionary of Holland Occupational Codes* in the reference section of your library or use the Department of Labor’s O*Net (<http://online.onetcenter.org/find>) to get a deeper understanding of your occupation. For each occupation, O*Net lists the type of work, the work environment, the skills and education required, and the job outlook for that occupation. This is a truly rich resource that you should get to know.

Identify Which Factors Might Affect Your Choice

You may now have a list of careers you want to explore. But there are other factors you will need to take into consideration as well. It is important to use your creative thinking skills to come up with alternative “right” answers to factors that may present an obstacle to pursuing the right career.

- **Timing.** How much time must I invest before I actually start making money in this career? Will I need to spend additional time in school? Is there a certification process that requires a specific amount of experience? If so, can I afford to wait?
- **Finances.** Will this career provide me with the kind of income I need in the short term and the security I’ll want in the longer term? What investment will I need to make to be successful in this field (education, tools, franchise fees, etc.)?
- **Location.** Does this career require me to relocate? Is the ideal location for this career somewhere I would like to live? Is it somewhere my family would like to live?
- **Family/personal.** How will this career affect my personal and family life? Do friends and family members who know me well feel strongly (for or against) about this career choice? How important is their input?

Your Next Steps

It may seem odd to be thinking about life after school, especially if you are just getting started. But you will soon be making decisions about your future, and regardless of the direction you may choose, there is a lot you can do while still in college. You will



need to focus your studies by choosing a major. You should find opportunities to explore the careers that interest you. You can ensure that you are building the right kind of experience on which to base a successful career. These steps will make your dreams come to life and make them achievable.

Start by developing a relationship with a counselor in the Counseling/Transfer Centers in the S Building, SAC Career/CTE Center staff, or an Undecided Majors Counselor in L-222. Another great resource is SAC’s Undecided Majors website <http://sac.edu/undecided>. It provides several helpful career exploration links.

All too often students engage these counselors only near the end of their college days, when the pressure is just on getting a job—any job—after having completed a degree. But these counselors can be of great help in matching your interests to a career and in ensuring you are gathering the right kind of experience to put you at the top of the recruiting heap.

Keep in mind that deciding on and pursuing a career is an ongoing process. The more you learn about yourself and the career options that best suit you, the more you will need to fine-tune your career plan. Don't be afraid to consider new ideas, but don't make changes without careful consideration. Career planning is exciting: learning about yourself and about career opportunities, and considering the factors that can affect your decision, should be a core part of your thoughts while in college.

Learn Specific Skills Necessary for Your Career Path

The table below lists four resources to help you determine which concrete skills are needed for all kinds of professions. You can even discover where you might gain some of the skills and which courses you might take.

Spend some time reviewing each resource. You will find many interesting and exciting options. When you're finished, you may decide that there are so many interesting professions in the world that it's difficult to choose just one. This is a good problem to have!

Table 4.2 Online Skills Identification Resources

	RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION
1	Career Aptitude Test (Rasmussen College)	This test helps you match your skills to a particular career that's right for you. Use a sliding scale to indicate your level of skill in the following skill areas: artistic, interpersonal, communication, managerial, mathematics, mechanical, and science. Press the Update Results button and receive a customized list customized of career suggestions tailored to you, based on data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. You can filter by salary, expected growth, and education.
2	Skills Profiler (Career OneStop from the U.S. Department of Labor)	Use the Skills Profiler to create a list of your skills, and match your skills to job types that use those skills. Plan to spend about 20 minutes completing your profile. You can start with a job type to find skills you need for a current or future job. Or if you are not sure what kind of job is right for you, start by rating your own skills to find a job type match. When your skills profile is complete, you can print it or save it.
3	O*Net OnLine	This U.S. government website helps job seekers answer two of their toughest questions: "What jobs can I get with my skills and training?" and "What skills and training do I need to get this job?" Browse groups of similar occupations to explore careers. Choose from industry, field of work, science area, and more. Focus on occupations that use a specific tool or software. Explore occupations that need your skills. Connect to a wealth of O*NET data. Enter a code or title from another classification to find the related O*NET-SOC occupation.
4	Suggested Courses to Develop Skills that Prospective Employers Want (Psych Web)	If you are trying to strengthen particular skills, certain courses may be helpful. The list at this site is based on courses offered on many campuses and some of the skills the courses emphasize.

Acquiring Necessary Skills (both in and out of class) for Your Career Goals

“Lifelong learning” is a buzz phrase in the twentieth-first century because we are inundated with new technology and information all the time, and those who know *how to learn*, continuously, are in the best position to keep up and take advantage of these changes. Think of all the information resources around you: colleges and universities, libraries, the Internet, videos, games, books, films—the list goes on.

With these resources at your disposal, how can you best position yourself for lifelong learning and a strong, viable career? Which hard and soft skills are most important? What are employers really looking for?

The following list was inspired by the remarks of Mark Atwood, director of open-source engagement at Hewlett-Packard Enterprise. It contains excellent practical advice.

- Learn how to write clearly. After you’ve written something, have people edit it. Then rewrite it, taking into account the feedback you received. Write all the time.
- Learn how to speak. Speak clearly on the phone and at a table. For public speaking, try Toastmasters. “Meet and speak. Speak and write.”
- Be reachable. Publish your email so that people can contact you. Don’t worry about spam.
- Learn about computers and computing, even if you aren’t gearing for a career in information technology. Learn something entirely new every six to twelve months.
- Build relationships within your community. Use tools like Meetup.com and search for clubs at local schools, libraries, and centers. Then, seek out remote people around the country and world. Learn about them and their projects first by searching the Internet.
- Attend conferences and events. This is a great way to network with people and meet them face-to-face.
- Find a project and get involved. Start reading questions and answers, then start answering questions.
- Collaborate with people all over the world.
- Keep your LinkedIn profile and social media profiles up-to-date. Be findable.
- Keep learning. Skills will often beat smarts. Be sure to schedule time for learning and having fun!

Just Get Involved

After you’ve networked with enough people and built up your reputation, your peers can connect you with job openings that may be a good fit for your skills. The video, below, from Monash University in Australia offers the following tips:

1. Get involved in part-time work
2. Get involved in extracurricular activities
3. Get involved with employment and career development

“Just Get involved. There are so many opportunities and open doors for you.”



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <http://pb.libretexts.org/career/?p=32>

Key Takeaways

- The right career for you depends on your interests, your personality, and your skills.
- Learning about your personality helps you to think about your emotions, behaviors, and ways of thinking on a day to day basis. An awareness of these things will help you to find a career that compliments your personality.
- Employers look for both hard and soft (transferable) skills in future employees; however transferable skills may be in more demand because they help people adapt to a variety of different jobs and professions without much training.
- Defining your occupational type may confirm career choices you have already made and open entirely new options for you.
- Connect with a college counselor early in your career development process to help you match your skills, personality and interests with potential jobs and eventually a career that best suits you.
- Career planning is an ongoing process involving knowing yourself, knowing about career options, and understanding the context in which your decisions will be made.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: Exploring Career Options

2.1: Review Your Career Profile

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2.1: Review Your Career Profile

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify your motivations for attending college as it relates to your future career goals
- Review your individual career profile
- Explore activities to gain knowledge and experience about your future career

College and Career

Knowing what you truly want to gain from your college experience is the first step toward achieving it. But reaching your goals doesn't necessarily mean you are college and career ready.

Ultimately, college and career readiness demands students know more than just content, but demonstrate that they know how to learn and build upon that content to solve problems. They must develop versatile communication skills, work collaboratively and work competitively in a school or work environment. Ensuring that you possess both the academic and technical know-how necessary for a career beyond the classroom is a great step toward succeeding on whatever path you choose. —Washington, DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education



Stay focused, go after your dreams, and keep moving toward your goals. —L L Cool J, musician

What does it mean to be ready for college and a career? In general, you are a college- and career-ready student if you have gained the necessary knowledge, skills, and professional behaviors to achieve at least one of the following:

- Earn a certificate or degree in college
- Participate in career training
- Enter the workplace and succeed

For instance, if you are studying for a skilled trade license in college, or perhaps pursuing a bachelor of arts degree, you are college-ready if you have the reading, writing, mathematics, social, and thinking skills to qualify for and succeed in the academic program of your choice.

Similarly, you are a career-ready student if you have the necessary knowledge and technical skills needed to be employed in your desired field. For example, if you are a community college student ready to be a nurse, you possess the knowledge and skill needed to secure an entry-level nursing position, and you also possess required licensing.

For a long time, my plan had always been to be a kindergarten teacher. But when I began my undergraduate degree I fell into that ever-growing pool of college students who changed their major three times before graduation. I was swayed by family members,

my peers, and the economy, but I eventually realized that I was investing my education in the wrong areas for the wrong reasons. It shouldn't just be about salaries and job security. I needed to find that personal attachment.

At eighteen, it's hard to see your entire life spread out before you. College may feel like a free-for-all at times, but the reality is that it's one of the most defining times of our lives. It should never be squandered. I started to imagine my life beyond college—what I found important and the type of lifestyle I wanted in the end. I started thinking about the classes that I was actually interested in—the ones that I looked forward to each week and arrived early to just so I could get a seat up front.

A turning point for me was when I took the advice of a campus mentor and enrolled in a career exploration course. I learned more about myself in that class than I had in my entire three years at college prior to taking it. It showed me that my passion was something I had always thought about but never thought about as a career. . . . Through this realization and my participation in my career exploration class, I saw a viable future in the Higher Education Administration field.

—Jamie Edwards, *Foundations of Academic Success: Words of Wisdom*

The Marriage of College and Career

The oldest institution of higher learning in the United States is widely acknowledged to be Harvard University. It was established in 1636 with the aim of providing instruction in arts and sciences to qualify students for employment. In the 1779 Constitution of Massachusetts submitted by Samuel Adams, John Adams, and James Bowdoin to the full Massachusetts Convention, the following language was used:

Art. I.—Whereas our wise and pious ancestors, so early as the year one thousand six hundred and thirty six, laid the foundation of Harvard-College, in which University many persons of great eminence have, by the blessing of GOD, been initiated in those arts and sciences, which qualified them for public employments, both in Church and State . . .

Is “public employment” preparation still the goal of higher education institutions today? Indeed, it is certainly one of the many goals! College is also an opportunity for students to grow personally and intellectually. In fact, in a 2011 Pew Research Center survey, Americans were split on their perceptions of the main purpose of a college education:

- 47 percent of those surveyed said the purpose of college is to teach work-related skills.
- 39 percent said it is to help a student grow personally and intellectually.
- 12 percent said the time spent at college should be dedicated to both pursuits—teaching work-related skills and helping students grow personally and intellectually.

These statistics are understandable in light of the great reach and scope of higher education institutions. Today, there are some 5,300 colleges and universities in the United States, offering every manner of education and training to students.

What do employers think about the value of a college education? What skills do employers seek in their workforce? In 2014, Hart Research Associates conducted a survey on behalf of the Association of American Colleges and Universities. The survey revealed that the majority of employers believe that having field-specific knowledge as well as a broad range of knowledge and skills is important for recent college graduates to achieve long-term career success.

Employers also said that when they hire, they place the greatest value on skills and knowledge that cut across all majors. The learning outcomes they rate as most important include written and oral communication skills, teamwork skills, ethical decision-making, critical thinking, and the ability to apply knowledge in real-world settings.^[1]

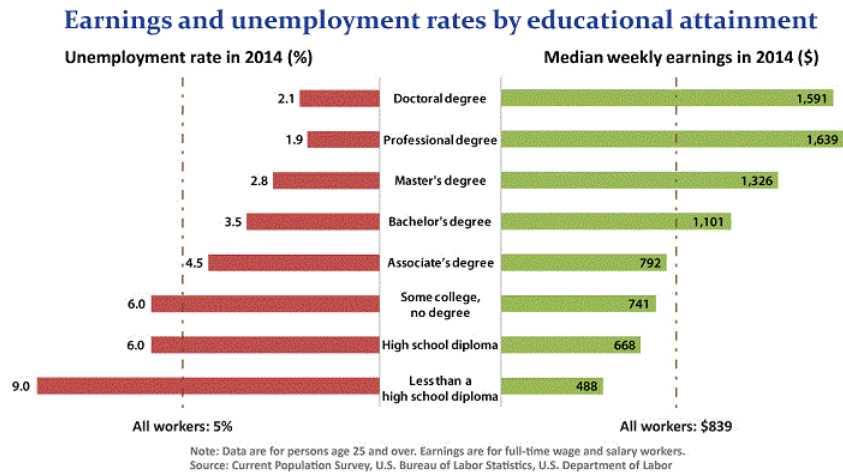
Employment Rates and Salaries

Consider, too, the following statistics on employment rates and salaries for college graduates. College does make a big difference!

- The average college graduate earns about 75 percent more than a non-college graduate over a typical, forty-year working lifetime. (U.S. Census Bureau)^[2]
- In 2014, young adults ages 20 to 24 with a bachelor's degree or higher had a higher employment rate (88.1 percent) than young adults with just some college (75.0 percent). (NCES)
- The employment rate for young adults with just some college (63.7 percent) was higher than the rate for those who had completed high school. (NCES)
- The employment rate for those who completed high school (46.6 percent) was higher than the employment rate for young adults who had not finished high school. (NCES)
- Employment rates were generally higher for males than females at each level of educational attainment in 2014. (NCES)^[3]

- Over the course of a forty-year working life, the typical college graduate earns an estimated \$550,000 more than the typical high school graduate. (PEW)
- The median gap in annual earnings between a high school and college graduate as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2010 is \$19,550. (PEW)^[4]

Perhaps most important, an overwhelming majority of college graduates—86 percent—say that college has been a good investment for them personally. (PEW)



Differences in Earnings between States

You may wish to use this [Earnings and Educational Attainment \(2011\)](#) interactive table to see how earnings for college graduates vs. high school-only graduates in your state compare with those in other states.

All in all, college imparts a wide and deep range of benefits. The short video *Why College*, below, shows that with a college degree you are more likely to

- Have a higher salary
- Have and keep a job
- Get a pension plan
- Be satisfied with your job
- Feel your job is important
- Have health insurance



Video: There are many benefits to getting a college degree - here are just a few. <https://youtu.be/-N6nru0nThg>

Success in College

Success in college can be measured in many ways: through your own sense of what is important to you; through your family's sense of what is important to your collective group; through your institution's standards of excellence; through the standards established by your state and country; through your employer's perceptions about what is needed in the workplace; and in many respects through your own unfolding goals, dreams, and ambitions.

How are you striving to achieve your goals? And how will you measure your success along the way?

Career Profile

As you make a commitment to your college career, let's review your career profile, *a self-assessment of your goals, values, personality, skills and interests* in order to start researching specific careers and explore activities to give you more hands-on experience.

Activity 5.1: Your Career Profile

Goals

1. Reflecting on your career exploration, identify one long-term career goal.
2. Then, identify 2-3 short-term goals for this semester to achieve your long-term goal from #1.

Values

1. From Chapter 3, what are your top 3-5 work values?
2. Name 2 career titles that you are most interested in that will allow you to express your values.

Interests

1. From Chapter 4 and your SII inventory results, what are your top interests (Holland Code)?
2. Name 2 career titles that you are most interested in that will allow you to express your interests.

Personality

1. From Chapter 4 and your MBTI results, what is your 4-letter personality type?
2. Name 2 career titles that you are most interested in that will be best fit with your personality type.

Skills

1. From Chapter 4, what are your 5 skills?
2. Name 2 career titles that you are most interested in that will allow you to utilize your skills.

Research activity:

- Of all the career titles you have explored, which career would you be interested in researching **more in-depth**?

Below is the second part of Jamie Edwards's essay (former student at State University of New York). Her advice is to make connections between the "now" of college experience and future career possibilities. She thinks that the more informed you are about your career options through real-life conversations and experiences, the better prepared you will be for your future—and the more confident you will be in your career decisions.

From where I sit now—my former personal and professional struggles in tow—I offer up some pieces of advice that were crucial to getting me where I am today. Whether you're an undecided major who is looking for guidance or a student with a clearly defined career path, I suggest the following:

1. Find a mentor—For me, everything began there. Without my mentor, I wouldn't have done any of the other items I'm about to suggest. Finding the right mentor is crucial. Look for someone who can complement your personality (typically someone who's the opposite of you). My advice would be to look beyond your direct supervisor for mentorship. It's important to create an open forum with your mentor, because there may be a conflict of interest as you discuss work issues and other job opportunities. Potential mentors to consider are an instructor on campus, your academic advisor, a professional currently working in your prospective field, someone you admire in your community, or anyone in your network of friends or family that you feel comfortable discussing your future goals with.

2. Enroll in a Career Exploration/Planning course, or something similar—Even if you do not see the effects of this course immediately (such as dramatically changing your major), you will notice the impact down the road. Making educated career choices and learning job readiness skills will always pay off in the end. Through my career exploration class, I learned how to relate my personality and values to potential career fields. These self-assessments changed my entire thought process, and I see that influence daily. Beyond changing the way you think, the knowledge you gain about effective job search strategies is invaluable. Learning how to write purposeful résumés and cover letters, finding the right approach to the interview process, and recognizing your strengths and weaknesses are just a few of the benefits you can gain from these type of courses.
3. Complete a Job Shadow and/or Informational Interview—No amount of online research is going to give you the same experience as seeing a job at the front line. In a job shadow or an informational interview, you're able to explore options with no commitment and see how your in-class experience can carry over to a real world setting. Additionally, you're expanding your professional network by having that personal involvement. You never know how the connections you make might benefit you in the future. My only regret about job shadowing in college is that I didn't do it sooner.
4. Do an Internship—A main source of frustration for recent grads is the inability to secure an entry-level position without experience. "How do I get a job to gain experience when I can't get a job without experience?" This is how: do an internship or two! Most colleges even have a course where you can obtain credit for doing it! Not only will you earn credits towards graduation, but you'll gain the necessary experience to put on your résumé and discuss in future interviews. Having completed four internships throughout my college career, I can't say they were all great. However, I don't regret a single one. The first one showed me the type of field I didn't want to work in. The second confirmed that I was heading in the right direction with my career. My third and fourth internships introduced me to completely different areas of higher education which broadened my knowledge and narrowed my search simultaneously.

My takeaway is that sometimes you have to learn what you don't want in order to find out what you do want. The more informed you are about career options through real-life conversations and experiences, the better prepared you will be for your future and the more confident you will be in your career decisions. Always explore your options because even if you learn you hate it, at least you're one step close to finding what you love.

—Jamie Edwards, *Foundations of Academic Success: Words of Wisdom*

Activity 5.2: Informational Interview

As recommended in Part 2, #3 above, try the following activity from [California Career Café](#), a virtual career center for CA community college students:



Activity 5.3: resources for career research

After you have identified career titles you are most interested and have conducted informational interviews, check out the following resources to help research careers more in-depth:

- [California Labor Market Information](#)
 - The Labor Market Information Division (LMID) is the official source for California Labor Market Information. The LMID promotes California's economic health by providing information to help people understand California's economy and make informed labor market choices. We collect, analyze, and publish statistical data and reports on California's labor force, industries, occupations, employment projections, wages and other important labor market and economic data.
- [Occupational Outlook Handbook from US Department of Labor](#)
 - The OOH can help you find career information on duties, education and training, pay, and outlook for hundreds of occupations.
- Additionally, for in-person help, go to the college's career center to get more help with your search

Key Takeaways

Labor research indicates that as educational attainment increases in individuals the unemployment rate decreases.

A college degree affects other personal factors you may have not considered such as retirement plan, health care insurance, and higher lifetime salary.

Selecting the right career involves thorough research such as, informational interviews, online research, and utilizing the Career Center located in your college.

1. "Falling Short? College Learning and Career Success." Hart Research Associates, 20 Jan. 2015. Web. 31 Mar. 2016. ↩
2. "Workplace, Office Blogs, Articles & Advice - Experience.com." *Workplace, Office Blogs, Articles & Advice - Experience.com*. Web. 31 Mar. 2016. ↩
3. "Fast Facts." *Fast Facts*. Web. 31 Mar. 2016. ↩
4. "Is College Worth It?" *Pew Research Centers Social Demographic Trends Project RSS*. 2011. Web. 31 Mar. 2016. ↩

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: Creating Your Career Game Plan

3.1: College Majors

3.2: Networking

3.3: Résumés and Cover Letters

3.4: Interviewing

3.5: What's Next?

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3.1: College Majors



You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose. You're on your own. And you know what you know. And YOU are the one who'll decide where to go. —Dr. Seuss, children's author

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- List key strategies for selecting a college major
- Identify the relationship between college majors and career paths (both why they matter and why they don't)
- Identify sources for learning more about specific majors and related careers

Your Major

In the United States and Canada, your academic major—simply called “your major”—is the academic discipline you commit to as an undergraduate student. It's an area you specialize in, such as accounting, chemistry, criminology, archeology, digital arts, or dance. In United States colleges and universities, roughly 2,000 majors are offered. And within each major is a host of core courses and electives. When you successfully complete the required courses in your major, you qualify for a degree.

Where did the term major come from? In 1877, it first appeared in a Johns Hopkins University catalogue. That major required only two years of study. Later, in 1910, Abbott Lawrence Lowell introduced the academic major system to Harvard University during his time as president there. This major required students to complete courses in a specialized discipline and also in other subjects. Variations of this system are now the norm in higher education institutions in the U.S. and Canada.

Why is your major important? It's important because it's a defining and organizing feature of your undergraduate degree. Ultimately, your major should provide you with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and/or behaviors you need to fulfill your college goals and objectives.

In this section we look at how to select your major and how your college major may correlate with a career. Does your major matter to your career? What happens if you change your major? Does changing your major mean you must change your career? Read on to find out!

How to Select Your College Major

Selecting your major is one of the most exciting tasks (and, to some students, perhaps one of the most nerve-wracking tasks) you are asked to perform in college. So many decisions are tied to it. But if you have good guidance, patience, and enthusiasm, the process is easier. Two videos, below, present lighthearted looks undertaking this task. In the first one, the following five tips are discussed:

1. Seek inspiration

2. Consider everything
3. Identify talents and interests
4. Explore available resources
5. In-depth career exploration

https://youtu.be/8I_Qw2NfSq0

The next video shares nine tips:

1. Narrow your choices by deciding what you don't like.
2. Explore careers that might interest you. Ask questions.
3. Use your school's resources.
4. Ask your teacher, counselor, and family about your strengths.
5. 60 percent of students change their majors.
6. Your major isn't going to define your life. But choosing one that interests you will make your college experience much more rewarding.
7. Go on informational interviews with people in careers that interest you.
8. There's no pressure to decide now.
9. Take new classes and discover your interests.



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Does Your College Major Matter to Your Career?

There are few topics about college that create more controversy than “Does your major really matter to your career?” Many people think it does; others think it's not so important. Who is right? And who gets to weigh in? Also, how do you measure whether something “matters”—by salary, happiness, personal satisfaction?

It may be difficult to say for sure whether your major truly matters to your career. One's college major and ultimate career are not necessarily correlated. Consider the following “factoids”:

- 50–70 percent of college students change their major at least once during their time in college.
- Most majors lead to a wide variety of opportunities rather than to one specific career, although some majors do indeed lead to specific careers.
- Many students say that the skills they gain in college will be useful on the job no matter what they major in.
- Only half of graduating seniors accept a job directly related to their major.
- Career planning for most undergraduates focuses on developing general, transferable skills like speaking, writing, critical thinking, computer literacy, problem-solving, and team building, because these are skills that employers want.
- College graduates often cite the following four factors as being critical to their job and career choices: personal satisfaction, enjoyment, opportunity to use skills and abilities, and personal development.
- Within ten years of graduation, most people work in careers that aren't directly related to their majors.
- Many or most jobs that exist today will be very different five years from now.

It's also important to talk about financial considerations in choosing a major.

- Any major you choose will likely benefit you because college graduates earn roughly \$1 million more than high school graduates, on average, over an entire career.
- STEM jobs, though—science, technology, engineering, and mathematics—can lead to the thirty highest paying jobs. So if you major in any of these areas, you may be more likely to earn a higher salary.
- Even though humanities and social sciences students may earn less money right after college, they may earn more by the time they reach their peak salary than students who had STEM majors.
- Students who major in the humanities and social science areas are also more likely to get advanced degrees, which increases annual salary by nearly \$20,000 at peak salary.

So where will you stand with regard to these statistics? Is it possible to have a good marriage between your major, your skills, job satisfaction, job security, and earnings?

Here to share a personal story about selecting your college major and finding the right career fit is Marc Luber, host of Careers Out There. Enjoy his insights, which he sums up with, “Focus on what makes you tick, and run with it.”



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The best guidance on choosing a major and connecting it with a career may be to get good academic and career advice and select a major that reflects your greatest interests. If you don't like law or medicine but you major in it because of a certain salary expectation, you may later find yourself in an unrelated job that brings you greater satisfaction—even if the salary is lower. If this is the case, will it make more sense, looking back, to spend your time and tuition dollars studying a subject you especially enjoy?

Every student who pursues a college degree and a subsequent career may tell a different story about the impact of their major on their professional directions. In the following excerpt from *Foundations of College Success: Words of Wisdom*, writer and former SUNY student Kristen Mruk reflects on the choices she made and how they turned out.

The Student Experience

What I Would Like To Do

I thought I knew exactly what I wanted to do when I started college, but that changed three times by the time I graduated. Initially I started as an International Business major but ended up receiving a degree in Communication and continued on to graduate school. My greatest advice to you is to embrace feelings of uncertainty (if you have them) with regard to your academic, career, or life goals. Stop into the Career Services office on your campus to identify what it is that you really want to do when you graduate or to confirm your affinity to a career path. Make an appointment to see a counselor if you need to vent or get a new perspective. Do an internship in your field; this can give you a first-hand impression of what your life might look like in that role.

When I chose International Business, I did not do so as an informed student. I enjoyed and excelled in my business courses in high school and I had hopes of traveling the world, so International Business seemed to fit the bill. Little did I know, the major required a lot of accounting and economics which, as it turned out, were not my forte. Thinking this is what I wanted, I wasted time pursuing a major I didn't enjoy and academic courses I struggled through.

So I took a different approach. I began speaking to the professionals around me that had jobs that appealed to me: Student Unions/Activities, Leadership, Orientation, Alumni, etc. I found out I could have a similar career, and I would enjoy the required studies along the way. Making that discovery provided direction and purpose in my major and extracurricular activities. I felt like everything was falling into place.

What I Actually Do

I would like to . . . ask you to consider why you are in college. Why did you choose your institution? Have you declared a major yet? Why or why not? What are your plans post-graduation? By frequently reflecting in this way, you can assess whether or not your behaviors, affiliations, and activities align with your goals.

What you actually do with your student experience is completely up to you. You are the only person who can dictate your collegiate fate. Remind yourself of the reasons why you are in college and make sure your time is spent on achieving your goals. There are resources and people on your campus available to help you. You have the control—use it wisely.

—Kristen Mruk, *Foundations of Academic Success: Words of Wisdom*

Resources

Success doesn't come to you . . . you go to it. —Dr. Marva Collins, civil rights activist and educator

This quote really sets the stage for the journey you're on. Your journey may be a straight line that connects the dots between today and your future, or it may resemble a twisted road with curves, bumps, hurdles, and alternate routes.

To help you navigate your pathway to career success, take advantage of all the resources available to you. Your college, your community, and the wider body of higher-education institutions and organizations have many tools to help you with career development. Be sure to take advantage of the following resources:

- **College course catalog:** Course catalogs are typically rich with information that can spark ideas and inspiration for your major and your career.
- **Faculty and academic advisers at your college:** Many college professors are also practitioners in their fields, and can share insights with you about related professions.
- **Fellow students and graduating seniors:** Many of your classmates, especially those who share your major, may have had experiences that can inform and enlighten you—for instance, an internship with an employer or a job interview with someone who could be contacted for more information.
- **Students who have graduated:** Most colleges and universities have active alumni programs with networking resources that can help you make important decisions.
- **Your family and social communities:** Contact friends and family members who can weigh in with their thoughts and experience.
- **A career center:** Professionals in career centers have a wealth of information to share with you—they're also very good at listening and can act as a sounding board for you to try out your ideas.

Many organizations have free materials that can provide guidance, such as the ones in the table, below:

	WEB SITE	DESCRIPTION
1	List of College Majors (MyMajors)	A list of more than 1,800 college majors—major pages include description, courses, careers, salary, related majors and colleges offering major
2	Take the College Major Profile Quiz (About.com)	Quiz is designed to help students think about college majors, personality traits, and how they may fit within different areas of study
3	Choosing a College Major Worksheet (Quint Careers)	A six-step process to finding a college major
4	Common Mistakes Students Make in Choosing a Major (Wayne State University)	Lists common misperceptions about choosing a major and explains how these misperceptions can cloud future plans

	WEB SITE	DESCRIPTION
5	Best college majors for your career 2015-2016 (Yahoo.com)	Explore a detailed list of the top ten majors that give students the greatest potential for success in the workplace, good incomes, and ample job opportunities
6	Explore Careers (BigFuture/The College Board)	Explore careers by selecting “Show me majors that match my interests,” “Show me new career ideas,” and “Show me how others made their choices”
7	The College Major: What It Is and How To Choose One (BigFuture/The College Board)	When to choose a major, how to choose a major, “you can change your mind,” majors and graduate school, and majors and professions

Key Takeaways

Your major is a set of core courses and electives-the academic discipline- that you commit to while you are in college. Upon completion of your major, you typically qualify for a degree.

Selecting your major is a process, and it should involve the exploration of your:

- Personality
- Values
- Interests
- Skills

Your college major and ultimate career are not necessarily correlated. The best academic and career advice is to select a major that reflects your greatest interests.

Students have many resources available to them that are on/off campus, which can assist them in the selection of a major:

- College catalog
- Counselors
- Undecided Majors Workshops
- Career Center
- Friends and Family
- Alumni

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3.2: Networking



Communication—the human connection—is the key to personal and career success. —Paul J. Meyer, motivational speaker

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Define network and identify strategies for networking
- Identify sources for developing professional networks

In the context of career development, networking is the process by which people build relationships with one another for the purpose of helping one another achieve professional goals.

When you “network,” you exchange information.

- You may share business cards, résumés, cover letters, job-seeking strategies, leads about open jobs, information about companies and organizations, and information about a specific field.
- You might also share information about meet-up groups, conferences, special events, technology tools, and social media.
- You might also solicit job “headhunters,” career counselors, career centers, career coaches, an alumni association, family members, friends, acquaintances, and vendors.

Networking can occur anywhere and at any time. In fact, your network expands with each new relationship you establish. And the networking strategies you can employ are nearly limitless. With imagination and ingenuity, your networking can be highly successful.



Strategies for Networking

We live in a social world. Almost everywhere you go and anything you do professionally involves connecting with people. It stands to reason that finding a new job and advancing your career entails building relationships with these people. Truly, the most effective way to find a new job is to network, network, and network some more.

Once you acknowledge the value of networking, the challenge is figuring out how to do it. What is your first step? Whom do you contact? What do you say? How long will it take? Where do you concentrate efforts? How do you know if your investments will pay off?

For every question you may ask, a range of strategies can be used. Begin exploring your possibilities by viewing the following energizing video, *Networking Tips for College Students and Young People*, by Hank Blank. He recommends the following modern and no-nonsense strategies:

1. Hope is not a plan. You need a plan of action to achieve your networking goals.
2. Keenly focus your activities on getting a job. Use all tools available to you.
3. You need business cards. No ifs, ands, or buts.
4. Register your own domain name. Find your favorite geek to build you a landing page. Keep building your site for the rest of your life.
5. Attend networking events. Most of them offer student rates.
6. Master LinkedIn because that is what human resource departments use. Post updates.
7. Think of your parents' friends as databases. Leverage their knowledge and their willingness to help you.
8. Create the world you want to live in in the future by creating it today through your networking activity. These are the times to live in a world of "this is how I can help."



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See the [LinkedIn for Students](#) Web site.

International Student Series: Finding Work Using Your Networks

If you are an international student, or perhaps if English is not your native language, this video may especially appeal to you. It focuses on the importance of networking when looking for jobs and keeping an open mind. Simply talking to people can help you move from casual work to full-time employment.



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. . . And More Strategies

Strategies at College

- **Get to know your professors:** Communicating with instructors is a valuable way to learn about a career and also get letters of reference if and when needed for a job. Professors can also give you leads on job openings, internships, and research possibilities. Most instructors will readily share information and insights with you. Get to know your instructors. They are a valuable part of your network.
- **Check with your college’s alumni office:** You may find that some alumni are affiliated with your field of interest and can give you the “inside scoop.”
- **Check with classmates:** Classmates may or may not share your major, but any of them may have leads that could help you. You could be just one conversation away from a good lead.

Strategies at Work

- **Join professional organizations:** You can meet many influential people at local and national meetings and events of professional and volunteer organizations. Learn about these organizations. See if they have membership discounts for students, or student chapters. Once you are a member, you may have access to membership lists, which can give you prospective access to many new people to network with.
- **Volunteer:** Volunteering is an excellent way to meet new people who can help you develop your career, even if the organization you are volunteering with is not in your field. Just by working alongside others and working toward common goals, you build relationships that may later serve you in unforeseen and helpful ways.
- **Get an internship:** Many organizations offer internship positions to college students. Some of these positions are paid, but often they are not. Paid or not, you gain experience relevant to your career, and you potentially make many new contacts. Check CollegeRecruiter.com for key resources.
- **Get a part-time job:** Working full-time may be your ultimate goal, but you may want to fill in some cracks or crevices by working in a part-time job. Invariably you will meet people who can feasibly help with your networking goals. And you can gain good experience along the way, which can also be noted on your résumé.
- **Join a job club:** Your career interests may be shared by many others who have organized a club, which can be online or in person. If you don’t find an existing club, consider starting one.
- **Attend networking events:** There are innumerable professional networking events taking place around the world and also online. Find them listed in magazines, community calendars, newspapers, journals, and at the Web sites of companies, organizations, and associations.
- **Conduct informational interviews:** You may initiate contact with people in your chosen field who can tell you about their experiences of entering the field and thriving in it. Many Web sites have guidance on how to plan and conduct these interviews.

Strategies at Home and Beyond

- **Participate in online social media:** An explosion of career opportunity awaits you with social media, including LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, and many more. You will find an [extensive list of suggested sites at CareerOneStop](#).

Keep your communication ultra-professional at these sites. Peruse magazine articles, and if you find one that's relevant to your field and it contains names of professionals, you can reach out to them to learn more and get job leads.

- **Ask family members and friends, coworkers, and acquaintances for referrals:** Do they know others who might help you? You can start with the question “Who else should I be talking to?”
- **Use business cards or networking cards:** A printed business card can be an essential tool to help your contacts remember you. Creativity can help in this regard, too. Students often design cards themselves and either hand print them or print them on a home printer.

Activity: Networking for Career Development

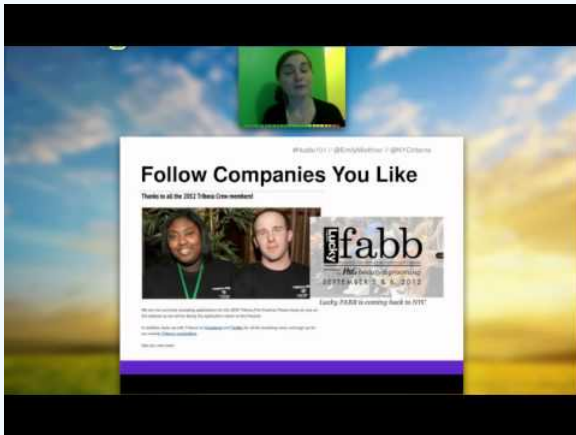
Objectives

- Examine five strategies for obtaining and engaging with networking contacts
- Develop relationships with new contacts to enhance your career

Instructions

- Find information about five companies or people in your field of interest, and follow them on Twitter.
- Get an account at four social media sites that you've not yet been active with that may enhance your career.
- Find names of three people who interest you (peruse magazine articles, online sites, or other resources), and write an email to them explaining your interests and any requests you may have for information.
- Sign up for newsletters from two professional organizations in a field you want to know more about.
- Find and attend one in-person or online event within a month.
- Now write about this experience at one of your social media sites.

For additional ideas and inspiration about networking for career development, watch the following video, *Hustle 101: Networking For College Students and Recent Grads*. The speaker, Emily Miethner, is a recent college graduate and the founder and president of NYCreative Interns, “dedicated to helping young creatives discover and then follow their dream careers.”



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Sources for Developing Professional Networks

The bottom line with developing professional networks is to cull information from as many sources as possible and use that information in creative ways to advance your career opportunities. The strategies listed in the section above provide you with a comprehensive set of suggestions. Below is a summary of sources you can use to network your way to career success:

- Meet-up groups
- Conferences
- Special events
- Technology tools
- Social media
- Career centers
- Alumni association

- Professional organizations
- Volunteer organizations
- Internships
- Part-time job
- Job club
- Networking events
- Magazine articles
- Web sites
- Career coaches
- Headhunters
- Career counselors
- Family members
- Friends
- Coworkers
- Vendors
- College professors
- Advisers
- Classmates
- Administrators
- Coaches
- Guest speakers

Key Takeaways

Networking is the process by which people form professional relationships to create, act upon opportunities, share information and help one another achieve professional goals.

- When you “network” with a person, you may:
 - Share business cards, resumes, cover letters, job-seeking strategies, leads about open jobs, information about companies and organizations, and information about specific fields.
 - Share information about networking groups, conferences, events, technology tools, and social media
 - Research career counselors, career centers, career coaches and alumni, relatives, and acquaintances
- Networking can occur anywhere and anytime, and expands as you form and nurture new relationships
- According to Hank Blank, producer of the video *Networking Tips for College Students and Young People*, as a college student, you should have specific modern and no-nonsense strategies when developing your network.
- If you are an international student you may want to focus on keeping an open mind when it comes to networking
- When networking at college:
 - Get to know your professors
 - Check with your college alumni office
 - Check with classmates
- Some strategies that you can develop at work include:
 - Joining professional organizations
 - Volunteering
 - Internships
 - Clubs
 - Attend networking events
 - Conduct informational interviews
- Some strategies that you can develop at home include:
 - Be active on social media
 - Ask family members and friends, coworkers, and relatives for referrals
 - Utilize business cards for networking

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3.3: Résumés and Cover Letters



The most important tool you have on a résumé is language. —Jay Samit, digital media innovator

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Define the purpose and contents of a résumé
- Identify characteristics of an effective cover letter and résumé

A résumé is a “selfie” for business purposes. It is a written picture of who you are—it’s a marketing tool, a selling tool, and a promotion of you as an ideal candidate for any job you may be interested in.

The word *résumé* comes from the French word *résumé*, which means “a summary.” Leonardo da Vinci is credited with writing one of the first known résumés, although it was more of a letter that outlined his credentials for a potential employer, Ludovico Sforza. The résumé got da Vinci the job, though, and Sforza became a longtime patron of da Vinci and later commissioned him to paint *The Last Supper*. You can see the letter and read the translation at [Ladders Career Advice](#).

Résumés and cover letters work together to represent you in the brightest light to prospective employers. With a well-composed résumé and cover letter, you stand out—which may get you an interview and then a good shot at landing a job.

In this section we discuss résumés and cover letters as key components of your career development tool kit. We explore some of the many ways you can design and develop them for the greatest impact in your job search.

Your Résumé: Purpose and Contents

Your résumé is an inventory of your education, work experience, job-related skills, accomplishments, volunteer history, internships, residencies, and/or more. It’s a professional autobiography in outline form to give the person who reads it a quick, general idea of who you are. With a better idea of who you are, prospective employers can see how well you might contribute to their workplace.

As a college student or recent graduate, though, you may be unsure about what to put in your résumé, especially if you don’t have much employment history. Still, employers don’t expect recent grads to have significant work experience. And even with little work experience, you may still have a host of worthy accomplishments to include. It’s all in how you present yourself.

The following video is an animated look at why résumés are so important. You can read a transcript of the video [here](#).



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Elements of Your Successful Résumé

Perhaps the hardest part of writing a résumé is figuring out what format to use to organize and present your information in the most effective way. There is no correct format, per se, but most résumés follow one of the four formats below. Which format appeals to you the most?

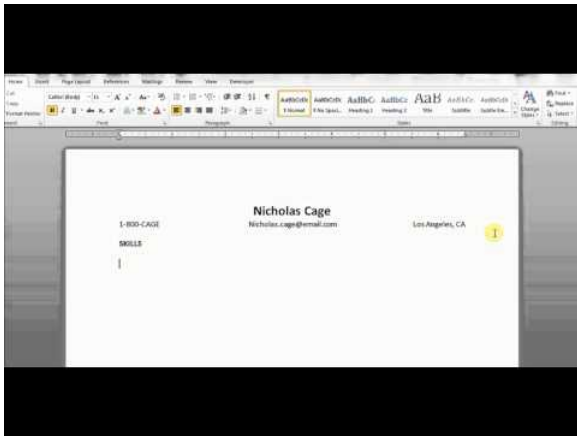
1. **Reverse chronological résumé:** A reverse chronological résumé (sometimes also simply called a chronological résumé) lists your job experiences in reverse chronological order—that is, starting with the most recent job and working backward toward your first job. It includes starting and ending dates. Also included is a brief description of the work duties you performed for each job, and highlights of your formal education. The reverse chronological résumé may be the most common and perhaps the most conservative résumé format. It is most suitable for demonstrating a solid work history, and growth and development in your skills. It may not suit you if you are light on skills in the area you are applying to, or if you've changed employers frequently, or if you are looking for your first job. [Reverse Chronological Résumé Examples](#)
2. **Functional résumé:** A functional résumé is organized around your talents, skills, and abilities (more so than work duties and job titles, as with the reverse chronological résumé). It emphasizes specific professional capabilities, like what you have done or what you can do. Specific dates may be included but are not as important. So if you are a new graduate entering your field with little or no actual work experience, the functional résumé may be a good format for you. It can also be useful when you are seeking work in a field that differs from what you have done in the past. It's also well suited for people in unconventional careers. [Functional Résumé Examples](#)
3. **Hybrid résumé:** The hybrid résumé is a format reflecting both the functional and chronological approaches. It's also called a combination résumé. It highlights relevant skills, but it still provides information about your work experience. With a hybrid résumé, you may list your job skills as most prominent and then follow with a chronological (or reverse chronological) list of employers. This résumé format is most effective when your specific skills and job experience need to be emphasized. [Hybrid Résumé Examples](#)
4. **Video, infographic, and Web-site résumé:** Other formats you may wish to consider are the video résumé, the infographic résumé, or even a Web-site résumé. These formats may be most suitable for people in multimedia and creative careers. Certainly with the expansive use of technology today, a job seeker might at least try to create a media-enhanced résumé. But the paper-based, traditional résumé is by far the most commonly used—in fact, some human resource departments may not permit submission of any format other than paper based. [Video Resume Examples](#); [Infographic Résumé Examples](#); [Web-Site Résumé Examples](#)

An important note about formatting is that, initially, employers may spend only a few seconds reviewing each résumé—especially if there is a big stack of them or they seem tedious to read. That's why it's important to choose your format carefully so it will stand out and make the first cut.

Résumé Contents and Structure

For many people, the process of writing a résumé is daunting. After all, you are taking a lot of information and condensing it into a very concise form that needs to be both eye-catching and easy to read. Don't be scared off, though! Developing a good résumé can

be fun, rewarding, and easier than you think if you follow a few basic guidelines. In the following video, a résumé-writing expert describes some keys to success.



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Contents and Components To Include

1. **Your contact information:** name, address, phone number, professional email address
2. **A summary of your skills:** 5–10 skills you have gained in your field; you can list hard skills as well as soft skills (refer to the Professional Skill Building topic in this course)
3. **Work experience:** depending on the résumé format you choose, you may list your most recent job first; include the title of the position, employer’s name, location, employment dates (beginning, ending)
4. **Volunteer experience**
5. **Education and training:** formal and informal experiences matter; include academic degrees, professional development, certificates, internships, etc.
6. **References statement** (optional): “References available upon request” is a standard phrase used on résumés, although it is often implied
7. **Other sections:** may include a job objective, a brief profile, a branding statement, a summary statement, additional accomplishments, and any other related experiences

Caution

Résumés resemble snowflakes in as much as no two are alike. Although you can benefit from giving yours a stamp of individuality, you will do well to steer clear of personal details that might elicit a negative response. It is advisable to omit any confidential information or details that could make you vulnerable to discrimination, for instance. Your résumé will likely be viewed by a number of employees in an organization, including human resource personnel, managers, administrative staff, etc. By aiming to please all reviewers, you gain maximum advantage.

- Do not mention your age, gender, height or weight.
- Do not include your social security number.
- Do not mention religious beliefs or political affiliations, unless they are relevant to the position.
- Do not include a photograph of yourself or a physical description.
- Do not mention health issues.
- Do not use first-person references. (I, me).
- Do not include wage/salary expectations.
- Do not use abbreviations.
- Proofread carefully—absolutely no spelling mistakes are acceptable.

Top Ten Tips for a Successful Résumé

1. Aim to make a résumé that’s 1–2 pages long on letter-size paper.
2. Make it visually appealing.
3. Use action verbs and phrases. See [Action Words and Phrases for Résumé Development](#).

4. Proofread carefully to eliminate any spelling, grammar, punctuation, and typographical errors.
5. Include highlights of your qualifications or skills to attract an employer's attention.
6. Craft your letter as a pitch to people in the profession you plan to work in.
7. Stand out as different, courageous.
8. Be positive and reflect only the truth.
9. Be excited and optimistic about your job prospects!
10. Keep refining and reworking your résumé; it's an ongoing project.

Remember that your résumé is your professional profile. It will hold you in the most professional and positive light, and it's designed to be a quick and easy way for a prospective employer to evaluate what you might bring to a job. When written and formatted attractively, creatively, and legibly, your résumé is what will get your foot in the door. You can be proud of your accomplishments, even if they don't seem numerous. Let your résumé reflect your personal pride and professionalism.

In the following video, *Résumé Tips for College Students From Employers*, several college graduate recruiters summarize the most important points about crafting your résumé. You can download a transcript of the video [here](#).



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <http://pb.libretexts.org/career/?p=44>

[Click here for a text-only version of the activity.](#)

Résumé Writing Resources

	WEBSITE	DESCRIPTION
1	Résumé Builder (from LinkedIn)	Turn your LinkedIn Profile into a great résumé in seconds. Pick a résumé template, customize the content, print and share the result.
2	The Online Resume Builder (from My Perfect resume)	The online résumé builder is easy to use. Choose your résumé design from the library of professional designs, insert prewritten examples, then download and print your new résumé.
3	Résumé Builder (from Live Career)	This site offers examples and samples, templates, tips, videos, and services for résumés, cover letters, interviews, and jobs.
4	Résumé Samples for College Students and Graduates (from About Careers)	This site offers a plethora of sample résumés for college students and graduates. Listings are by type of student and by type of job. Résumé templates are also provided.

	WEBSITE	DESCRIPTION
5	JobSearch Minute Videos (from College Grad)	This site offers multiple to-the-point one-minute videos on topics such as print résumés, video résumés, cover letters, interviewing, tough interview questions, references, job fairs, and Internet job searching.
6	Student [Career] Services (from Employment Ontario—Community Employment Services)	— Buzzwords and Skills to Include in your résumé — Action Words and Phrases for résumé Development — Checklist of Personal Skills
7	42 Résumé Dos and Don'ts Every Job Seeker Should Know (from the muse)	A comprehensive list of résumé dos and don'ts, which includes traditional rules as well as new rules to polish your résumé.

Your Résumé: It's Like Online Dating

The following essay by Jackie Vetrano is excerpted from *Foundations of Academic Success: Words of Wisdom*. It's a true-to-life story comparing job hunting to online dating. The writer's "lessons learned" are meant to enlarge your awareness of your career goals as you attend college.

It's Like Online Dating

Searching for a job, especially your first job, is a lot like online dating. It begins as a time commitment, gets nerve-wracking towards the middle, but ends in success and happiness if you follow the right process.

Like many single people with access to current technology, I ventured into the world of online dating. I went for coffee with potential mates who were instant no ways, some who left me scratching my head, and a few who I found a connection with.

But hang on. We are here to talk about professional development, not my love life.

Being on the job hunt is not easy. Many spend hours preparing résumés, looking at open positions, and thinking about what career path to travel. Occasionally, it is overwhelming and intimidating, but when taken one step at a time, it can be a manageable and an exciting process.

The first step of online dating is the most important: create your dating profile. Your profile is where you put your best foot forward and show off all of your attractive qualities through visuals and text. Online daters find their most flattering photos and then season the "about me" section of their profile with captivating and descriptive words to better display who they are and why other online daters should give them a shot.

Résumés follow this same logic. Your résumé should be clean, polished, and present you in your best light for future employers. Like dating profiles, they are detailed and should paint a picture for other prospective dates (or future employers) supporting why you deserve a chance at their love—an interview.

The unspoken rules of online dating profiles are very similar to the rules for writing a résumé. Whether you like it or not, your online dating profile and résumé both serve as a first impression. Profiles and résumés that are short, filled with spelling errors, or vague are usually passed over. Unless you are a supermodel and all you need is an enticing photo, your written description is very important to display who you are.

Your résumé should capture who you are, your skill set, education, past experiences, and anything else that is relevant to the job you hope to obtain. Knowing your audience is a key factor in crafting the perfect resume. Logically, if my online dating profile presented studious and quiet personality traits, I would likely start receiving messages from potential mates who are looking for someone who is seeking those traits. By taking a similar approach while writing a résumé, you can easily determine the tone, language, and highlighted skills and experiences you should feature. The tone of your résumé is dictated by the nature of the position you hope to obtain in the future. For example, hospitality jobs or positions that require you to interact with many people on a daily basis should be warm and welcoming while analytical jobs, such as accounting or research positions, should reflect an astute attention to detail. Your choice in language follows similar logic—use appropriate terms for the position you are seeking.

Unlike online dating profiles, your résumé should include your important contact information, including email address, telephone number, and mailing address. Some advise refraining from listing a mailing address, as this could create a bias due to some

organizations that are looking for a new employee who is already in the area.

Unfortunately, this bias cannot be foreseen, which means you should use your best judgment when listing your contact information. If you include this contact information on your dating profile, you may have some very interesting text messages in the morning.

—Jackie Ventrano, *Foundations of Academic Success: Words of Wisdom*

Ventrano's essay is continued ahead in the “Cover Letters” section of this page.

Activity: Create Your Résumé

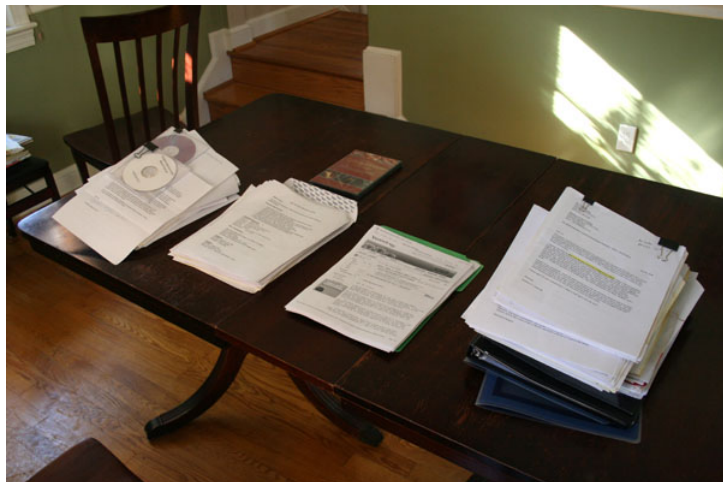
Objectives:

- Compile data reflecting your professional and educational skills and accomplishments.
- Assess the main résumé formats and select one that meets your needs.
- Create a first draft of your professional résumé.

Directions:

1. Compile all needed information for your résumé, including your contact information, a summary of your skills, your work experience and volunteer experience, education and training (including your intended degree, professional development activities, certificates, internships, etc.). Optionally you may wish to include job objective, a brief profile, a branding statement, additional accomplishments, and any other related experiences.
2. Select one of the résumé builder tools listed above in the Résumé Writing Resources table.
3. Create your résumé, following instructions at your selected site.
4. Save your document as a PDF file.
5. Follow instructions from your instructor on how to submit your work.

Your Cover Letter



Cover letters matter. When you have to go through a pile of them, they are probably more important than the résumé itself. — woodleywonderworks

What Is a Cover Letter?

A cover letter is a letter of introduction, usually 3–4 paragraphs in length, that you attach to your résumé. It's a way of introducing yourself to a potential employer and explaining why you are suited for a position. Employers may look for individualized and thoughtfully written cover letters as an initial method of screening out applicants who may lack necessary basic skills, or who may not be sufficiently interested in the position.

Cover Letter Examples

Often an employer will request or require that a cover letter be included in the materials an applicant submits. There are also occasions when you might submit a cover letter uninvited: for example, if you are initiating an inquiry about possible work or asking someone to send you information or provide other assistance.

With each résumé you send out, always include a cover letter specifically addressing your purposes.

Characteristics of an Effective Cover Letter

Cover letters should accomplish the following:

- Get the attention of the prospective employer
- Set you apart from any possible competition
- Identify the position you are interested in
- Specify how you learned about the position or company
- Present highlights of your skills and accomplishments
- Reflect your genuine interest
- Please the eye and ear

The following video features Aimee Bateman, founder of Careercake.com, who explains how you can create an incredible cover letter. You can download a transcript of the video [here](#).



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <http://pb.libretexts.org/career/?p=44>

Cover Letter Resources

	WEBSITE	DESCRIPTION
1	Student Cover Letter Samples (from About Careers)	This site contains sample student/recent graduate cover letters (especially for high school students and college students and graduates seeking employment) as well as cover letter templates, writing tips, formats and templates, email cover letter examples, and examples by type of applicant
2	How to Write Cover Letters (from CollegeGrad)	This site contains resources about the reality of cover letters, using a cover letter, the worst use of the cover letter, the testimonial cover letter technique, and a cover letter checklist
3	LinkedIn Cover Letter	This site contains articles, experts, jobs, and more: get all the professional insights you need on LinkedIn
4	Cover Letters (from the Yale Office of Career Strategy)	This site includes specifications for the cover letter framework (introductory paragraph, middle paragraph, concluding paragraph), as well as format and style

Your Cover Letter: It's Like Online Dating

The following is another excerpt from the “It’s Like Online Dating” essay by Jackie Vetrano. Writing a cover letter may feel like a chore, but the payoff will be well worth it if you land the job you want!

It's Like Online Dating

Sending a Message—The Cover Letter

After searching through dozens of profiles, online daters generally find a handful of people they can picture themselves with. There’s only one way to find out more about the person, and that’s by sending the first message.

The challenging part of the first message I send through online dating sites is determining what to say. I’ve never met these people before, but I do have access to their dating profiles filled with their hobbies, hometowns, and more. This is a perfect starting point for my message, especially if we both root for the same football team or if the other person likes to run as much as I do.

Your cover letter serves as an introduction to your future employer and should complement your résumé to create a shining first impression. It is incredibly challenging to sit in front of a blank screen trying to find a good starting point, which means you should look at the job posting and organization’s Web site for ideas about what to include.

Generally, these job postings provide a set of hard skills (such as proficiency with certain technology) and soft skills (such as public speaking, teamwork, or working in a flexible environment) required and desired for the posted position. This information provides you a list of what should be explained in your cover letter. Demonstrating your hard skills is a simple enough task by using examples or stating certifications, but describing your soft skills may require a little more thought. These soft skills can be exhibited by discussing specific examples of past experiences in previous jobs you’ve held, volunteer work, or work you’ve done in college classes.

After you have crafted your cover letter, you should send it to a few people you trust for their opinion and overall proofreading along with the job posting for their reference. It’s obvious that your cover letter should be free of spelling and grammar errors, but these trustworthy individuals will also be able to provide helpful insight about the examples you’ve used to display your soft skills.

—Jackie Vetrano, *Foundations of Academic Success: Words of Wisdom*

Key Takeaways

The purpose of the resume is to get your foot in the door and be offered an interview. The resume is your one chance to catch your employer’s attention and stand out from the other applicants.

A cover letter is a letter of introduction that you submit with your resume and it explains why you are suited for the position.

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3.4: Interviewing



One important key to success is self-confidence. An important key to self-confidence is preparation. —Arthur Ashe, champion tennis player

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe effective strategies to prepare for an interview
- Differentiate between different types of interview situations and identify appropriate interview techniques for each
- Analyze different question types common in interviews

If your résumé and cover letter have served their purposes well, you will be invited to participate in an interview with the company or organization you're interested in. Congratulations! It's an exciting time, and your prospects for employment are very strong if you put in the time to be well prepared.

In this section we look at how to get ready for an interview, what types of interviews you might need to engage in, and what kinds of questions you might be asked.

Preparing Effectively for a Job Interview

Review the Job Description

When you prepare for an interview, your first step will be to carefully read and reread the job posting or job description. This will help you develop a clearer idea of how you meet the skills and attributes the company seeks.

Research the Company or Organization

Researching the company will give you a wider view of what the company is looking for and how well you might fit in. Your prospective employer may ask you what you know about the company. Being prepared to answer this question shows that you took time and effort to prepare for the interview and that you have a genuine interest in the organization. It shows good care and good planning—soft skills you will surely need on the job.

Practice Answering Common Questions

Most interviewees find that practicing the interview in advance with a family member, a friend, or a colleague eases possible nerves during the actual interview. It also creates greater confidence when you walk through the interview door. In the “Interview Questions” section below, you'll learn more about specific questions you will likely be asked and corresponding strategies for answering them.

Plan to Dress Appropriately

Interviewees are generally most properly dressed for an interview in business attire, with the goal of looking highly professional in the eyes of the interviewer. At the [DePaul University Career Center and CareerSpots.com](#) Web site, click on Interview Dress to see three videos on dressing for success in your job interview. Learn exactly what is meant by “business casual,” and see the specific types of attire appropriate for men and women.

Come Prepared

Plan to bring your résumé, cover letter, and a list of references to the interview. You may also want to bring a portfolio of representative work. Leave behind coffee, chewing gum, and any other items that could be distractions.

Be Confident

Above all, interviewees should be confident and “courageous.” By doing so you make a strong first impression. As the saying goes, “There is never a second chance to make a first impression.”

Job Interview Types and Techniques

Every interview you participate in will be unique: The people you meet with, the interview setting, and the questions you’ll be asked will all be different from interview to interview.

The various factors that characterize any given interview can contribute to the sense of adventure and excitement you feel. But it’s also normal to feel a little nervous about what lies ahead. With so many unknowns, how can you plan to “nail the interview” no matter what comes up?

A good strategy for planning is to anticipate the type of interview you may find yourself in. There are common formats for job interviews, described in detail, below. By knowing a bit more about each type and being aware of techniques that work for each, you can plan to be on your game no matter what form your interview takes.

Screening Interviews

Screening interviews might best be characterized as “weeding-out” interviews. They ordinarily take place over the phone or in another low-stakes environment in which the interviewer has maximum control over the amount of time the interview takes. Screening interviews are generally short because they glean only basic information about you. If you are scheduled to participate in a screening interview, you might safely assume that you have some competition for the job and that the company is using this strategy to whittle down the applicant pool. With this kind of interview, your goal is to win a face-to-face interview. For this first shot, though, prepare well and challenge yourself to shine. Try to stand out from the competition and be sure to follow up with a thank-you note.

Phone or Web Conference Interviews

If you are geographically separated from your prospective employer, you may be invited to participate in a phone interview or online interview, instead of meeting face-to-face. Technology, of course, is a good way to bridge distances. The fact that you’re not there in person doesn’t make it any less important to be fully prepared, though. In fact, you may wish to be all the more “on your toes” to compensate for the distance barrier. Make sure your equipment (phone, computer, Internet connection, etc.) is fully charged and works. If you’re at home for the interview, make sure the environment is quiet and distraction-free. If the meeting is online, make sure your video background is pleasing and neutral, like a wall hanging or even a white wall.

One-on-One Interviews

The majority of job interviews are conducted in this format—just you and a single interviewer—likely with the manager you would report to and work with. The one-on-one format gives you both a chance to see how well you connect and how well your talents, skills, and personalities mesh. You can expect to be asked questions like “Why would you be good for this job?” and “Tell me about yourself.” Many interviewees prefer the one-on-one format because it allows them to spend in-depth time with the interviewer. Rapport can be built. As always, be very courteous and professional. Have handy a portfolio of your best work.

Panel Interviews

An efficient format for meeting a candidate is a panel interview, in which perhaps four to five coworkers meet at the same time with a single interviewee. The coworkers comprise the “search committee” or “search panel,” which may consist of different company representatives such as human resources, management, and staff. One advantage of this format for the committee is that

meeting together gives them a common experience to reflect on afterward. In a panel interview, listen carefully to questions from each panelist, and try to connect fully with each questioner. Be sure to write down names and titles, so you can send individual thank-you notes after the interview.

Serial Interviews

Serial interviews are a combination of one-on-one meetings with a group of interviewers, typically conducted as a series of meetings staggered throughout the day. Ordinarily this type of interview is for higher-level jobs, when it's important to meet at length with major stakeholders. If your interview process is designed this way, you will need to be ultraprepared, as you will be answering many in-depth questions. Stay alert.

Lunch Interviews

In some higher-level positions, candidates are taken to lunch or dinner, especially if this is a second interview (a “call back” interview). If this is you, count yourself lucky and be on your best behavior, because even if the lunch meeting is unstructured and informal, it's still an official interview. Do not order an alcoholic beverage, and use your best table manners. You are not expected to pay or even to offer to pay. But, as always, you must send a thank-you note.

Group Interviews

Group interviews are comprised of several interviewees and perhaps only one or two interviewers who may make a presentation to the assembled group. This format allows an organization to quickly prescreen candidates. It also gives candidates a chance to quickly learn about the company. As with all interview formats, you are being observed. How do you behave with your group? Do you assume a leadership role? Are you quiet but attentive? What kind of personality is the company looking for? A group interview may reveal this.

For a summary of the interview formats we've just covered (and a few additional ones), take a look at the following video, *Job Interview Guide—10 Different Types of Interviews in Today's Modern World*.



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <http://pb.libretexts.org/career/?p=46>

Activity: What Makes You a Great Fit?

Objectives:

- Define your ideal job.
- Identify the top three reasons why you are a great fit for this ideal job.

Directions:

- Write a paragraph describing your ideal job. Imagine that you are already in this job. What is your job title and what are you responsible for executing? What is the name of the company or organization? What is its function?
- Now identify the top three reasons why you are a great fit for this ideal job. What sets you apart from the competition? List the qualities, skills and values you have that match the job requirements. Provide examples to support your answers. Connect your values to the company's values.
- Summarize your answer.

- Submit this assignment according to directions provided by your instructor.

Interview Questions

For most job candidates, the burning question is “What will I be asked?” There’s no way to anticipate every single question that may arise during an interview. It’s possible that, no matter how well prepared you are, you may get a question you just didn’t expect. But that’s okay. Do as much preparation as you can—which will build your confidence—and trust that the answers will come.

To help you reach that point of sureness and confidence, take time to review common interview questions. Think about your answers. Make notes, if that helps. And then conduct a practice interview with a friend, a family member, or a colleague. Speak your answers out loud. Below is a list of resources that contain common interview questions and good explanations/answers you might want to adopt.

	WEBSITE	DESCRIPTION
1	100 top job interview questions—be prepared for the interview (from Monster.com)	This site provides a comprehensive set of interview questions you might expect to be asked, categorized as basic interview questions, behavioral questions, salary questions, career development questions, and other kinds. Some of the listed questions provide comprehensive answers, too.
2	Interview Questions and Answers (from BigInterview)	This site provides text and video answers to the following questions: Tell me about yourself, describe your current position, why are you looking for a new job, what are your strengths, what is your greatest weakness, why do you want to work here, where do you see yourself in five years, why should we hire you, and do you have any questions for me?
3	Ten Tough Interview Questions and Ten Great Answers (from CollegeGrad)	This site explores some of the most difficult questions you will face in job interviews. The more open-ended the question, the greater the variation among answers. Once you have become practiced in your interviewing skills, you will find that you can use almost any question as a launching pad for a particular topic or compelling story.

Why Should We Hire You

From the Ohio State University Fisher College of Business Career Management Office, here is a video featuring representatives from recruiting companies offering advice for answering the question “Why should we hire you?” As you watch, make mental notes about how you would answer the question in an interview for a job you really want.



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <http://pb.libretexts.org/career/?p=46>

In closing, below is the final excerpt from the essay “It’s Like Online Dating,” by Jackie Vetrano. You’ll recall that the writer compares job hunting—including résumé creation and cover-letter writing—to online dating. In this last section, she concludes with a look at the job interview and compares it to a first date.

It’s Like Online Dating

The First Date—The Job Interview

After what may feel like forever, you hear back from the love of your life. Congratulations! In the online dating world, you may chat about common interests (because you wrote a stunning first message), but in the world of work, you’ll be asked to visit the organization for an interview.

I have been on many first dates, and whether it’s in a coffee shop or over dinner, the first face-to-face meeting is tremendously important. If someone I am meeting for the first time looks like they just came from the gym or rolled out of bed, my impression instantly changes. This same theory can be directly applied to your first date with your future employer. You have worked hard on your cover letter and résumé, and you should not taint the sparkling first impression you have created with the wrong choice in dress.

What you wear to a job interview may change based on the position you have applied for, but there are a set of basic rules that everyone should follow. Similar to meeting someone on a first date for coffee, you want to be comfortable. Some interviews may take place with multiple people in an organization, meaning you will be walking to different locations, sitting down, and potentially sweating from a broken air conditioning unit. Consider these factors when choosing your outfit for your interview, and if you’re concerned about being underdressed, remember to always dress a bit nicer than how you’d dress for the job itself.

There is nothing worse than sitting alone at a coffee shop waiting for a mystery date to show up. It’s uncomfortable and affects my overall first impression of whom I’m about to meet. Avoid making your mystery employer annoyed and waiting for you by leaving at least ten minutes earlier than you need to, just in case you get stuck in traffic. Arrive at least ten minutes early. The interview will start out much better if you are early rather than nervous and running late. Arriving early also gives you the time to have some coffee and review materials you may need for the interview. Coming on time to an interview or a first date shows you respect the time of the person you plan to meet.

On a first date, it is all about communication. Sometimes, there may be silences that cannot be filled or the person I have just met discloses their entire life story to me in less than an hour. If we cannot achieve a proper balance, there will not be a second date. Communicating effectively in a job interview is equally as important, especially if you want a job offer!

All of the rules of dating apply to how you should behave in a job interview. The interviewer will ask you questions, which means that you should look at them and focus on what is being asked. Your phone should be on silent (not even on vibrate), and hidden, to show that you are fully attentive and engaged in the conversation you are having. Much like having a conversation on a date, the answers to your questions should be clear and concise and stay on topic. The stories I tell on my first dates are more personal than what would be disclosed in a job interview, but the mindset is the same. You are building the impression that the organization has of you, so put your best foot forward through the comments you make.

To make that great impression, it is really important to heavily prepare and practice, even before you have an interview scheduled. By brainstorming answers to typical interview questions in a typed document or out loud, later during the interview you will easily remember the examples of your past experiences that demonstrate why you are best for the job. You can continue to update this list as you move through different jobs, finding better examples to each question to accurately describe your hard and soft skills.

This interview is as much a date for your future employer as it is for you. Come prepared with questions that you have about the company, the position, and anything else you are curious about. This is an opportunity for you to show off the research you've done on the organization and establish a better understanding of company culture, values, and work ethic. Without knowing these basics of the company or organization, what you thought was a match might only end in a tense breakup.

After your interview is over, you continue to have an opportunity to build on the positive impression that you've worked hard to form. Sending a follow up thank you note to each person you interviewed with will show your respect for the time the organization spent with you. These notes can be written and sent by mail or emailed, but either way should have a personal touch, commenting on a topic that was discussed in the interview. While sending a thank you note after a first date may sound a little strange, you might not get asked to a second interview without one!

It's Official—The Job Offer

In the online dating world, it takes a few dates to determine if two people are a match. In the corporate world, you may have a one or two interviews to build a relationship. If your impression was positive and the organization believes you're a match for the open position, you'll be offered a job.

With a job offer also comes the salary for the position. It is important to know what a reasonable salary is for the position and location, which can be answered with a bit of research. One good place to look is the [Bureau of Labor Statistics Web site](#). At this point, it is not uncommon to discuss your salary with your future employer, but be sure to do so in a polite way.

Online dating sites provide the means for millions of people to meet future partners, and the number of people who use online dating is so large that there are sure to be disappointments along the way. I have met people who I thought were compatible with me, but they did not feel the same, and vice versa. This happens frequently while searching for a job, which can be discouraging, but should not hinder you from continuing to search! There are a great number of opportunities, and sometimes all it takes is adjusting your filters or revising your résumé and cover letter. The cliché “there's plenty of fish in the sea” may be true, but there is definitely a way for each person to start their career off.

—Jackie Vetrano, *Foundations of Academic Success: Words of Wisdom*

Key Takeaways

- Prepare for the interview by carefully reviewing the job description and researching the company in advance. This will help you tailor your interview responses to illustrate how your skills and abilities match the needs of the organization.
- Practice common interview questions with a family member or friend to help you respond to questions more naturally, make a good impression, and build confidence in your interviewing skills.
- Come prepared for the interview by dressing professionally for the position and bringing copies of your résumé, cover letter, letters of reference, and samples of your work if relevant to the position.
- Become familiar with common formats for job interviews, such as screening interviews, one-on-one interviews, phone or web conference interviews, and panel interviews. Each will require different interview techniques from you, and by learning about each type, you will be prepared to demonstrate how you are the best person for the job.
- Always send a personalized thank you note to each person who interviewed you immediately following the interview.

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3.5: What's Next?



Your Success Track

You've completed an important first step toward college success completing this course, by finishing the College Success module! May the new skills and strategies you've gained serve you well not only in college but at work and in any other settings in which college skills become life skills.

Application of Ideas

Consider the presentation, below, by Freeman Hrabowski, president of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC). At the young age of twelve, he marched with Martin Luther King, and now, at UMBC, he works to create an environment that helps underrepresented students—specifically African American, Latino, and low-income learners—get degrees in math and science. In the video he shares the four pillars of UMBC's approach. It's an inspiring talk for any college student, no matter what your major may be. You can download a copy of the transcript [here](#).



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <http://pb.libretexts.org/career/?p=48>

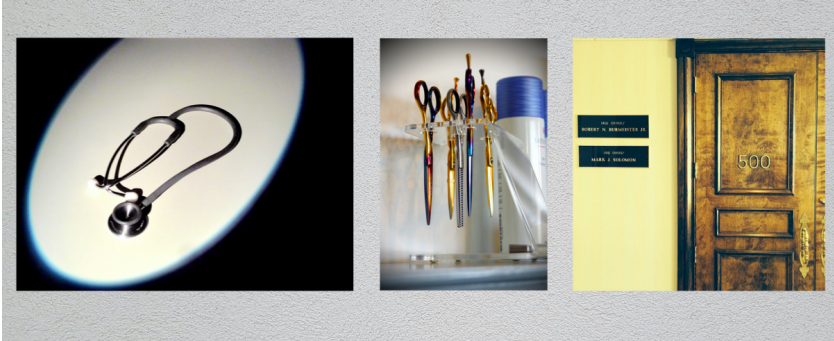
Symbols of Success

As you move more deeply into student life, consider selecting a symbol of your commitment to success. Consider your own personal definition of “success.” What would a physical representation of that success look like? Many people consider graduation caps or diplomas to be symbols of college success. If those are meaningful to you, consider choosing one. Alternatively, yours can

become more personal—an item that speaks to you as a sign of what you’re working toward and how you’ll know you’ve “made it.”

Some ideas from previous students include:

- a stethoscope, for an aspiring medical student
- a set of professional salon scissors, for an aspiring beautician
- an office door nameplate, for an aspiring law student



Once you find a meaningful symbol—perhaps an object or an image or even an idea—keep it in a place where you can easily access it. In moments when you need a boost, you can remind yourself that college success begins and ends with your commitment to learning well.

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- Freeman Hrabowski: 4 Pillars of College Success in Science. **Provided by:** Ted. **Located at:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9EgIK8Mk18o>. **License:** *All Rights Reserved*. **License Terms:** Standard YouTube license

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