The choice of a career is one of the most important decisions that you can make. However, career decisions are not easy. They result from careful searching and planning. Success in finding a rewarding career will depend on the work you put into a career search. By following the steps in career decision-making and using sources of occupational information, you can create a personal career plan.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identifying Possible Careers</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources for Career Information</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Clusters and Pathways</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plans of Study</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Tools for Career Planning and Preparation</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Personal Selling Points</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting Ready for College</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding Job Opportunities</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing Your Digital Dirt</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies for Networking</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill Builder: Build a Personal Network</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Myths and Realities</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill Builder: Practice Introductions and Casual Conversation</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acing any Interview - What You Need to Know</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resumés that Stand Out for the Right Reasons</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words to the Wise</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essential Skills for Success - Keys to Success in any Career Pathway</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting Back to Work: Re-Entry Strategies</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Connections Directory</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putting Together the Education Puzzle</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Define your future needs and wants.
   Examples: Where will you want to live? How much time will you want to devote to your job? How much traveling do you want to do? How much money will you need?

2. Identify possible careers that suit you—careers that match your interests, skills, and personality, as well as your needs and wants.

3. Gather information about each possible career:
   - Employment trends/outlook
   - Job duties
   - Working conditions
   - Education and training requirements
   - Salary range
   - Other information important to you

4. Evaluate your choices.
   Example: Compare your results from steps 1 and 3. Are your skills and abilities appropriate for the career? Will the rewards of the career satisfy you?

5. Choose a career path. (You can still revise your plan—or even change your mind!)
6. **Design a plan to reach your goal:**

Where can you get the needed education and training? How will you afford it?
What courses should you take?
If you’re now in school, what part-time jobs could give you useful education and skills for the career you want?
Are internships available?

7. **Be flexible**—have a plan that you can change if you change your mind or if the career field changes.

8. **Continue to evaluate your career.**

Continue to ask yourself if your chosen career is meeting your needs. If not, then consider a career change. Many people change careers to meet their changing needs or situations.

**WEB ACTIVITY**

Discover your interests! An interest inventory or profile can help relate your interests to career choices. The one listed below is free and easy: [www.mynextmove.org/explore/ip](http://www.mynextmove.org/explore/ip)
Sources for Career Information

- Career consultants
- Counselors
  
  You can find counselors in many places. For example, look in school guidance offices, in school career planning and placement offices, in community organizations, in private counseling agencies and private practices, and in state employment service offices.

- Educational institutions
  - High Schools
  - Community Colleges
  - Colleges / Universities

- Employers

- Online networks and resources

- Personal contacts:
  - Parents
  - Family members
  - Friends and acquaintances
  - Neighbors

- Professional organizations

- Public libraries, career centers and guidance offices

- Trade associations and magazines

WEB ACTIVITY

You can find out about hundreds of possible careers using the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* online. Just visit the website and follow the instructions at:

www.bls.gov/oco/
Career clusters are broad career fields. Each cluster includes a number of related occupations that are organized under “career pathways.” Career information is often organized according to career clusters and pathways. You can use them two ways:

1. If you’re thinking about an occupation, you can find career information for that occupation under the appropriate cluster title.
2. If you’re interested in a career field, but aren’t sure about a specific occupation, pick the cluster title to identify possible occupations. Different sources of career information may use different career cluster titles.

Find the top career clusters that interest you according to personal qualities and school subjects. Think about why these qualities would be important.

---

**Career Cluster: Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources**

**Personal Qualities:**
- Practical
- Observant
- Physically active
- Step-by-step thinker
- Coordinated

**Favorite School Subjects:**
- Agricultural education
- Math
- Geometry
- Chemistry
- Physics
- Language arts

It’s more than farming! Science and technology are fascinating areas that continue to grow through research efforts. New methods and products are continually being developed to make our lives easier and safer. Many of the jobs involved in science and technology are part of agriculture. What exactly is agriculture? It is the production of plants and animals, and related supplies, services, mechanics, products, processing and marketing. Because agriculture continues to expand, the term agriscience is often used to describe the application of agricultural principles and new technologies. There are nearly 22 million jobs in agriculture and related fields in the U.S. today. Fewer than 2 million of these are traditional farming jobs. Agriculture in the 21st century is based in science and often calls upon the latest technologies.
Career Cluster: Architecture & Construction

Personal Qualities:
- Curious
- Follows directions
- Detail-oriented
- Can imagine possibilities
- Patient and persistent

Favorite School Subjects:
- Math
- Drafting
- Physical sciences
- Construction trades
- Electrical trades
- Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning
- Technology engineering

WEB ACTIVITY
Careers in green construction:
www.bls.gov/green/construction/

Career Cluster: Business, Management & Administration

Personal Qualities:
- Organized
- Practical and logical
- Patient
- Tactful
- Responsible

Favorite School Subjects:
- Business and information technology/computer applications
- Accounting
- Math
- English
- Economics

Career Cluster: Arts, A/V Technology & Communications

Personal Qualities:
- Creative and imaginative
- Communicates well
- Curious about technology
- Relates well to feelings and thoughts of others
- Determined

Favorite School Subjects:
- Art/Graphic design
- Music
- Speech and drama
- Literature
- Journalism
- Audiovisual technologies

Career Cluster: Education & Training

Personal Qualities:
- Friendly and helpful
- Decision maker
- Innovative
- Questioning/inquisitive
- Good listener

Favorite School Subjects:
- Language arts
- Social sciences
- Math
- Science
- Psychology
Career Cluster: Finance

Personal Qualities:
- Trustworthy
- Orderly and logical
- Self-confident
- Methodical or efficient

Favorite School Subjects:
- Accounting
- Math
- Economics
- Banking/Financial services
- Business law

Career Cluster: Health Science

Personal Qualities:
- Compassionate and caring
- Follows directions
- Conscientious and careful
- Patient
- Good listener

Favorite School Subjects:
- Health careers education
- Biological sciences
- Chemistry
- Math
- Language arts

Look for “hidden healthcare careers.” Of the many possible careers in health sciences, you might be familiar with only a few of them—such as doctor, nurse, and physical therapist. Other careers are not well known and require little or no contact with patients. For example, investigate careers such as biostatistician, cytotechnologists, surgical technologists, pharmacy technician and medical transcriptionist. Health educators promote wellness and healthy lifestyles.

Career Cluster: Government & Public Administration

Personal Qualities:
- Communicates well
- Competitive
- Service-oriented
- Organized
- Problem solver

Favorite School Subjects:
- Government
- Language arts
- History
- Math
- Foreign language
Career Cluster: Hospitality & Tourism

Personal Qualities:
- Tactful
- Self-motivated
- Works well with others
- Outgoing
- Easygoing/slow to anger

Favorite School Subjects:
- Language arts/Speech
- Foreign language
- Social sciences
- Marketing
- Food services

Career Cluster: Human Services

Personal Qualities:
- Communicates well
- Good listener
- Caring
- Uses logic and intuition
- Non-judgmental

Favorite School Subjects:
- Language arts
- Psychology/Sociology
- Family and consumer sciences education
- Finance
- Foreign language

Family and Consumer Sciences professionals work in the following areas:
- foods and nutrition
- design and consulting
- research
- education
- media
- child development
- human services
- retail merchandising
- consumer affairs
- the Cooperative Extension Service

WEB ACTIVITY

Ready to know more about some of the thousands of possible careers? Go to: www.bls.gov/opub/ooq/ooqindex.htm and scroll down to “Occupations and industries.” You’ll find articles about a wide range of career choices and career pathways.
**Career Cluster: Information Technology (IT)**

**Personal Qualities:**
- Logical/analytical thinker
- Sees details in the big picture
- Persistent
- Good concentration skills
- Precise and accurate

**Favorite School Subjects:**
- Math
- Science
- Computer technology/applications
- Technology engineering
- Communications
- Graphic design

Who are IT workers? No single definition exists. However, people in IT careers usually have a computer-related focus. IT careers can be found in almost all parts of the country and in all types of organizations—from retail businesses to manufacturing plants.

**WEB ACTIVITY**

To learn about the history of the FBI, go to: www.fbi.gov/about-us/history

To learn about “tools of the trade,” take a quiz to test your knowledge and more, go to: www.fbi.gov/fun-games

Applicants for careers in law enforcement must pass a series of tests. These tests can include a physical abilities test, a polygraph exam, a background investigation, a psychological exam, and other tests. To watch a video of a physical abilities test, go to:

www.kcmo.org/police/AboutUs/Departments/Administration/HumanResources/EmploymentSection/HiringProcess/index.htm

A police academy provides candidates with the core knowledge and skills to succeed as a peace officer. To read about basic academy life, go to:

www.ok.gov/cleet/Peace_Officers/index.html

---

**Career Cluster: Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security**

**Personal Qualities:**
- Adventurous
- Dependable
- Community-minded
- Decisive
- Optimistic

**Favorite School Subjects:**
- Language arts
- Psychology/Sociology
- Government
- History
- Law enforcement
- First aid/first responder

---

**Career Cluster: Manufacturing**

**Personal Qualities:**
- Practical
- Observant
- Physically active
- Step-by-step thinker
- Coordinated

**Favorite School Subjects:**
- Math
- Geometry
- Physics
- Chemistry
- Trade and industry
- Technology engineering
- Language arts
Career Cluster: Marketing, Sales & Service

Personal Qualities:
- Enthusiastic
- Competitive
- Creative
- Self-motivated
- Persuasive

Favorite School Subjects:
- Language arts
- Math
- Business education/Marketing
- Economics
- Computer applications

Career Cluster: Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM)

Personal Qualities:
- Detail-oriented
- Inquisitive
- Objective
- Methodical
- Mechanically-inclined

Favorite School Subjects:
- Math
- Science
- Drafting/CAD
- Electronics/Computer networking
- Technology engineering

Like to solve problems? A committee of experts from around the world came up with a list of 14 “grand challenges” for engineering. Maybe you can help to find solutions to these challenges:

- Make solar energy economical.
- Provide energy from fusion.
- Develop carbon sequestration methods.
- Manage the nitrogen cycle.
- Provide access to clean water.
- Restore and improve urban infrastructure.
- Advance health informatics.
- Engineer better medicines.
- Reverse-engineer the brain.
- Prevent nuclear terror.
- Secure cyberspace.
- Enhance virtual reality.
- Advance personalized learning.
- Engineer the tools of scientific discovery.

To learn more, go to:
www.engineeringchallenges.org

WEB ACTIVITY

To see real-world movies about real STEM careers, go to:
www.thefutureschannel.com
What is a plan of study? A plan of study can work as a roadmap to guide you as you work to reach your career goals. To stay on track, you should create a plan of study, then update your plan each year you are in school. You can see sample plans of study for each career cluster and career pathway at http://united.okcareertech.org/students/plan-of-study/sample-pathway-plans-of-study.

For a blank plan of study that you can fill in, scroll down to the bottom of the page at the link above.

What if you change your mind about your career choice? Don’t worry! Simply revise your plan of study so you can take the courses you need for your new career choice.

A number of online tools can assist you in choosing a career and finding a job:

- **Salary calculators**—These tools provide information on salaries within specific geographic locations and for specific career types. They are useful when moving from one location to another where the cost of living may be drastically different.

- **Career tests**—These tools can help you determine which career is a best fit for your skills and interests.

- **Skills training**—Technology centers, colleges and universities, and community or technical colleges can help you obtain or improve specific job-required skills. Many of them also offer courses online.

- **Advice and resources**—These tools provide information on current employment trends; sample résumés, cover letters, and common interview questions; and even advice on negotiating salary and benefits.

- **Podcasts**—Podcasts provide an opportunity for recruiters to give résumé and job seeking tips. They also enable employers to advertise positions and provide information about their organizations.

- **Blogs**—You can create your own job-search blog, read company blogs, and join career-related blogs.