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.
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## CAREER FOCUS

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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!)
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?

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

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
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**

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**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/ooh
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/

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**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

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**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

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**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