

CAREER EXPLORATION GUIDE

Understanding the world and your place in it.



Cornell University

College of Human Ecology • Office of Career Development • 172 MVR

Career Exploration Guide

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Welcome

The purpose of this guide is to support you as you begin exploring and understanding career paths. Your own career development involves reflecting upon your interests, skills, strengths, and accomplishments—what you value, and what you are looking for in a career. This guide will help you identify these areas while providing guidelines for decision-making and information gathering—about careers, work, academic courses, and yourself.

Many resources are available to help you locate information about careers. The Human Ecology Career Exploration Center (CEC) in MVR 162 holds important information and resources about internships and careers. Career Assistants in the CEC are also available to help you navigate resources, build effective resumes and cover letters, and assist you in researching on-campus and off-campus opportunities.

Counselors in Student and Career Development, MVR 172, are also available to help you process much of the information provided in this guide. Make an appointment to meet with a counselor about decision-making, majors and careers, experiential opportunities, and how you can develop skills to enhance your career development.

We hope that you will take advantage of the variety of resources available, and begin to realize, through this guide, that career development requires self-reflection, awareness of careers, and informed decision-making. This guide is available to help you through the process.

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Career Myths

Career Exploration Quiz

Read each item and decide whether it is true or false

1. _____ Career testing will tell me what career is right for me.
2. _____ There is a perfect career for me.
3. _____ I'll pursue whatever career is in demand.
4. _____ If I make the wrong decision, I'll be stuck forever.
5. _____ I know everything I need to know about the career of my choice.
6. _____ I don't need to be concerned about making career choices until my Junior year.

Generally, all of the above items are false, and can be seen as career myths. Before you consider exploring careers, it is important to identify these myths that could block informed decision-making.

MYTH: Career testing will tell me what career is right for me.

FACT: No test will tell you which career is right for you or what career you should follow. Career assessment results can be useful in gathering information about you and relating it to career types. Test results often help you to put information in order so you can verify or challenge your ideas. These assessments are tools; the decision is yours.

MYTH: There is a perfect career for me.

FACT: No single career is the perfect one for you. There are many careers that have the potential to meet your career goals, and several ways to find a meaningful career path. Career choice often requires the willingness to balance disadvantages with advantages and to make choices between several alternatives.

MYTH: I'll pursue whatever career is in demand.

FACT: Knowing what is hot in the job market is important information, but not the only information you need to make a decision. Without knowing about your own interests and skills, you may choose a career that is available, but may learn that it isn't the right fit for you.

MYTH: If I make the wrong decision, I'll be stuck forever.

FACT: Fear of making a wrong decision can prevent you from making any decision. Career choices are never permanent. Few people head into one career and stay there for their whole working lives. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that the average age worker will change careers five times during a work life.

MYTH: I know everything I need to know about the career of my choice.

FACT: Your knowledge may be incomplete. Understanding careers requires exploration, experience, and knowledge. The world of work is continually changing, and acquiring a variety of skills that apply to a variety of settings, will prepare you for a dynamic job market.

MYTH: I don't need to be concerned about making career choices until my Junior year.

FACT: Actually, your career development has already begun! Attending college is a career decision and your major choice is a career decision. It is never too early to think about your future and your career.

Key Career Questions

Open career questions can prompt ideas about the direction you might take in your career. These questions provide clues to understand yourself and your potential. Before looking at the career exploration process, take a moment to think about your responses to the questions below. Write down some of your thoughts, and consider these as part of understanding yourself in the career exploration process.

What can you honestly see yourself doing and enjoying?

If a miracle happened one evening and you awoke the next morning with your fantasy career waiting, what do you see yourself running to do?

The last time you were in a bookstore, what was the first section you went to? What personal interests and career ideas are suggested from your preferences?

Who do you admire? Why?

One thing I have always done well is...

The Career Exploration Process

Career exploration is a continual process that requires gathering information about yourself and information about careers. Whether you are just beginning to think about a career, or have a good idea of where you are heading, make sure you engage in self-assessment, career research, and experiences that enhance your skills and build upon your strengths.

Think of career planning in three steps. These steps include:

Step One: Understanding Yourself and Self-Assessment. Knowing about yourself is the basis of career decision-making. What are your interests, skills, your values? What is important to you about your work? What are your personal traits and characteristics?

Step Two: Gathering Information about Careers. Learning about the careers, types of jobs, educational requirements, and job functions are important in understanding the careers that fit your interests and goals.

Step Three: Integration. This step requires you to take what you know about yourself and piece it together with the reality of the work world. You begin to evaluate career options that are practical for you.

Career/Life

Career decisions will include more than considering which job to take after graduation. Your career is the value of all the work and experiences you develop over time. In making career decisions, the work you choose to pursue will have a direct impact on the way you live your life. Your values, interests, past experiences, and lifestyle choices are all part of career development

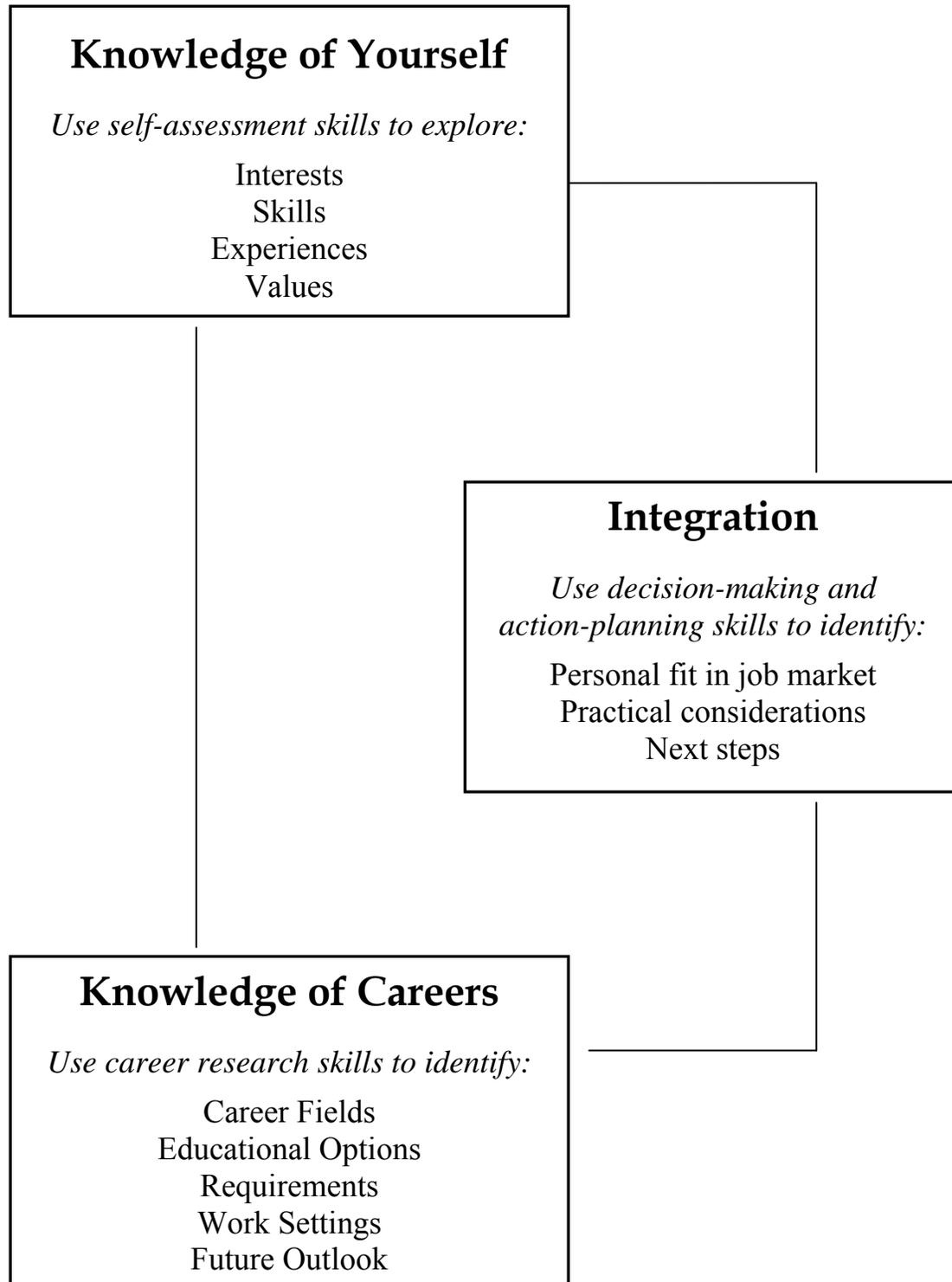
Developing an Action Plan

Planning is an essential component of the process that requires setting goals about work and lifestyle and developing specific objectives that will help you meet them. Regardless of where you are in the planning process—from completely unsure to having somewhat of an idea—you will need to set goals and set strategies to move forward in the process. Gathering information will help you establish clear goals and objectives. Many sources of career information and support are available to help you along.

Making Career Decisions

Your career plan will not be the result of one decision, but rather a series of decisions throughout your lifetime. You will go through the steps in career planning several times because as you continue to grow and develop as a person, your interests, skills, and values will change. The job market will also continually change. So, “process” implies a dynamic aspect of reflection and knowledge to develop satisfying and successful career and life plans. Don’t be alarmed if you feel uncertain about career plans – now is the time to explore, question, and wonder.

The Career Exploration Process



Understanding Yourself

The starting point in the career exploration process includes identifying your skills, values, interests, and strengths in order to analyze the appropriateness of career paths and job opportunities. In this self-assessment stage, key questions include:

- What do I like to do?
- What keeps my curiosity? What motivates me?
- What do I like to work with? People, concepts, things, data?
- What do I value?
- What skills do I possess? What new ones can I develop?

The ultimate goal in the choosing a career is for you to find a career field or job that is consistent with your interests, skills, personality, abilities, and values. These traits are not always easy to identify. There are formal as well as informal methods of self-assessment. Self-assessment is the key to successful career planning and requires critical thought and reflection.

Action steps:

- Meet with a Human Ecology Career Counselor in MVR 172
- Visit the Human Ecology Career Exploration Center in MVR 162
 - Bring a resume draft; have it critiqued
 - Browse the CEC resources
- Visit Cornell Career Services, Barnes Hall
 - Use computer-based assessments at Cornell Career Services to learn more about yourself
 - SIGI Plus
 - Strong Interest Inventory
 - Myers Briggs Type Indicator
 - SkillScan
 - Self-Directed Search
 - Pick up a Cornell Career Services Career Guide
- Attend **career workshops** offered on campus – Check the Career Events Guide and Communecology
- Get feedback from friends, family, advisors, and faculty to learn about your unique interests, abilities, and strengths
- Complete reflective exercises - Complete the **self-assessment** exercises in this Guide to identify your strengths and skills
- Think about your past experiences and accomplishments – list any **transferable skills** -- written and verbal communication; leadership; computer skills; organization; problem solving; analytical thinking; managing a budget; teaching; supervising; teamwork
- Build a resume. Meet with a counselor or visit the Career Exploration Center for tips on writing a resume
- Choose **electives** that help you gather information about yourself. Choose courses that interest you or explore a skill area. What did you learn about yourself?

Understanding Careers

Begin researching types of careers: identify resources, market information, and evaluate career options. Your task is to find information resources that meet your expectations and requirements. You will want to learn about types of careers, culture, mission, areas of specialization within career areas, current issues, and major accomplishments. Some important questions include:

- What are examples of careers in my major or field of interest?
- What do I know about the reality of the job market?
- What job titles interest me?
- What work environments do I like?
- How can I find an internship, externship or work experience?

Action steps:

- Visit the Career Exploration Center in MVR 162 or meet with a Career Counselor to explore questions
 - How can I build experience?
 - What can I do with my major?
- Pick up a Career Guide
- Register for **Cornell CareerNet** and establish your Career Interest Profile www.career.cornell.edu
- Conduct an information interview
- Connect with Alumni through the Cornell Career Services *Career Contact Network*
- Choose elective courses that allow you to sample career options
- Get involved by choosing to volunteer or join a club or organization
- Find out about summer opportunities and internships
- Talk to upper-classmen about their **externship/ internship** experiences

Resources:

- The Career Exploration Center (CEC) in MVR 162
 - Resource Library
 - Resume / Cover Letter Development
 - Cornell CareerNet
 - Trained Career Assistants
- Cornell Career Services Resource Library in 103 Barnes
 - The Occupational Outlook Handbook
 - Dictionary of Occupational Titles
 - Many more career resources!
- Internet Sources
- People
 - Human Ecology Student and Career Development, MVR 172
 - Human Ecology Faculty and Staff
 - Cornell Career Services, 103 Barnes Hall
 - Alumni
 - Friends and Family
- You – think about how your personal experiences open up career possibilities!

Integration

Integration requires decision-making and action planning. The integration step is important because it requires taking what you know about yourself and putting it together with the reality of the work world. In doing so, you begin to identify career options that are practical for you. Some important questions include:

- Do I have the resources to pursue these options?
- What challenges might be presented in the job market?
- Where are my academic strengths – could I pursue these career options?
- What career areas or clusters interest me?
- How can I narrow down my options?
- Should I pursue graduate school?
- What else do I need to know to identify my career objectives?
- What can I do to enhance my academic life? (study abroad, internships...)
- Do I need to conduct more self-assessment or career research?

Action Steps

- **Talk to a career counselor.**

Career counselors in MVR 172 can help you process some of the important information you have discovered about careers and about yourself. Counselors also help you identify strengths, obstacles, and where you may need to support your skills with other experience.

- **Gain experience.**

Several opportunities are available to help students make decisions about career paths. Externships and internships enhance skills, and can also help you determine what you like and don't like. Keeping your options open is important, and it is also practical to gain a wealth of experience to increase your marketability and point you in the right direction. Opportunities such as Urban Semester, Capital Semester, and Study Abroad have endless benefits and rewards for students as they make career decisions.

- **Attend events on campus.**

Resume workshops, information on internships and externships, presentations by alumni and students are frequent programs offered on campus. Do you keep current with these events? Do you read *Communcology*? Have you participated in a club or organization? Do you attend campus activities and events on campus? Many important opportunities are right at your fingertips—enhance your career and personal development through these opportunities on campus. You may learn something new about yourself, discover a new interest, or

Summary

There are plenty of career exploration tasks to work on regardless of where you are in the process, and there are many resources available to assist you.

Your education plays a large part of the career exploration process. The courses you take, your choice of major, your work experience, the clubs you join, and the people you meet will all influence the career decisions you make in your lifetime.

Building Your Resume

Start Early

A resume highlights skills, experiences, educational background, and other relevant pieces of information. It is not an autobiography. A resume should reflect the qualities that make the applicant a good match for the position. Every position is different and has different requirements. Your resume should be adaptable and flexible and should be tailored to the specific job you seek.

The resume building process is a continual process, and students should begin creating a resume early in their academic career. Students interested in internships and externships need a resume to show potential sponsors. Resumes reflect your transferable skills, what you could offer, and what you could gain from an experience. In college, the skills you are providing are largely educational experiences, and these experiences will play a larger role in your resume. Components such as GPA, courses taken, volunteering/community involvement, and externship and internship experiences help employers understand your strengths and skills.

Keep Track of Your Experiences

Create a document of experiences that contains a listing of skills, courses taken, participation in clubs and organizations, certifications, offices held, work experience, and volunteer experience. This serves as a master document, and from here, you can begin to tailor your resume to fit the desired position. Keep track of your experiences and think about how you can apply these experiences to new ones!

Revise Your Resume

You should always ask another person to review your resume. Ask friends and family to look over your resume. Also, ask a career counselor to look over your resume or bring it to the Career Exploration Center to be critiqued. Writing your resume is a process that takes time.

Resume Tips

- Create a crisp, clean, professional appearance.
- Use brief statements and concrete language. Know which skills you bring to the position.
- Keep the layout simple, balanced, and well-organized.
- Maintain consistent indentation, capitalization, font style, and spacing.
- Boldface important information.
- Quantify accomplishments when possible.
- Begin phrases with action verbs in the past tense – for current positions, use present tense.
- Place all dates on the right-hand side of the page.
- Avoid abbreviations.
- Visit the Career Exploration Center and have someone critique and proofread your resume.
- Ask questions! Use the Cornell Career Guide, the Career Exploration Center, and counselors as resources.

Transferable Skills

Understanding transferable skills is an important part of career development. Transferable skills are important in seeing your career potential, defining your strengths, building cover letters and resumes, and establishing important interview strategies. Transferable skills—skills you have acquired throughout experiences in your life—apply to many new experiences and opportunities. Projects, coursework, jobs, internships, volunteer experiences, participation in sports or clubs, and hobbies are all transferable skills and can be applied to many new situations or experiences you encounter.

Students often think that their past experiences are not valuable skill building experiences. All of your experiences are important career skills. For example, a retail associate who seeks a teaching position has had to problem-solve, exercise patience, and develop strong communication and interpersonal skills. Camp counselors, for example, have worked in teams, developed creative strategies, and organized and implemented events.

Below is a list of five broad skill areas, which are divided into more specific skills. Consider past experiences and jobs you have held. What transferable skills are found in these positions?

Communication

The expression, transmission and interpretation of knowledge and ideas.

- Speaking effectively
- Writing concisely
- Listening attentively
- Expressing ideas
- Facilitating group discussion
- Providing appropriate feedback
- Negotiating
- Perceiving nonverbal messages
- Persuading
- Reporting information
- Describing feelings
- Interviewing
- Editing

Research and Planning

The search for specific knowledge and the ability to conceptualize future needs and solutions for meeting those needs.

- Forecasting, predicting
- Identifying problems
- Imagining alternatives
- Identifying resources
- Gathering information
- Solving problems
- Setting goals
- Extracting important information
- Defining needs
- Analyzing / Developing evaluation strategies

Human Relations

The use of interpersonal skills for resolving conflict, relating to and helping people.

- Developing rapport
- Being Sensitive
- Listening
- Conveying feelings
- Providing support for others
- Motivating
- Sharing credit
- Counseling
- Cooperating
- Delegating with respect
- Representing others
- Perceiving feelings, situations
- Asserting

Organization, Management and Leadership

The ability to supervise, direct and guide individuals and groups in the completion of tasks and fulfillment of goals.

- Initiating new ideas
- Handling details
- Coordinating tasks
- Managing groups
- Delegating responsibility
- Teaching
- Coaching
- Counseling
- Promoting change
- Selling ideas or products
- Decision making with others
- Managing conflict

Work Management

The day-to-day skills that assist in promoting effective production and work satisfaction.

- Implementing decisions
- Cooperating
- Enforcing policies
- Being punctual
- Managing time
- Attending to detail
- Meeting goals
- Enlisting help
- Accepting responsibility
- Setting and meeting deadlines
- Organizing
- Making decisions

Discovering Your Career Potential

Begin developing your resume by creating an inventory and list of your skills. Consider what courses you have taken, your work experience, and your personal characteristics to find the skills that define you and what you can bring to a new opportunity or experience. Refer to the list of transferable skills for help.

Academic or Knowledge Skills

Review course syllabi; what were the objectives? What were you trained to understand? What did you learn; what did you solve?

Examples:

Writing; Research; Group work
Meeting deadlines; Multi-tasking

Work-Related Skills

Examine your work history and job descriptions; what skills were used? What did you accomplish?

Personal Knowledge Skills

What are your unique characteristics? How do others describe you? How would you describe yourself?

Using Elective Courses

Human Ecology students have an opportunity to take several electives as part of their degree requirements. In choosing elective courses, students should select courses that will benefit academic and professional goals. Electives provide students with the freedom to choose courses outside of their major and can offer insight into different careers and personal potential. Some reasons for choosing electives are listed below.

➤ **To explore career options**

Elective courses can help you explore career options. Sampling courses in areas of interest can confirm expectations about a career path, or open new possibilities. Students can also get new perspectives from professors and peers about career options within disciplines.

➤ **To develop a focus or concentration**

By taking courses in an area of interest, you can build your own focus or concentration. Through using electives, you can build your own concentration that will supplement the work in your major. Discuss with your advisor or a counselor (MVR 172) about any areas of interest, and how you might choose electives to your advantage.

➤ **To enhance your marketability**

Students often select courses to build upon various skill areas, such as finance, marketing, computer technology, languages, or public speaking. Students whose coursework reflects a strong liberal arts foundation and added skills are highly competitive in the job market.

➤ **To develop a talent you have neglected**

Have you always enjoyed singing, theatre, or music? Perhaps you don't want to major in that area, but want to add some depth to your education by pursuing an interest. Electives allow you to pursue and develop interests and talents that you do not plan to turn into a major, but that you also don't want to neglect.

➤ **To learn to understand and appreciate different cultures**

Classes that challenge you to understand the values and patterns of cultures different from your own will allow you to shed some light on your own culture, and your own personal values and perspectives.

➤ **To get active!**

Getting fit and staying fit are lifelong activities that help you to work and think productively. Cornell offers a variety of physical education courses that will allow you to stay healthy and balanced.

➤ **To learn life-skills that will be useful later**

Basic courses in writing and communicating are essential to a variety of careers. Students are encouraged to take courses that help them communicate clearly—both verbally and written.

➤ **To take courses because you will enjoy them**

It is important to take courses because you enjoy them. Courses that stimulate your curiosity and keep you engaged will benefit you in many aspects of your life, and will continue to make your college experience rewarding and satisfying.

*Talk to your peers or upper-class students about interesting electives to take.
Be curious, thoughtful, and daring.*

Conclusion

Career development takes place throughout the course of one's lifetime, and despite where you are in the process, careers require continual self-assessment. As the world continues to change and become more complex, it is important to understand ourselves and our relationship within it. Self-assessment and reflection helps us to deepen this understanding and develop skills over time to manage and prepare for a dynamic job market.

The future is full of possibilities, and what you bring to your career is a unique combination of personal characteristics, educational background, and experience. Over time, career decisions change as your interests, values, and experiences change. Keep an open mind to new ideas and opportunities. Be thoughtful about your decisions and considerate of your dreams.

Resources

Human Ecology AlumNet <http://www.human.cornell.edu/Current-Student-Portal.cfm>

AlumNet is a database of HE alumni and their current careers. Are you interested in learning about the ins and outs of a particular career field? Students are encouraged to contact alumni to set up an information interview.

Human Ecology Career Exploration Center, MVR 162

Start your career search in the CEC. Ask Career Assistants and Counselors to help you search for resources, critique a resume, or explore opportunities and experiences that can enhance your skills.

Human Ecology Career Development, MVR 172, 255-2532

Set up an appointment with a career counselor to discuss your career options with you, and to assist you in gathering resources and making the most out of your time at Cornell. Also, look for workshops and programs offered through Human Ecology Career Services.

Cornell Career Services, 103 Barnes Hall, <http://www.career.cornell.edu>

Visit Cornell Career Services. The resource library contains a variety of publications and resources to help you explore careers.

Occupational Outlook Handbook <http://www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm>

The OOH, from the U.S.F. Bureau of Labor Statistics, gives you detailed information on 250 occupations. Each listing addresses the employment outlook, job duties, earning, working conditions, training, education, qualifications and career advancement.

Occupational Outlook Quarterly <http://www.bls.gov/opub/ooq/ooqhome.htm>

A publication available on the web that covers career and work related topics on new and developing careers in the 21st Century.

America's Career InfoNet <http://www.acinet.org/>

A comprehensive source of occupational information on hundreds of careers that lists transferable skills used in many occupations, which industries employ people in these occupations, and expected salaries.

Job Profiles <http://www.jobprofiles.org/>

A career exploration and inspirational website where experienced workers share their motivations, basic skills and advice with those just entering the field. The profiles cover a wide variety of jobs.

Economic and Employment Projects 2000-2010 <http://stats.bls.gov/news.release/ecopro.toc.htm>

U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics provides the most current projections on where future job growth is expected by industry and occupation and information on the workforce pursuing those careers.

Career Development Exercises

As part of the self-assessment process, complete the following exercises.
Discuss results with a career counselor to decide what steps to take next.

Personal Profile

Use this space to summarize your self-information.

What are your interests? Write down your ideas below:

List three interests you have identified:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

List three activities or things you wish to avoid:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

List three work-related values:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

List three personality traits:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Describe Yourself

List 10 words that describe you:

- | | |
|----|-----|
| 1. | 6. |
| 2. | 7. |
| 3. | 8. |
| 4. | 9. |
| 5. | 10. |

Which words describe work-related strengths or assets?

Interests

Answer the following questions by thinking about what you enjoy:

1. What courses/ subject areas do you like?
2. What books or magazines do you read?
3. What do you like to do for fun? What do you do in your spare time?
4. What jobs have you had? What did you like or dislike about them?
5. Based on your responses, write a short statement about the things you like to do, and why

Values

Below is a list of work values, with an example of each.

Check off all the work values that are important to you, and rank the values you selected from 1-10.

- | | | |
|---------------------|-------|--|
| Adventure | _____ | work duties that involve frequent risk-taking |
| Creativity | _____ | developing new ideas, programs, structures |
| Authority | _____ | being in charge |
| Altruism | _____ | helping others |
| Help Society | _____ | do something to contribute to the betterment of the world |
| Independence | _____ | plan own work schedule without close supervision |
| Travel | _____ | opportunities to travel on the job |
| Prestige | _____ | be recognized and respected for your work |
| Pressure | _____ | high-pressure environment where quality of work is judged critically |
| Stability | _____ | keep a steady routine with a reasonable financial reward |
| Variety | _____ | experience change and enjoy different tasks |
| Time Freedom | _____ | have time and energy to spend outside of work; establish own schedule |
| Teamwork | _____ | work as a member of a team toward common goals |
| Learning | _____ | opportunity to learn new skills and apply them |
| Aesthetics | _____ | be involved in studying or appreciating the beauty of things, ideas |
| Challenge | _____ | use your skills to solve complex problems |
| Physical Challenge | _____ | physical demands, or 'hands on' challenges |
| Advancement | _____ | opportunity for promotion |
| Leisure | _____ | have time and energy to spend outside of work |
| Wealth | _____ | have a high income |
| Location | _____ | a place to live (town, geographical area) which is conducive to my lifestyle |
| Intellectual Status | _____ | acknowledged as "expert" in a given field or subject |

Achievements

A good way to identify skills is to consider your achievements and experiences. List three achievements below, large or small as long as they are important to you. For each accomplishment, answer the following:

1. What were the skills involved in making the accomplishment?
2. What did you enjoy?
3. What was challenging? How did you overcome these challenges?

Accomplishments

Example: Organized fundraiser for a concert tour.
Enjoyed the opportunity to take a leadership role to support a good cause.

Skills

- Interviewing
- Organization
- Presentation
- Writing
- Training
- Computer skill

1.

2.

3.

Additional questions to consider as you reflect on your achievements and accomplishments.

- How did you interact with people?
- Did you work alone or with others?
- Did it require you to be a leader of team member?
- How did you deal with data, ideas, or things?
- What was most rewarding?
- How much structure was involved?
- What interests were represented?
- What values are represented?

Thoughts on Career Development

People don't choose their careers; they are engulfed by them. *John Dos Passos*

The way we live our days is the way we live our lives. *Annie Dillard*

Follow your bliss. *Joseph Campbell*

Like the bee, we should make our industry our amusement. *Oliver Goldsmith*

The best way to predict the future is to invent it. *Alan Kay*

Whatever you can do, or dream you can do, begin it now. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it. *Goethe*

Life is either a daring adventure or nothing. *Helen Keller*

Passion gives us moments of wholeness. *Anais Nin*

Responsibility is what awaits outside the Eden of Creativity. *Nadine Gordimer*

Teachers open the door. You enter by yourself. *Chinese Proverb*

Pleasure in the job puts perfection in the work. *Aristotle*

I learn by going where I have to go. *Theodore Roethke*

We must make the choices that enable us to fulfill the deepest capacities of our real selves. *Thomas Merton*

Expect nothing. Live frugally, on surprise. *Alice Walker*

Life is a succession of lessons, which must be lived to be understood. *Emerson*

Nothing happens unless first, a dream. *Carl Sandberg*

First say to yourself what you would be; and then do what you have to do. *Epictetus*

What are some of your own career/life quotations? What inspires your career development?
