

## CHOOSING A CAREER KNOWING WHERE YOU'RE GOING

This article is about choosing a career.  
You will consider your skills, interests, and values and how to match them up with your career options.  
You will be given advice on how to find the information needed to make a career decision.  
You will begin to take the practical steps necessary to change your future.

### FIRST QUESTIONS

***"What do you want to be when you grow up?" is a question everyone has heard.***

It suggests that there is a simple answer and that somehow each of us should know exactly what career is right for us. According to labour experts, we will probably change jobs and careers *six to seven times* during our working lives.

You may not be able to choose just one career for the rest of your life. The decision you make today to learn the skills you need to get the "right" job is simply the first decision of many that you will have to make in a lifetime. This means that it is very important to first learn how to make decisions about your career goals. This knowledge will give you the tools to begin, to improve, and to change careers as the world of work changes around you.

Although the process for exploring careers is straightforward, it involves a considerable effort. You will need to spend some time looking at yourself, deciding what is important to you, and gathering information on possible careers. After that, you will need to learn where to get training to pursue your chosen career. This may seem like too much work, but think about how much your decision will affect the other parts of your life. It will affect the amount of money you'll earn and how well you'll like your job. It will also influence the environment you live in, the friends you make, and the plans you have for the future. If you consider that in a ten-year span you will spend over 20,000 hours working, you will realize that the time spent deciding on the skills you need and where to get them is really not very great.

### CHECKING WITH YOURSELF

***Before you decide what career you might like, you must look at yourself.*** You need to decide what's important to you, what interests you, and what abilities you have. As you mature, you will develop a system of personal values. Often what's valued by you is something you do well and, therefore, is something you really enjoy doing. These three important items -- values, skills, and interests -- will help you select a career that brings you satisfaction and success. A couple of sample exercises are included (under the "Your Skills and Interests" link) to help you understand your skills, interests, and values. Look over the values you have marked as very important. These are work needs for you to remember when you are selecting a career.

## CHECKING WITH OTHERS

***This guide should help you to start thinking about your skills, interests, and values.*** But this guide is just the beginning. There are many other resources available to help you.

This would be a good time to visit the guidance office at your high school (whether you are still in school or not). Good career counselling is also often available at a Private Career College or at your local community college. The YMCA also provides a good career counselling program. Counsellors can help you identify your skills, interests, and values at little or no cost. That's their job, and you are the reason they exist.

## CHECKING OUT CAREER OPTIONS

***After you have taken time to think about what's right for you, the next step is to find a skilled job that you would like.*** This is the first of several fact-finding missions you will go on. There is a lot of help available to assist you in completing your mission.

When you first look at careers, you should start with general books that list a number of career fields. The public library or local school library will be your next stop. The librarian can help you find books to assist you in your career search. *The National Occupational Classifications*, compiled by Human Resources and Social Development Canada, is a book that can help you. *The Encyclopedia of Careers and Vocational Guidance* is also good. It describes over seventy major industries and job fields and lists hundreds of careers. Look over these books and others like them early in your career search.

Each of these books describes an occupation in terms of requirements and responsibilities. These publications discuss physical requirements, the working environment, and necessary training and education. Also included is information on the number of workers in the career field and their average earnings and the national employment outlook for the career.

Once you have found a career that you like and that suits your needs, look for books that will provide more detailed information. Many professional societies, trade associations, labour unions, business firms, and educational institutions can help you. They will give you career information free or at a low cost.

Don't forget to talk to people in the career fields you are interested in. Speak to your friends, neighbours, or relatives -- anybody you think of as successful. Most people like to talk about what they do. Through these conversations you can get the facts about a career and also find out how these people got their jobs and what aspects of the job they like most. If possible, go to a job site and look at the workers. Watch what they do and how they do it. Check out the equipment and think about whether you would like to do the same kind of work.

A small word of caution is needed here:

Always check the date of printed information. Some career information quickly becomes outdated. In particular, information about wages changes very fast.

Always consider the source of the information. Some materials are produced to provide general career data, and other materials are meant to promote a certain career. Promotional materials often provide career information but may not provide you with the whole career story; sometimes, only the best things are listed about the career field.

You will need all the information that you have collected to make your career decision. You should pay special attention to what you would be doing on the job. Also, remember to look carefully at the working conditions. As part of your fact-finding mission, you should consider what might happen to your chosen career in the future.

## **CHECKING THE FUTURE**

***As you think about a new career, you must also think about the future of that career.*** A career as a typesetter in a printing shop may be appealing to you and may pay well, but will there be a demand for skilled workers in this job a few years from now? Current job projections say no. Growth or decline in the demand for skilled workers in a particular job occurs for several reasons. Technological change is a major factor in the decline of several occupations. Another factor is the shift in the country's economy. The Canadian economy seems to be shifting from goods-producing industries (making products like coal and refrigerators) to service-producing industries (offering services such as health care, education, repair and maintenance, amusement and recreation, transportation, banking, and insurance). This trend is likely to continue.