



Your journey to work

A career planning workbook

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Welcome to *Your journey to work*

Identifying the right career, course or training route for you is often called the ‘career planning process’.

This can be divided into four parts and it’s important that you work through all of these so you can research and weigh up the options open to you in an informed, methodical and realistic manner. You will have the opportunity to ask yourself “Where am I now?” “Where do I want to get to?” and “How do I get there?”. This workbook will support you as you:

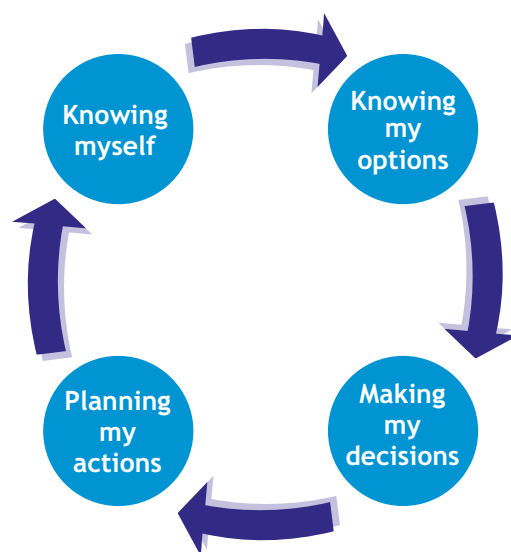
- Examine your values and interests
- Consider how your talents and skills can best be used in the world of work
- Identify working environments that suit your personality
- Research careers and occupations available to you
- Make informed decisions about your chosen career path
- Develop career goals as part of your future plan.

Job satisfaction is not an accident. People who enjoy their work and find it meaningful have found a career that best fits their personality and skills.

This workbook is based on a four step process. You should start with *Knowing myself* and work through to *Planning my actions*. This is shown as a cycle and is a good process to learn so that you can repeat it any time you’re considering new options. Next time, you would start by reviewing your skills and knowledge, updating your qualifications and work experience and then you can start to move through the cycle. Maybe next time you’ll be looking for promotion or the next steps after further learning.

This workbook will help you to be more self aware, will offer a place to record your research on career options, support your decision making and help you to set goals.

You are responsible for your own career development and skill development. To progress successfully in the world of work you must expand your experiences of the workplace, develop a strong portfolio of knowledge and skills and show possible employers how this matches their recruitment needs.





1

Knowing myself

This first section is about recording your current situation, and where you are in terms of your own education, training and employment. Don't worry if you feel at this stage you have nothing to offer, this workbook is all about making you realise that you have.

How would I describe my present situation?

If you are not currently undertaking any learning, please tell us if you take part in any other activities eg volunteering, leisure activities, activities at community centres etc, and what you do in your spare time:

What is your current education, training or employment situation?

Which organisation is this with and where is it based?

How long have you been doing this?

What hours/days of the week do you attend?

How long will this situation last and do you have a specific end date yet?

Are you working towards a qualification or any certificates?

Do you feel any obstacles have delayed your access to education and training? Eg parenthood, custody, not attending school/college, disability

What qualifications do I have?

This workbook is a good place to keep a record of your qualifications. This makes it easier to complete application forms and update your CV when applying for courses or opportunities. It's also important to keep your certificates safe as you may be asked to produce them when taking up employment or you may like to take a portfolio along to interviews.

What skills do I have?

What are you good at? This can be a difficult question for anyone at the beginning of their career. However, many employers think that skills (what you can do) and personal qualities (what you're like as a person) are as important, if not *more* important, than paper qualifications. Therefore, knowing what your strengths are will help in your journey to employment.

Everyone has skills and personal qualities. Sometimes we see them easily in others and not so easily in ourselves. This section has been designed to give you the opportunity to consider your own key skills and for you to decide what areas you excel in, and plan which you may need to gain more experience in.

Employability skills exercise

On the page opposite are some of the skills and qualities that employers tell us are important to them.

What's important is that you believe you have many of these skills and that you have examples you can give an employer when you complete an application form or attend an interview.

Your skills could come from:

- Attending school or training courses
- Any type of job, including voluntary work
- Projects at home or in the community
- Running a home or looking after people
- Making or fixing things and problem solving.

Look at the list of skills opposite and decide on your current situation (**A**, **B** or **C**).



Helping hand – At this point it may be helpful to talk through this skills list with someone and discuss possible examples. The other person should encourage you to think of good examples that show your skills. You can use the examples at future interviews.

Revisit this list every 6 months to track your progress and don't forget to celebrate your personal development and identify what you want to work on next.

A: I have this skill and it demonstrates something I'm very good at

B: I have this skill but could develop it further to succeed in the workplace

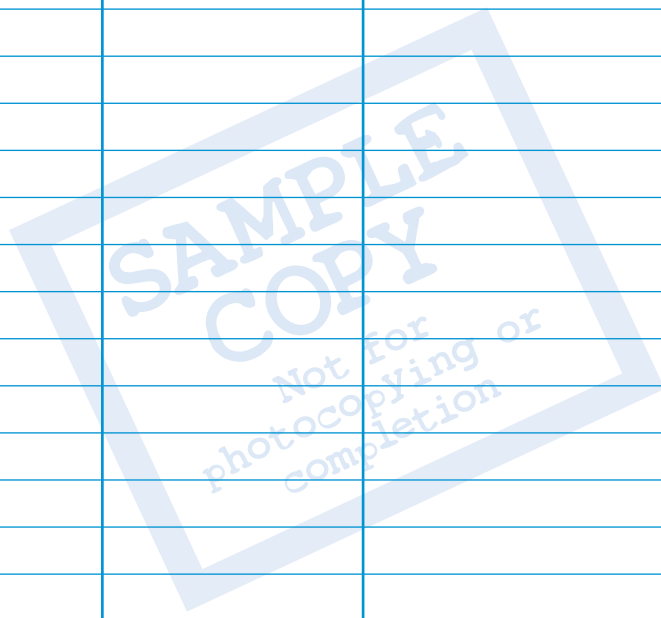
C: I need to develop this skill to get the type of career I want in the future

You can complete this exercise now and then review it in 3 and 6 months to see how much progress you've made. Your aim is to turn B's into A's and C's into B's to move forward.

Skills

Rank as A, B or C

| | Now | 3 months later | 6 months later |
|-----------------|-----|----------------|----------------|
| Analysing | | | |
| Assessing | | | |
| Building | | | |
| Buying | | | |
| Caring | | | |
| Computing | | | |
| Checking | | | |
| Cleaning | | | |
| Communicating | | | |
| Coordinating | | | |
| Deciding | | | |
| Developing | | | |
| Driving | | | |
| Encouraging | | | |
| Evaluating | | | |
| Examining | | | |
| Filing | | | |
| Handling | | | |
| Helping | | | |
| Interpreting | | | |
| Inventing | | | |
| Leading | | | |
| Liaising | | | |
| Making | | | |
| Managing | | | |
| Memorising | | | |
| Negotiating | | | |
| Operating | | | |
| Organising | | | |
| Performing | | | |
| Planning | | | |
| Problem solving | | | |
| Recording | | | |
| Researching | | | |
| Selling | | | |
| Serving | | | |
| Teaching | | | |
| Training | | | |
| Typing | | | |
| Writing/Reading | | | |



What are my values?

Throughout your life so far, you have embraced a set of values about work – these are your beliefs and ideas and they are important to you. Taking these into account when identifying your future career ideas will help you to identify employment that will satisfy you because it fits with your values and beliefs.

The following is a list of personal values that many people have identified as being important to them in their careers. To begin exploring your own personal work values, rate each value listed with the following scale:



Helping hand – If you like practical hands on activities, ask someone helping you to turn the points below into a set of cards then arrange them into three columns based on how much you value each point. It can be helpful to discuss what each point means to you.

1: Things I value very much

2: Things I value

3: Thing I don't value very much

| 1 2 3 | Value | Description of value |
|-------|---------------------|--|
| | Help society | Do something to contribute to improving our community or wider world |
| | Help others | Help other people including in groups and 1:1 |
| | Public contact | Contact with the public is an important part of the role |
| | Work with others | Work as part of a team to achieve a common goal |
| | Work alone | Do activities by myself with limited input from others |
| | Competition | Engage in activities where I compete with others |
| | Make decisions | Part of my role is to decide what actions to take |
| | Work under pressure | Work where meeting deadlines and managing workload is important |
| | Influence people | Be in a position to influence the opinions of others |
| | Knowledge | Gathering knowledge to understand better |
| | Work mastery | Become an expert in whatever I do |
| | Artistic creativity | Express myself creatively |
| | General creativity | Creating programmes or materials is part of the role |
| | Supervision | Direct responsible for the work of staff members |
| | Change and variety | Activities at work and varied and change regularly |
| | Precision work | Attention to detail and accuracy are important |
| | Stability | A work routine is established and does not vary greatly |
| | Security | I am assured that my job is ongoing |

1 2 3 Value Description of value

| | | |
|--|--------------------|---|
| | Recognition | The quality of my work is recognised |
| | Fast pace | A role where work must be done with speed |
| | Financial gain | My work is financially rewarding or has the potential to be so |
| | Physical challenge | My work activities utilise my physical strength |
| | Independence | No significant oversight or direction is needed to complete tasks |
| | Community | I participate in community action local to where I live |
| | Time freedom | I have the time to add activities I enjoy into my life |

My 5 most essential values:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

How do I like to learn?

There are three ways in which people take in new information and experiences – by watching, listening and doing. Although we all learn using a combination of these you may have a preference for how you learn best – being shown, being told, or by having a go.

Your style will define the best way for you to learn and might help you to think about the how you choose your next steps when planning where to go next.

Learning styles questionnaire

Choose one of the three options from each numbered line and place a 1 in the relevant column.

| | Visual | Auditory | Kinaesthetic/physical |
|---|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1 When operating new equipment for the first time I prefer to ... | read the instructions | listen to or ask for an explanation | have a go and learn by ‘trial and error’ |
| 2 When seeking travel directions I ... | look at a map | ask for spoken directions | follow my nose or maybe use a compass |
| 3 When cooking a new dish I ... | follow a recipe | call a friend for explanation | follow my instinct, tasting as I cook |

(continued)

| | Visual | Auditory | Kinaesthetic/physical |
|--|---|--|--|
| 4 to teach someone something I ... | write instructions | explain verbally | demonstrate and let them have a go |
| 5 I tend to say ... | "I see what you mean" | "I hear what you are saying" | "I know how you feel" |
| 6 I tend to say ... | "show me" | "tell me" | "let me try" |
| 7 I tend to say ... | "watch how I do it" | "listen to me explain" | "you have a go" |
| 8 complaining about faulty goods I tend to ... | write a letter | phone | go back to the store, or send the faulty item to the head office |
| 9 I prefer these leisure activities | museums or galleries | music or conversation | physical activities or making things |
| 10 When shopping generally I tend to ... | look and decide | discuss with shop staff | try on, handle or test |
| 11 Choosing a holiday I ... | read the brochures | listen to recommendations | imagine the experience |
| 12 Choosing a new car I ... | read the reviews | discuss with friends | test-drive what I fancy |
| 13 Learning a new skill ... | I watch what the teacher is doing | I talk through with the teacher exactly what I am supposed to do | I like to give it a try and work it out as I go along by doing it |
| 14 Choosing from a restaurant menu ... | I imagine what the food will look like | I talk through the options in my head | I imagine what the food will taste like |
| 15 When listening to a band ... | I sing along to the lyrics (in my head/out loud!) | I listen to the lyrics and the beats | I move in time with the music |
| 16 When concentrating I ... | focus on the words or pictures in front of me | discuss the problem and possible solutions in my head | move around a lot, fiddle with pens and pencils and touch unrelated things |

(continued)

| | Visual | Auditory | Kinaesthetic/physical |
|---|--|--|--|
| 17 I remember things best by ... | writing notes or keeping printed details | saying them aloud or repeating words and key points in my head | doing and practising the activity, or imagining it being done |
| 18 My first memory is of ... | looking at something | being spoken to | doing something |
| 19 When anxious, I ... | visualise the worst-case scenarios | talk over in my head what worries me most | can't sit still, fiddle and move around constantly |
| 20 I feel especially connected to others because of ... | how they look | what they say to me | how they make me feel |
| 21 When I revise for an exam, I ... | write lots of revision notes (using lots of colours!) | I talk over my notes, to myself or to other people | imagine making the movement or creating the formula |
| 22 When explaining something to someone, I tend to ... | show them what I mean | explain to them in different ways until they understand | encourage them to try and talk them through the idea as they try |
| 23 My main interests are ... | photography or watching films or people-watching | listening to music or listening to the radio or talking to friends | physical/sports activities or fine wines, fine foods or dancing |
| 24 Most of my free time is spent ... | watching television | talking to friends | doing physical activity or making things |
| 25 When I first contact a new person ... | I arrange a face to face meeting | I talk to them on the telephone | I try to get together to share an activity |
| 26 I first notice how people ... | look and dress | sound and speak | stand and move |
| 27 If I am very angry ... | I keep replaying in my mind what it is that has upset me | I shout lots and tell people how I feel | I stomp about, slam doors and throw things |
| 28 I find it easiest to remember ... | faces | names | things I have done |

(continued)

| | Visual | Auditory | Kinaesthetic/physical |
|--|--------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| 29 I think I can tell someone is lying because ... | they avoid looking at you | their voice changes | the vibes I get from them |
| 30 When I'm meeting with an old friend ... | I say "it's great to see you!" | I say "it's great to hear your voice!" | I give them a hug or a handshake |
| TOTALS | Visual | Auditory | Kinaesthetic/physical |

When you have answered all the questions, add **down** each column so that you get a total score for each style – the one with the highest score is your preferred learning style.

You are also likely to use the others too but will do best when your preferred style is used. There are no right or wrong answers. Some people do not have any one strong preference.

The point is simply to try to understand as much as you can about yourself and your strengths (your preferred style or styles), and then make best use of learning methods which suit your strengths (your preferred style or styles).

The explanations below will help you to understand a little more about your preferences.

Learning styles explained

Learning styles can be put into 3 main categories:

VISUAL – where you see things including pictures, diagrams, demonstrations, handouts, films, flip charts etc. You will hear those who prefer this style say things like “Show me”, “Let me have a look at that”.

Visual learners can be divided into 2 sub-types – *linguistic or spatial*. Learners who are *visual-linguistic* like to learn through reading and writing about tasks. They remember what has been written down, even if they read it only once and they like to write down directions or instructions.

Learners who are *visual-spatial* usually do better with charts, demonstrations, videos, and other visual materials. They easily visualise faces and places by using their imagination and seldom get lost in new surroundings.

Both these learners do best with a new task after reading the instructions or watching someone else do it first. Visual learners like to work from lists and handouts with written instructions and diagrams.

AUDITORY – where you prefer to receive information by listening. You will hear them say “Tell me”, “Can you talk me through it?”

Auditory learners often talk to themselves. They may also move their lips when reading or read out loud. They may have difficulty following written instructions and often do best after talking to a colleague.

Auditory learners will repeat a new task best after listening to instructions from an expert, even if this is spoken over the phone. You will find they can remember all the words to a song!

A **KINAESTHETIC (or tactile)** style has a preference for physical experiences in learning – touching, feeling, holding, practical hands-on tasks. They will say “Let me try that” and learn best by trying things out and learning as they go. Kinesthetic learners like experiments, hands on tasks and never read the instructions first!

Kinaesthetic learners also tend to lose concentration if there is little or no external stimulation or movement. When listening to lectures they may want to take notes for the sake of moving their hands. When reading, they like to scan the material first, and then focus in on the details (get the big picture first). They typically use colour highlighters and take notes by drawing pictures, diagrams, or doodling.

Overall, you may have a very strong preference for how you learn while others may have a blend of all three that is fairly even. It is useful to be able to understand how you learn best so that you can choose appropriate learning experiences.

My personal profile

To summarise the exercises that you have completed in the first section of this workbook, transfer what you have found out into the following table. This will make it easy for you to refer to your interests, skills, job preference types, and learning style, in order to complete the remainder of this workbook and will help with your career planning.

| |
|--|
| Current skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none">●●●●●● |
| Skills I would like to develop: <ul style="list-style-type: none">●●●●●● |
| My highest qualification level is: |
| My preferred learning style is: |
| My values for work are: <ol style="list-style-type: none">123 |

2

Knowing my options

So now you have an idea about what skills you have, and what skills you would like to develop. But what about who you are, what you can do and what you like to do?

What type of job will suit me?

There is a simple theory of career choice developed by John Holland that suggests that people get most job satisfaction from work environments that match best with their personality. Holland suggests that jobs can be classified into 6 themes as shown on by the hexagon below.



This self assessment has been designed to support you to think about job types at might suit you.

Step 1: To discover the work environments best suited to your interests, abilities and personality look through this list and tick each box that applies to you.

REALISTIC

Are you ...

- Practical
- Athletic
- Straight forward
- Mechanically inclined
- A nature lover
- Good with tools and machinery

Can you ...

- Fix electrical things
- Solve mechanical problems
- Pitch a tent
- Play a sport
- Read a blueprint
- Work on cars

Total:

Like to ...

- Tinker with mechanics
- Work outdoors
- Be physically active
- Use your hands
- Build things

INVESTIGATIVE

Are you ...

- Inquisitive
- Analytical
- Scientific
- Observant
- Precise
- Good with tools and machinery

Can you ...

- Think abstractly
- Solve maths problems
- Understand physical theories
- Do complex calculations
- Use a microscope
- Work on cars

Total:

Like to ...

- Explore ideas
- Use computers
- Work independently
- Perform lab experiments
- Read scientific or technical magazines

ARTISTIC

Do you ...

- Explore ideas
- Use computers
- Work independently
- Perform lab experiments
- Read scientific or technical magazines

Can you ...

- Sketch, draw, paint
- Play a musical instrument
- Write stories, poetry, music, sing, act, dance
- Design fashions or interiors

Total:

Like to ...

- Attend concerts, theatres, art exhibitions
- Read fiction, plays, poetry
- Work on crafts
- Take photographs
- Express yourself creatively

SOCIAL

Are you ...

- Friendly
- Helpful
- Idealistic
- Insightful
- Outgoing
- Understanding

Can you ...

- Teach/train others
- Express yourself clearly
- Lead a group discussion
- Mediate disputes
- Plan and supervise an activity
- Cooperate well with others

Total:

Like to ...

- Work in groups
- Help people with problems
- Participate in meetings
- Do volunteer service
- Work with young people
- Play team sports

ENTERPRISING

Are you ...

- Self-confident
- Assertive
- Sociable
- Persuasive
- Enthusiastic
- Energetic

Can you ...

- Initiate projects
- Convince people to do things your way
- Sell things or promote ideas
- Give talks or speeches
- Organize activities and events
- Lead a group

Total:

Like to ...

- Make decisions affecting others
- Be elected to office
- Win a leadership or sales award
- Start your own political campaign
- Meet important people

CONVENTIONAL

Are you ...

- Well groomed
- Accurate
- Numerically inclined
- Methodical
- Conscientious

Can you ...

- Work well within a system
- Do a lot of paper work in a short time
- Keep accurate records
- Use a computer terminal
- Write effective business letters

Total:

Like to ...

- Follow clearly defined procedures
- Use data processing equipment
- Work with numbers
- Type or take shorthand
- Be responsible for details

Step 2: Add up the total ticks in the three columns for each of the 6 sections. Identify the top 3 categories/themes that create the most accurate picture of you. My top 3 categories/themes are:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Step 3: How accurately do you believe your (3) top themes describe your personality and interests:

Holland's job type explanation sheet

Understanding Holland's theory will help you to make positive choices about your future career path including occupations to consider and ways of learning that might suit you.

Holland also suggested that people who are similar will seek out the same working environments so if you already know someone who you think has similar preferences to you, ask them more about their work.



Helping hand – If you have the chance to visit different companies and speak to their employees, ask them why they think their job suits them and why they think the company the work for provides a positive working environment for them.

REALISTIC people are characterised by their competitive/assertive behaviour and by interest in activities that require skill, and physical strength. Realists prefer situations involving actions rather than tasks involving verbal or interpersonal skills. They tend to be interested in scientific areas.

- Likes to work with animals, tools, or machines; generally avoids social activities like teaching, counselling, nursing, and informing others
- Has good skills in working with tools, mechanical drawings, machines or animals
- Values practical things you can see and touch – like plants and animals you can grow, or things you can build or make better
- Sees self as practical, mechanical, and realistic.

INVESTIGATIVE people prefer to think rather than to act, to organise and understand rather than to persuade. They are not likely to be very “people oriented”.

- Likes to study and solve math or science problems; generally avoids leading, selling, or persuading people
- Has good skills at understanding and solving science and math problems
- Values science
- Sees self as precise, scientific, and intellectual.

ARTISTIC people value self-expression. They dislike structure, prefer tasks involving personal or physical skills, and are more prone to expression of emotion than others. In contrast to investigative and realistic people, social types are drawn more to seek close relationships and are less likely to engage in intellectual or extensive physical activities.

- Likes to do creative activities like art, drama, crafts, dance, music, or creative writing; generally avoids highly ordered or repetitive activities
- Has good artistic abilities – in creative writing, drama, crafts, music, or art
- Values the creative arts – like drama, music, art, or the works of creative writers
- Sees self as expressive, original, and independent.

SOCIAL people have an interest in people and are sensitive to the needs of others. They perceive themselves as liking to help others, understanding others, and having teaching abilities. They use their verbal and social skills to change other people’s behaviour. They are generally very cheerful.

- Likes to do things to help people – like teaching, counselling, nursing, or giving information; generally avoids using machines, tools, or animals to achieve a goal
- Has good skills at teaching, counselling, nursing, or giving information
- Values helping people and solving social problems
- Sees self as helpful, friendly, and trustworthy.

ENTERPRISING people are verbally skilled and use this skill to persuade rather than support others. They also value status and are more likely to pursue it than conventional people (below).

- Likes to lead and persuade people, and to sell things and ideas; generally avoids activities that require careful observation and scientific, analytical thinking
- Is good at leading people and selling things or ideas
- Values success in politics, leadership, or business
- Sees self as energetic, ambitious, and sociable.

CONVENTIONAL people don’t mind rules and regulations and show self-control. They prefer structure and order to uncertainty in work and interpersonal situations. They place value on their status.

- Likes to work with numbers, records, or machines in a set, orderly way; generally avoids ambiguous, unstructured activities
- Is good at working with written records and numbers in a systematic, orderly way
- Values success in business
- Sees self as orderly, and good at following a set plan.

Researching career options

You should plan to investigate jobs that fall into more than one area – neighbouring job types are also likely to suit you as shown in the table below.

Compatible work environments

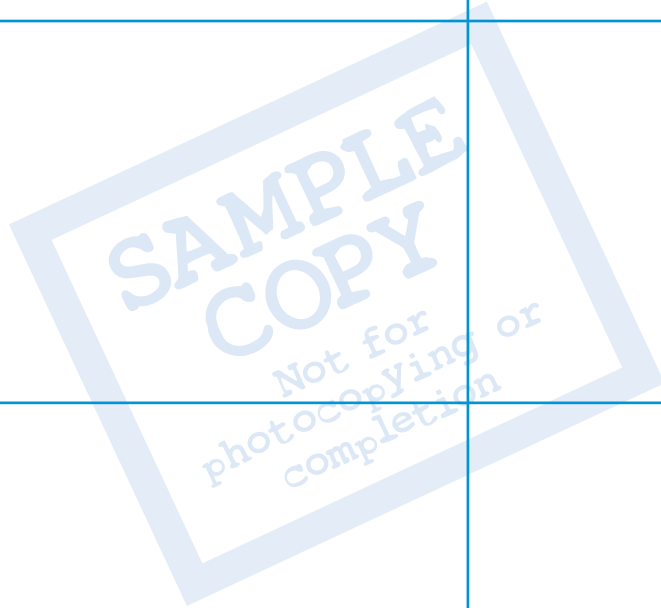
| Your personality type | Most compatible | Also compatible |
|-----------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| Realistic | Realistic | Investigative and Conventional |
| Investigative | Investigative | Realistic and Artistic |
| Artistic | Artistic | Investigative and Social |
| Social | Social | Artistic and Enterprising |
| Enterprising | Enterprising | Social and Conventional |
| Conventional | Conventional | Enterprising and Realistic |

Opportunity analysis

So now that you know yourself and have an idea of the kind of career you're looking for it's time for some research. This workbook assumes you can find information about the careers you're interested in either by researching it yourself or by making an appointment with a guidance professional to receive advice and guidance on your career ideas.

Use this page to summarise your research including info from internet research, career research interviews with professionals.

| Career idea | Qualifications I would need to have to start on this career path | Knowledge and skills that are relevant to my chosen career path |
|-------------|--|---|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |



Here's another way of researching job that can add to your basic research and help you to find out what different job roles are really like.

Setting up a career research interview

You can set up a career research interview formally or informally. For example, you may meet someone at a networking event or jobs fair and realise that they could be a source of valuable information for you as you research and plan your career path.

So you simply ask them if you can meet again.

"I am really interested in the kind of work you do and I wonder if we might meet up some time in the next week or so, so I can find out a bit more. I realise you are very busy, so obviously this would be at your convenience."

Alternatively, you may be given the contact details of someone and you can follow up by letter, email or telephone. You may also find the person's contact details on the company website.

Emails are very easily skimmed over and deleted, so it is probably better to start the old fashioned way with a letter. Start by explaining where you got their contact details from – you may have been given the information by someone who knows them. If it's a 'cold call' then explain you are undertaking careers research to inform your future plans and you would like to find out more about their company and their job role. Make it very clear that you are not looking for a job at this point.

Let them know that you are only looking for a short appointment and that it is of course, at their convenience.

Be well prepared

Do not shoot yourself in the foot by going in unprepared. Make sure you do the following:

- Do your homework. Show you have done some relevant research in advance so they know you are serious.
- Be professional – be on time, dress appropriately, keep to the time agreed for the meeting.
- Have your list of questions ready (see below) and stick to the topic.
- Be prepared to share positive information about yourself, but keep the focus on them.
- At the end of the meeting, always ask if they can recommend any useful contacts.
- Send a thank you letter to show you appreciate the time they have given.

Questions to ask at career research interview

Remember this is your chance to ask for the kind of information that you will not find on the internet or in careers books, so don't waste your opportunity by asking about things that are available elsewhere.

Here are a few good interview questions you can try in a career research interview ...

The job

- What does your job involve on a day to day basis?
- What does a typical day look like?
- Is there a set routine or does the work vary across the year?

- What are the typical working conditions? For example ...
 - What are the work place conditions and culture?
 - Are unusual working hours required?
 - Is travel away from the main office necessary?
 - How much contact with others is there – colleagues and clients?
 - What kind of people are ‘typical’ clients/customers?
 - Are there any restrictions on dress, appearance and behaviour?
- How stressful is the job?
- What are the good and bad points of the job from their point of view?
- What are the current projects they are involved in?

Getting in

- What entry qualifications are useful over and above the basic entry requirements?
- What particular skills, qualities and experience will increase the chances of successful entry to this career?
- Where are jobs advertised?
- What is the job market like generally at the moment for this field of work?
- How difficult is it to enter this career area?
- What can I expect to earn at first and is there a pay scale or bonus system?
- What would impress them on a CV or application form?
- What advice would they offer to a new entrant from their position of experience of the job?

Getting on

- What further training might be required after entry?
- What career progression is possible?
- How easy is it to progress?
- What path has your career followed?
- If you were to have your career over, what if anything would you do differently?
- Is there anything I should have asked about this role that I have missed?

If you feel the interview has gone particularly well and you have built up good rapport ...

- Is there a possibility of spending a half day work shadowing you or a colleague?
- Is there any project work that I might be able to contribute to on a voluntary basis?



3

Making my decisions

This section will help you to decide on the next steps to achieving your career goals. You now have a better sense of your skills and abilities and you know the type of job or career you want to aim for so you've already made some decisions.

It's now time to think about anything that might hold you back and stop you from taking your next steps. We'll look at personal obstacles – we all have them to a greater or lesser extent and it's better to get them out in the open and on paper in this workbook as this is the first step to dealing with them.

Identifying personal obstacles

Obstacles can be thought of in two ways: **internal** and **external**. An obstacle is anything or anyone that has a negative impact on your future goals, including preventing you from considering all alternative paths to identify the best one for you.

Internal obstacles could be related to how you feel or what you believe about yourself eg you might feel fear of new situations and this fear is an internal obstacle if it really stops you from moving forward.



Helping hand – sometimes we don't see our own internal obstacles so it can be good to discuss this section with a good friend who you know will be honest as they have your best interests at heart.

When thinking about what you want to do next, do any of these alternative obstacles apply? Highlight any that apply and make a note of how that obstacle applies to you.

Fear of making a wrong decision

Fear of taking a risk

Fear of failing

Fear of change

Low self-confidence

Being in two minds about the right decision

Putting off decisions and actions

Believing stereotypes

Write any other internal obstacles here:

External obstacles are present in the world around you, for example discrimination and prejudice. Other external obstacles are closer to you such as pressure from personal relationships, peer pressure, negative influences from family and friends etc.

Are any of the obstacles below holding you back at the moment?

Expectations of others

Influence of others

Finances

Accommodation situation

A family to consider

Write any other external obstacles here:

My beliefs

Do you have beliefs about yourself and your abilities that are holding you back? Put quite simply — if you **believe** that you can achieve something, you will find a way to do it. If you **believe** that you can't, then you won't bother to look for a way forward. Limiting beliefs can act as a barrier and stop you putting effort into things.

The fact that you've got this far in the workbook suggests that you do believe there are possibilities for a better future.



Helping hand — talk about the obstacles you've identified above with someone you trust and ask about their honest observations on what you feel is holding you back. They will have a more impartial view of what obstacles are based on real, undeniable fact and this may help you to identify if any of the factors holding you back are based on your beliefs.

Turning the tide

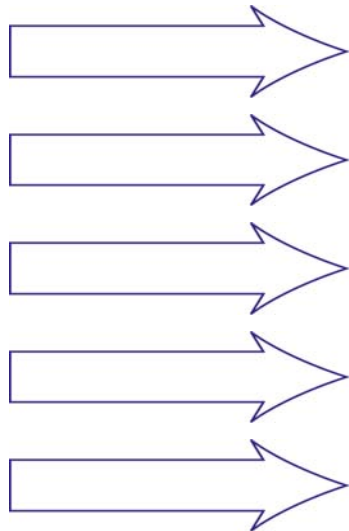
Here we will use a business technique called Force Field Analysis — a useful way of looking at all the forces for and against a decision. In effect, it is a specialised method of weighing pros and cons.

By carrying out the analysis you can plan to strengthen the forces supporting a decision, and reduce the impact of obstacles. You want to 'turn the tide' so that there is more to support your next steps than to stop you achieving the future you want.

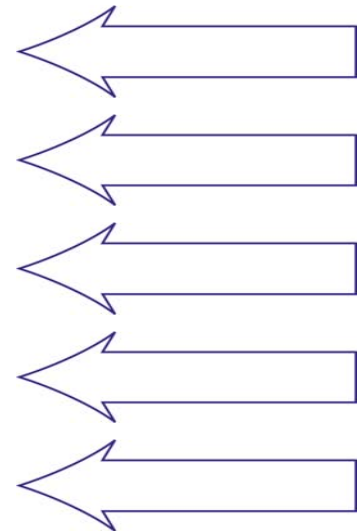
Use the picture to:

- Describe your career goal in the middle
- Write your skills and strengths that support your chosen career idea on the left hand side in the arrows
- Write any obstacles that may be in your way on the right hand side.

Skills and strengths



Obstacles



So now you know where you're at – you will have lots of skills and strengths to build on and you may have some obstacles or beliefs to overcome.

If you have a number of obstacles that are pushing against your move to the future, then the actions you need to take to 'turn the tide' are your next steps. It may just take a little longer to create the right conditions so that you will succeed with the next bigger step towards the future you want.

- Do you need to gather more employability skills?
- Do you need to plan some work experience or take part in volunteering opportunities?
- Do you need to ensure your accommodation situation becomes more settled before you can concentrate on your career?
- Do you need to find support for certain aspects of your life?
- Do you need to improve your literacy or numeracy?
- Do you need to upgrade your qualifications?
- Do you have a family to consider?
- Do you have some self-limiting beliefs to work on?
- Do you have finances to consider?



4

Planning my actions

So you've identified the skills you have and those you want to develop further to help you into a better future. You've thought about what type of job and career you would like, researched options and identified the new qualifications and skills you need to be successful in those careers.

The obstacles exercise has also helped you to be more aware of anything that might be holding you back and stopping you getting what you want.



Helping hand – complete this section of the workbook with the person who gave it to you so that they can support you in clearly setting out your future career goals.

Defining my outcome

This task is to very clearly describe your **next** step as the desired outcome you really want to achieve. This may only be a small step but think how great it will feel when you can say you've completed the first step towards the future you want for yourself.

It is useful to clearly define your desired outcome so that you are clear about your goal. You can use this process again and again but for now start with your next step towards your career goal.

In positive language, what is the next step you are working towards?

What is your **own** part in achieving this – what will **you** do to start and maintain action towards your outcome?

Specifically:

When?

What?

Where?

How?

With whom?

Do you want this outcome?



Is the outcome the right size to be achievable?

If it feels too big, break it down into two outcomes:

How will you know you've achieved your outcome?

What will you see?

What will you hear?

What will you feel?

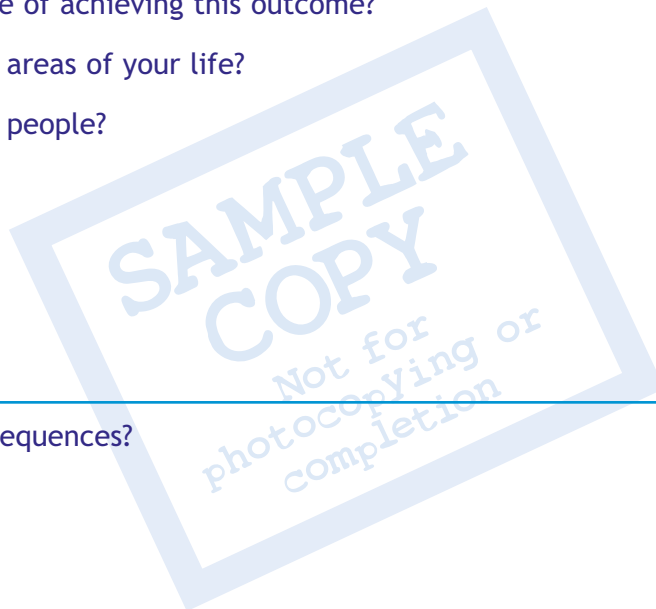
What is the consequence of achieving this outcome?

How will it affect other areas of your life?

How will it affect other people?

Are there negative consequences?

Who can help you and what support do you need?



Now it's time to create some further career goals to identify future steps forward. Goal setting and action plans can be a powerful technique that allows **you** to say where you want to go in life. If you know exactly what you want to achieve then you can identify what you must concentrate on and improve to secure your future goals.

Make sure your goals are **SMART ...**

Specific – what is the task? What action is needed?

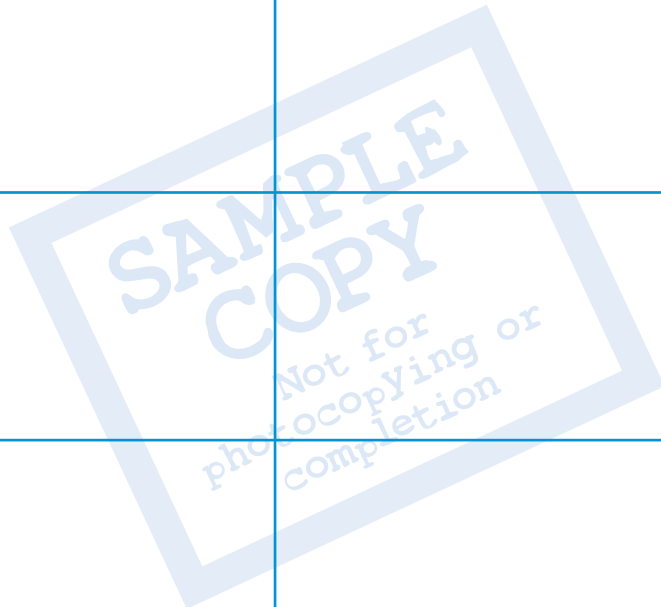
Measurable – how will you know you've achieved the task? What will be different if you've achieved this goal?

Achievable – is this goal possible? Can you achieve it given your current situation? Do you need to set this as a future goal with a longer timescale? What support might you need to achieve this task?

Relevant – why is this task important? Does this task move you forward towards your goal?

Timescale – when should this task be done by? Is this a long-term task with a future date to complete it? Is the timescale realistic?

| Development area | Action required | Resources and support needed | Timescale |
|------------------------------------|--|---|--------------------|
| <i>Example:</i> Work experience | Need to find out more about careers working with children, eg classroom assistant. | Find out who I can speak to in the Council in children's centres and schools rather than nurseries. See how my Personal Advisor can help. | Next three months. |
| | | | |
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Visualising the future

So now you have a clear plan with a clearly defined next step and goals to help you to continue to move forward. Remember that when you've achieved your first outcome, you can complete the *Defining my outcome* step again to help you to be really clear about what you need to do next and why you want to take that next step. This will help you to keep motivated – visualising a new future can be a powerful tool to use to motivate yourself.

When you have a quiet moment, sit back and visualise what your new future will look like when you have achieved the qualifications you need or you have the job you deserve.

What will you see? How will people react to you? What will you hear people saying to you? How will you feel about yourself? How will those closest to you feel about you?

Keep thinking about that image of the future:

- Make it stronger – more colourful, bigger and brighter
- Hear people saying positive things to you
- See a more confident, happier you in your vision.

Bring the image closer to you in your mind and see yourself stepping into the vision. Take a few moments to let the vision wash over you and enjoy the positive feelings.

Sometimes it's easy to forget what the hard work is for and get bogged down in the moment. You can return to this vision of your new future whenever you need to remind yourself of why you're working through your goals.

If it's possible for one person, it's possible for you

You have all the resources you need to make changes in your life. Years ago people believed if you ran fast enough to complete a mile in four minutes your heart would burst – until Roger Bannister believed he could do it and proved everyone wrong.

There is no failure, only feedback

Going forward focus on solutions and think about what's possible. Use any feedback you get to identify what to do differently and add this new way of being to your vision of the future.

If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always had

We repeat patterns of behaviour even though we know they are not working for us. Until you reprogramme your thinking you will continue to get the same results. Think of it like uploading new software to a computer.

You are in charge of your mind

Any change starts with one thought. You are in control of the way you act and present yourself to the world. Make sure the thoughts you have about achieving your goals are positive and forward thinking.



Helping hand – make sure you talk regularly about your goals and progress with the people who are there to support you in achieving your goals, revisiting the vision of your future and describing it in detail.

About us

For further information and resources please contact us or go to our website www.leavingcare.org

The National Care Advisory Service (NCAS) is the national advice, support and development service focussing on young people's transition from care.

NCAS draws on its significant national experience of engaging care leavers, and supporting those working with them to improve services and outcomes. We work at local, regional, national and European levels to develop solutions based on good corporate parenting that include and empower young people and influence professionals and policy makers to continually improve quality and outcomes.

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