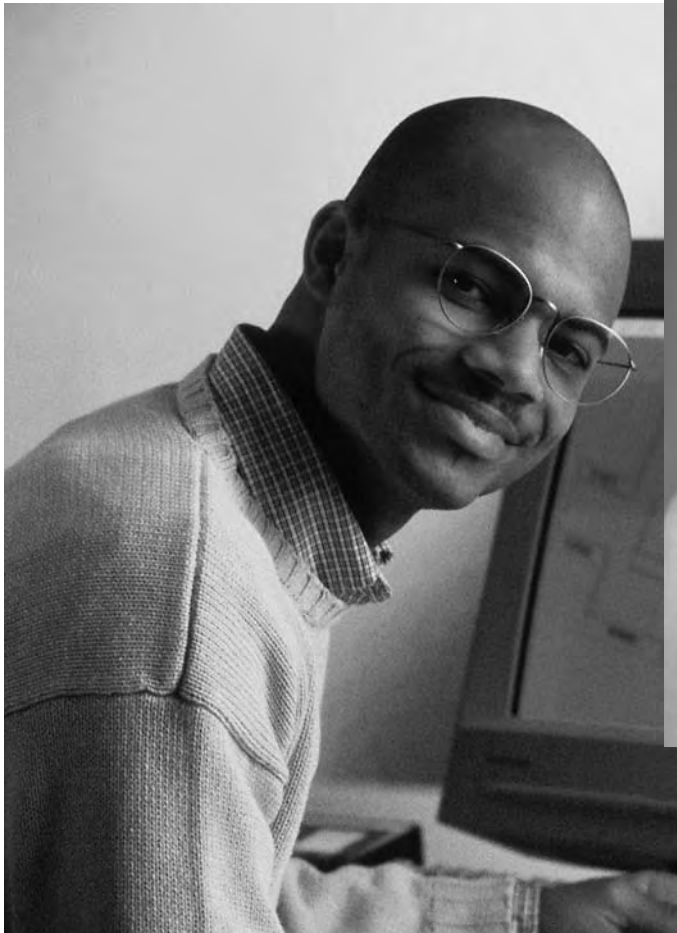


# ASSESSING YOURSELF AND YOUR CAREER



# *ASSESSING YOURSELF AND YOUR CAREER*

Career choice is one of the most important, yet difficult decisions you'll ever have to make. You'll spend at least eight hours a day at work, so it's essential you make a well-informed decision. In order to make a decision you'll be happy with, career planning can be helpful.

Career planning is a lifelong process, which includes choosing an occupation, getting a job, growing in a job, changing careers, and eventually retiring. This may happen once in your lifetime, but it

is more likely to happen several times as you first define and then redefine yourself and your goals.

Career planning also involves evaluating your career goals and how they fit with your life goals. It's assessing your interests, financial needs and geographical living requirements. It's determining what you need to do to be happy, healthy and able to meet your financial obligations.

## *What to Consider When Developing Your Career Plan*

**Core Expertise:** What are your skills? Are you good with logic? Organization? Do you have technical skills, such as working with computers or mechanics? Do you have experience in a specific field?

**Personal Desires:** Do you want a balance between work, family and friends? Do you need quality personal time? Is it important to you to work for a company that is socially responsible? Do you desire to work at home, or in a small or a large company setting?

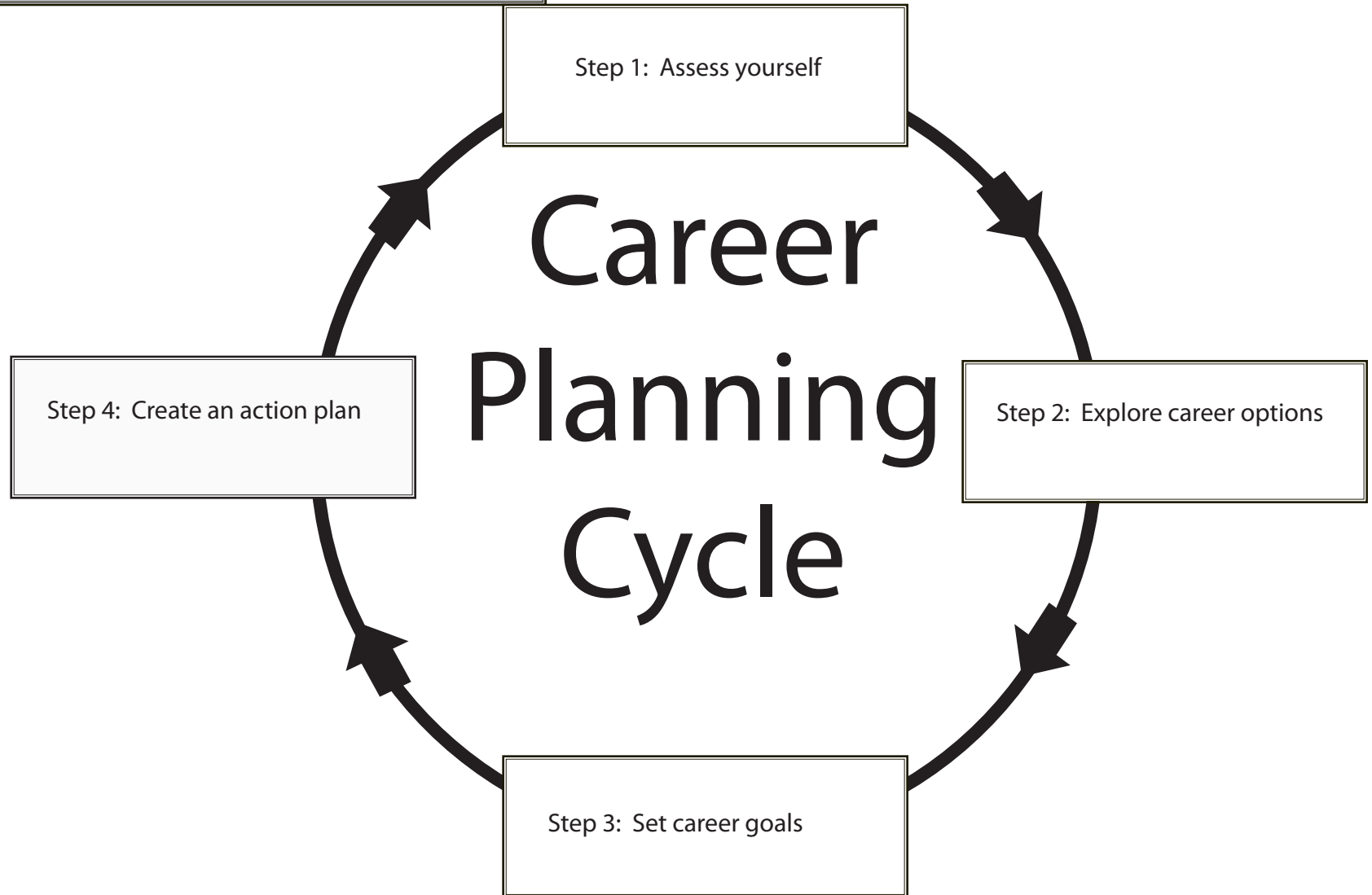
**Current & Future Financial Needs:** What do you really need, as opposed to really want? Think about your current and long-term financial needs.

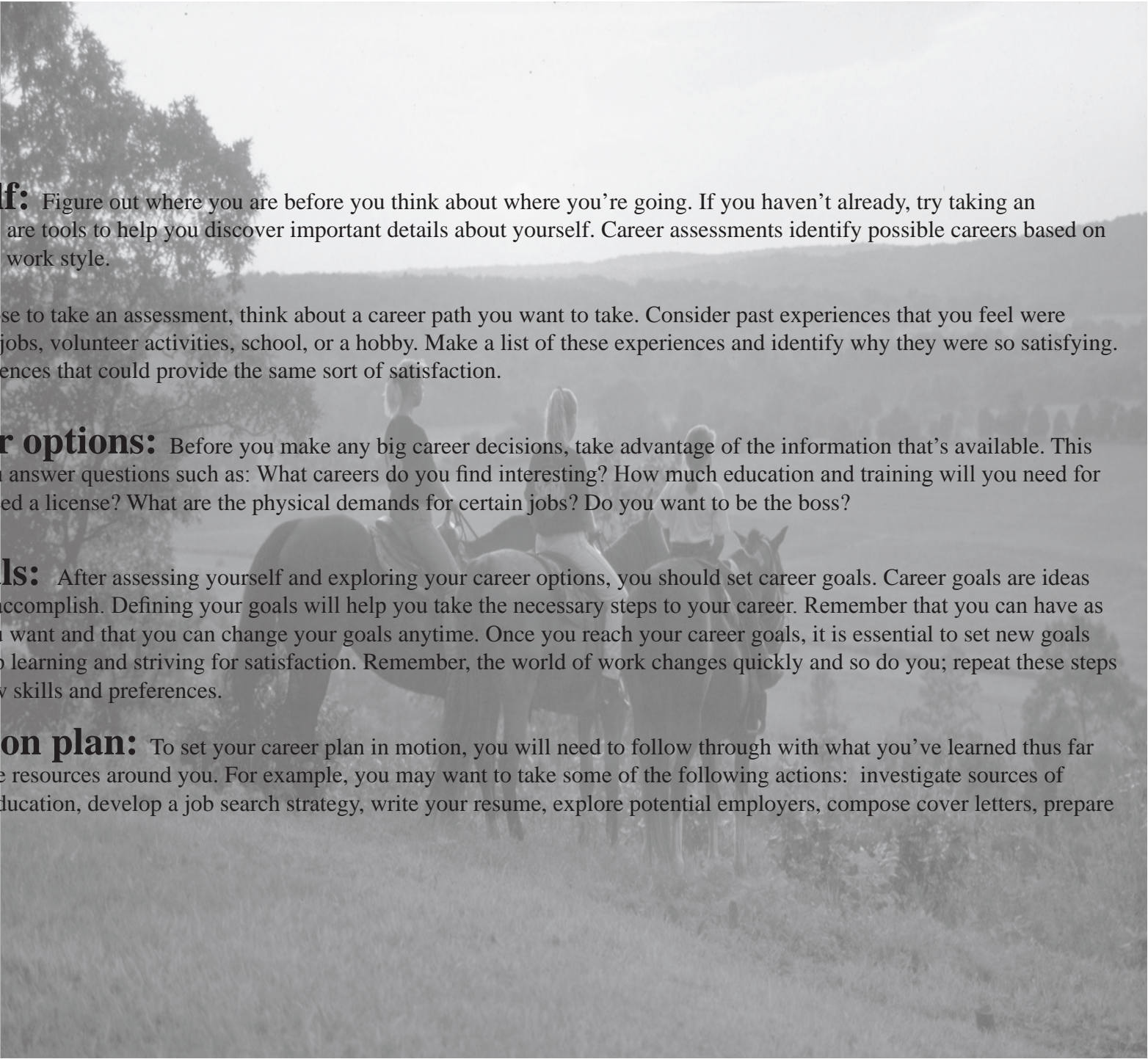
**Health:** Do you have physical limitations? How much physical energy are you willing to exert in a job? Keep these answers in mind when applying for jobs that require physical ability, such as lifting, working on an assembly line—or even sitting at a computer all day.

**Geographic Location:** Where do you want to live? Remember: computers and the Internet make communicating much easier today, and offer people more flexibility in where they work and live.

## CAREER PLANNING PROCESS

The career planning process is comprised of four steps. These four steps are: assess yourself, explore your career options, set career goals and create an action plan. We'll go into more detail about each step in the next few sections.





**Assess yourself:** Figure out where you are before you think about where you're going. If you haven't already, try taking an assessment. Assessments are tools to help you discover important details about yourself. Career assessments identify possible careers based on your interests, skills, and work style.

Whether or not you choose to take an assessment, think about a career path you want to take. Consider past experiences that you feel were particularly rewarding—jobs, volunteer activities, school, or a hobby. Make a list of these experiences and identify why they were so satisfying. Think about other experiences that could provide the same sort of satisfaction.

**Explore career options:** Before you make any big career decisions, take advantage of the information that's available. This information can help you answer questions such as: What careers do you find interesting? How much education and training will you need for certain jobs? Will you need a license? What are the physical demands for certain jobs? Do you want to be the boss?

**Set career goals:** After assessing yourself and exploring your career options, you should set career goals. Career goals are ideas about what you want to accomplish. Defining your goals will help you take the necessary steps to your career. Remember that you can have as many career goals as you want and that you can change your goals anytime. Once you reach your career goals, it is essential to set new goals that motivate you to keep learning and striving for satisfaction. Remember, the world of work changes quickly and so do you; repeat these steps as needed to develop new skills and preferences.

**Create an action plan:** To set your career plan in motion, you will need to follow through with what you've learned thus far and take advantage of the resources around you. For example, you may want to take some of the following actions: investigate sources of additional training and education, develop a job search strategy, write your resume, explore potential employers, compose cover letters, prepare for job interviews.

## CAREER PATHS

One initial action plan you can take right now is to check out career paths. Career paths are clusters of occupations that require different levels of education and training. There are six career paths that can help you identify a career focus without being locked into a specific occupation. You don't have to choose a specific occupation today, but you can learn about career paths and opportunities in them.

By exploring different career paths, you'll see how math, science, language arts, and social studies are important in lots of careers. If you see a connection between your education/training preparation and the world of work, chances are your education and career training will be more meaningful to you.



### *What are the six career paths?*

**Arts & Communication:** Occupations in this path are related to humanities and the performing, visual, literary and media arts. These include architecture, graphic design (interior and fashion), writing, film, fine arts, journalism, languages, media, advertising, and public relations.

**Business, Management & Technology:** Occupations in this path are related to the business environment. These include entrepreneurship, sales, marketing, computer/information systems, finance, accounting, personnel, economics, and management.

**Health Services:** Occupations in this path are related to the promotion of health and treatment of disease. These include research, prevention, treatment, and related health technologies.

**Human Services:** Occupations in this path are related to economic, political, and social systems. These include education, government, law and law enforcement, leisure and recreation, military, religion, childcare, social services, and personal services.

**Industrial & Engineering Technology:** Occupations in this path are related to technologies necessary to design, develop, install, and maintain physical systems. These include engineering, manufacturing, construction, service, and related technologies.

**Natural Resources & Agriculture:** Occupations in this path are related to agriculture, the environment, and natural resources. These include agricultural sciences, earth sciences, environmental sciences, fisheries, forestry, horticulture, and wildlife.

Now that you have an understanding of career paths, you can begin to discover which one might be right for you. The following exercise allows you to choose activities, interests, personal qualities, and school subjects to determine which career path might be the best fit.

# CAREER INVENTORY

Circle each item that relates to you; then total each section:

**Activities that sound interesting to me:**

- \* Preparing medicines in a pharmacy
- \* Helping sick people
- \* Working with animals
- \* Helping with sports injuries
- \* Studying anatomy and disease
- \* Performing surgery

**Personal qualities that describe me:**

- \* Compassionate and caring
- \* Good listener
- \* Good at following directions
- \* Conscientious and careful
- \* Patient

HEALTH SERVICES

**In my free time I would enjoy:**

- \* Volunteering in a hospital
- \* Taking care of pets
- \* Exercising

**School subjects/activities that I enjoy or do well in:**

- \* Math
- \* Science
- \* Biology
- \* Chemistry

Total # circled:

**Activities that sound interesting to me:**

- \* Reading or writing stories or articles
- \* Designing and building scenery for plays
- \* Gardening
- \* Taking photographs
- \* Acting in a play or movie
- \* Listening to/playing music

**Personal qualities that describe me:**

- \* Imaginative
- \* Creative
- \* Outgoing
- \* Using my hands to create things
- \* Performer

ARTS AND COMMUNICATION

**In my free time I would enjoy:**

- \* Working on the school newspaper or yearbook
- \* Acting in a play
- \* Painting pictures, drawing

**School subjects/activities that I enjoy or do well in:**

- \* Social studies
- \* Choir/chorus/band
- \* Creative writing
- \* Art

Total # circled:

**Activities that sound interesting to me:**

- \* Interviewing people
- \* Using computer programs
- \* Typing letters, forms, banners
- \* Keeping records, taking notes
- \* Working with numbers
- \* Organizing files and paperwork

**Personal qualities that describe me:**

- \* Practical
- \* Independent
- \* Organized
- \* Like to use machines
- \* Like to be around people

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT/ TECHNOLOGY

**In my free time I would enjoy:**

- \* Being in a speech contest or debate
- \* Using a computer
- \* Volunteering in a local hospital

**School subjects/activities that I enjoy or do well in:**

- \* Speech
- \* Language
- \* Math
- \* Marketing

Total # circled:

**Activities that sound interesting to me:**

- \* Predicting weather
- \* Predicting or measuring earthquakes
- \* Growing flowers/trees, gardening
- \* Studying rocks and minerals
- \* Raising fish or other animals
- \* Working in a chemistry lab

**Personal qualities that describe me:**

- \* Observant
- \* Nature lover
- \* Physically active
- \* Problem solver
- \* Like helping with problems

NATURAL RESOURCES/ AGRICULTURE

**In my free time I would enjoy:**

- \* Hiking
- \* Participating in FFA or 4-H
- \* Experimenting with chemistry

**School subjects/activities that I enjoy or do well in:**

- \* Math
- \* Geography
- \* Biology
- \* Geometry

Total # circled:

**Activities that sound interesting to me:**

- \* Putting things together
- \* Designing buildings
- \* Working on cars, mechanical things
- \* Using advanced math to solve problems
- \* Gardening
- \* Using tools

**Personal qualities that describe me:**

- \* Practical
- \* Like using my hands
- \* Logical
- \* Observant
- \* Good at following instructions

INDUSTRIAL/ ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY

**In my free time I would enjoy:**

- \* Building stage sets for a play
- \* Drawing sketches of cars, mechanical things
- \* Working on cars

**School subjects/activities that I enjoy or do well in:**

- \* Math
- \* Geometry
- \* Woodworking
- \* Science

Total # circled:

**Activities that sound interesting to me:**

- \* Helping people solve problems
- \* Working with children
- \* Working with elderly people
- \* Working in a team
- \* Being involved in politics
- \* Solving a mystery

**Personal qualities that describe me:**

- \* Organized
- \* Community-minded
- \* Outgoing
- \* Good at making decisions
- \* Good listener

HUMAN SERVICES

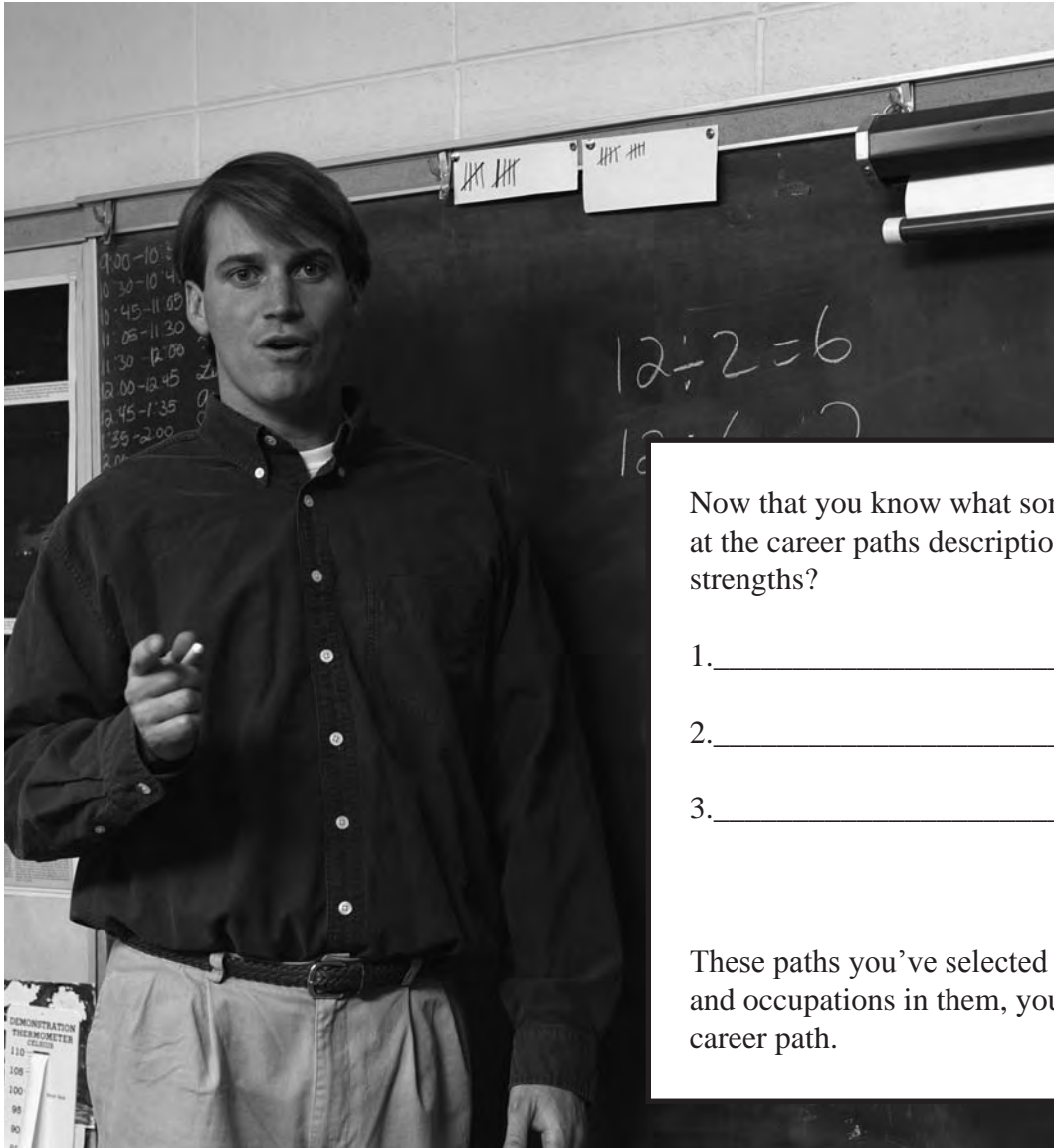
**In my free time I would enjoy:**

- \* Tutoring young children
- \* Helping with a community project
- \* Coaching children in a sport

**Schools subjects/activities that I enjoy or do well in:**

- \* Language arts
- \* History
- \* Speech
- \* Math

Total # circled:



Now that you know what some of your interests, abilities, and talents are, take another look at the career paths descriptions. Which three career paths do you think best match your strengths?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

These paths you've selected are just a starting point. As you find out more about career paths and occupations in them, you may decide that your strengths are best suited to a different career path.

It would be a good idea to review your education/training plan with your school or career counselor. If you have not yet developed one, talk to your counselor about doing so. As you look at your plan, ask which paths can help you gain the knowledge and skills in the career you are exploring. As you move through life, even if your direction changes, many of the skills and the knowledge you learn can transfer to other career paths. Looking at your plan of study through the lens of career paths can help provide a more relevant purpose to your career goals.

## ***CAREER AWARENESS***

Take an inventory of your likes, dislikes, personal characteristics, values, wants and needs. It is the first part of the career planning process. Before you can decide what you want to be, you first have to discover who you are. People change, grow and develop. Everyone should reassess themselves periodically in relation to their career goals.

## ***SELF-ASSESSMENT***

**Interests:** Interests are the things we enjoy doing, and can give us clues about work or career interests. Fixing things, cooking, using computers, and caring for children are just a few examples of leisure time activities that can be converted into careers.

**Personality:** Personality can be defined as a combination of emotional and behavioral characteristics that can indicate strengths and weaknesses. Different careers fit with different personality traits. For example, an outgoing, friendly person who enjoys meeting and talking to people all day would be suited for jobs in sales, customer service or public relations.

**Skills:** Skills are acquired from work experience, community service and other roles people have had in their lives. Skills are divided into three types:

***Transferable or functional skills:*** Skills that can be carried from one job to another.

***Self-management or adaptive skills:*** Self-management skills are strengths people have developed through life and work experience, or from exposure to role models. They are also behaviors learned in families and from significant others. Certain self-management skills are very important in some occupations, less important in others. Matching occupational choices to strengths is a very important factor in career or occupational choice.

***Technical or work content skills:*** Skills learned through training can often be applied to a narrow range of occupations. Sometimes recognizing the satisfaction generated from using these skills can indicate alternative career choices.

## Self-Assessment (continued)

**Abilities:** Abilities often indicate potential in a particular area. With training, ability may turn into career options. People often take for granted the skills that come easily to them. It is precisely those areas that should be explored.

**Work Values:** Work values are the motivation or personal needs required for job satisfaction. Looking at work values also helps people prioritize what role work plays in their lives. As adults grow and mature, some of their values may change. A job or career chosen at age 20 may not match the values of a person at age 40 or 50.

**Lifestyle & Financial Considerations:** The way people prefer to live their lives and how their career and occupational choices affect those preferences. Through assessment of lifestyle, individuals can evaluate how their career decisions impact how they live, the significant people in their lives, and whether there are existing or potential barriers to overcome. One very important consideration is one's financial needs. Knowledge of monthly expenses and having realistic financial goals can help in choosing appropriate occupations.

**Preferred Work Environment:** Preferences regarding people, environments, living and working conditions can be just as important as what a person chooses to do. Work environment can play a large part in how people feel about their jobs. Often a person's comfort level with the work environment can make the difference between a successful and an unsuccessful career choice.

### ***LEARN ABOUT YOURSELF***

*Have you done a self-assessment lately? There are many instruments to assist you with your self-assessment, both informal exercises and formal tests/inventories. Some are available at your high school. If you've taken a self-assessment inventory, it might be a good idea to review your results. If you need some resources, here are online inventories to try out.*

**www.onetcenter.org (in 'Products' folder)**

**www.bridges.com (in 'Products and Services,' 'High School')**

**www.workkeys.com**

**WorkKeys®** assessments give students and workers reliable, relevant information about real world skills employers feel are critical to job success, such as applied math and technology, business writing, listening, locating information, observation, overall job readiness, reading for information, teamwork and writing. After the assessment is complete, you are informed how your skills compare to specific job requirements, providing you a targeted solution that saves you time and money. WorkKeys® assessments are currently offered at several Missouri Career Centers and other partner agencies. Please use the listing on pages 51-52 to contact a Missouri Career Center near you for more information.

*Good luck and have fun learning about yourself!*

## ***THE HOLLAND PARTY EXERCISE*** ***MATCHING OCCUPATIONS TO PERSONALITY***

When your job matches your interests and your personality, you are more likely to be happy and successful in your work. Consider working in an occupation that fits your personality.

The following exercise is based on the work of John Holland, a career theorist who looked at the relationship between interests and occupational fit. As you complete the exercise, you will be identifying your top interest categories.



## ***INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE HOLLAND PARTY EXERCISE***

Imagine you are at a party with six different groups of people gathered around the room.

Read the descriptions of the six Holland Types (Realistic, Artistic, Investigative, Social, Enterprising, Conventional). Imagine yourself joining the group of people that you would most enjoy being with. If several groups appeal to you, pick the one that appeals to you most. Write down the first letter of the name of that group on the following page under “Top Choices.”

Pretend all the members of your group have left the party and you decide to join another group. What would be your second choice? Write down the first letter of your second choice next to your first choice under “Top Choices.” Can you make a third choice? If so, write down the first letter of your third choice, next to the first and second.

## ***HOLLAND TYPES (Adapted from the *Self-Directed Search* by John L. Holland, Ph.D.)***

### ***Realistic (Adventuring/Producing)***

Interested in athletics, good with their hands, prefer to work with objects, machines, plants or animals rather than people. Prefer to do the job without a lot of talk or argument, do it right the first time, get to the point.

### ***Investigative (Analytic)***

Like to observe, learn, evaluate, or solve problems. This type is associated with scientific/academic pursuits. Prefer to analyze a problem, evaluate options and data, set a plan of action, and analyze the results.

### ***Artistic (Creative)***

Interested in artistic expression. Like to work in unstructured situations using imagination and creativity. Prefer creative approach to problem-solving and planning which relies heavily on intuition and imagination.

### ***Social (Helping)***

Like to work with people in some helping capacity—informing, teaching, developing, curing people. Prefer to gather data from all involved parties before generating an action plan. Will try to find equitable solutions for all concerned. Adept at networking with people.

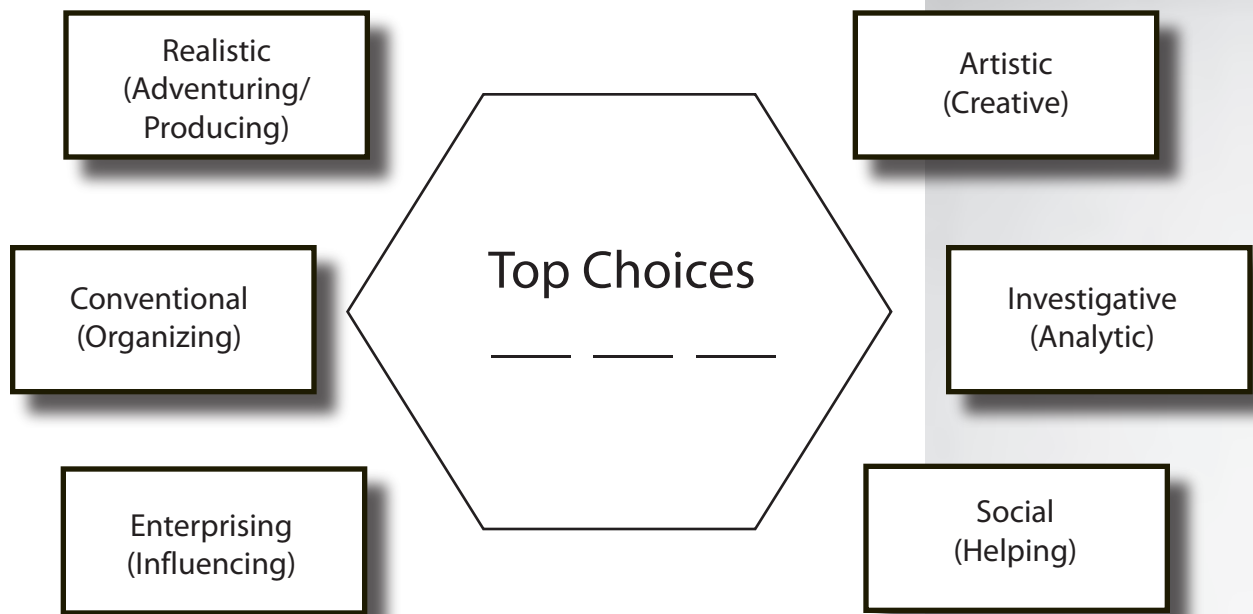
### ***Enterprising (Influencing)***

Like to work with people in a leadership capacity—managing, performing, persuading, influencing, often for organizational or political goals or economic gain. Prefer to investigate a direct plan of action to be carried out by others. Focus on achieving the goal, not concerned with minor details. Likes to keep big picture in mind.

### ***Conventional (Organizing)***

Like to work with data, numbers, more than people. Like detail, tangible products, and have little tolerance for ambiguity. Like following others; like instructions rather than being in charge. Prefer to follow a defined structured plan of action. Attentive to details. Enjoy putting all the pieces of a plan together.





Holland classifies occupations into six major groups (using 2- or 3-letter codes). These codes correlate with the interests of people in each occupation. According to this model, if you share a lot of interests with people in an occupation, you would probably prefer that occupation. Holland surmised that people would be most satisfied in work environments related to their interests. Determining your interests is only one component of making effective career choices. There's also your values, skills, and personality to consider. We encourage you see beyond the Holland model and apply what you've learned to the larger context of your life.

Indicate which interest types represent your first, second, and possible, third choices. Your top two or three choices represent your Holland code (for example: IA, or IAS)



## ***HOLLAND'S OCCUPATIONS BY CATEGORY***

### **Realistic Theme**

Mechanical/Fixing  
Electronics  
Carpentry  
Manual/Skilled Trades  
Protective Services  
Athletic/Sports  
Nature/Outdoors  
Animal Service

### **Investigative Theme**

Mathematics  
Scientific Research/Development  
Medical Science

### **Artistic Theme**

Writing  
Creative Arts  
Performing/Entertaining

### **Social Theme**

Community Service  
Educating  
Medical Service  
Religious Activities

### **Enterprising Theme**

Public Speaking  
Law/Politics  
Management/Supervision  
Sales

### **Conventional Theme**

Office Practices  
Clerical/Clerking  
Food Service

### **Realistic Theme**

Aircraft Mechanic  
Aircraft Pilot  
Animal Trainer  
Auto Mechanic  
Bus Driver  
Camera Repair Technician  
Carpenter  
Conservation Officer  
Dental Lab Technician  
Drafter  
Electrician  
Emergency Medical Technician  
Farmer/Rancher  
Firefighter  
Forest Ranger  
Hardware Store Manager  
Janitor  
Machinist  
Mail Carrier  
Military Enlisted  
Military Officer  
Musical Instrument Repairer  
Orthotist/Prosthetist  
Painter  
Park Ranger  
Pipefitter/Plumber  
Police Officer  
Printer  
Radio/TV Repairer  
Security Guard  
Sheet-Metal Worker  
Telephone Repairer  
Tool/Die Maker  
Truck Driver

### **Investigative Theme**

Biologist  
Chemist  
Chiropractor  
Computer Programmer  
Computer Scientist  
Dental Hygienist  
Dentist  
Dietitian  
Economist  
Electronic Technician  
Engineer  
Mathematician  
Math/Science Teacher  
Medical Lab Technician  
Pharmacist  
Physical Therapist  
Physician  
Psychologist  
Radiological Technician  
Respiratory Therapy Technician  
Surveyor  
Veterinarian

### **Artistic Theme**

Advertising Artist/Writer  
Advertising Executive  
Architect  
Author/Writer  
Chef  
Interior Designer  
Legal Assistant  
Librarian  
Musician  
Newspaper Reporter  
Photographer  
Piano Technician

### **Social Theme**

Athletic Trainer  
Child Care Assistant  
Cosmetologist  
Counselor-Chemical Dependency  
Elementary School Teacher  
Guidance Counselor  
Licensed Practical Nurse  
Nurse's Aide  
Occupational Therapist  
Operating Room Technician  
Registered Nurse  
Religious Leader

### **Enterprising Theme**

Barber/Hairstylist  
Buyer/Merchandiser  
Card/Gift Shop Manager  
Caterer  
Elected Public Official  
Florist  
Food Service Manager  
Hospital Administrator  
Hotel/Motel Manager  
Insurance Agent  
Lawyer  
Manufacturing Representative  
Personnel Manager  
Private Investigator  
Purchasing Agent  
Real Estate Agent  
Reservation Agent  
Restaurant Manager  
Travel Agent

### **Conventional Theme**

Accountant  
Bank Manager  
Bank Teller  
Bookkeeper  
Cafeteria Worker  
Court Reporter  
Data Input Operator  
Dental Assistant  
Executive Housekeeper  
Medical Assistant  
Pharmacy Technician  
Secretary  
Teacher's Aide  
Waiter/Waitress

## ***CAREER EXPLORATION***

Our world is changing faster than ever before. New technologies are affecting every aspect of our lives—how we work, how we learn, how we communicate, and how we spend our spare time. With all these changes come new opportunities in education and the world of work. You have hundreds of choices available to you, so it is important to spend some time investigating the different options.

Regardless of where you are in your career decision-making process, you can start taking steps now toward finding a career that's right for you.

### ***Questions you might want to think about while you explore careers:***

- What do people do in this career?
- In what type of environment do people in this career work?
- What kind and how much training is needed to enter this career?
- What are the opportunities in this career?

*For Missouri career profiles, career grades, top employing occupations and highest and lowest paying occupations, check out the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center's web page at:*

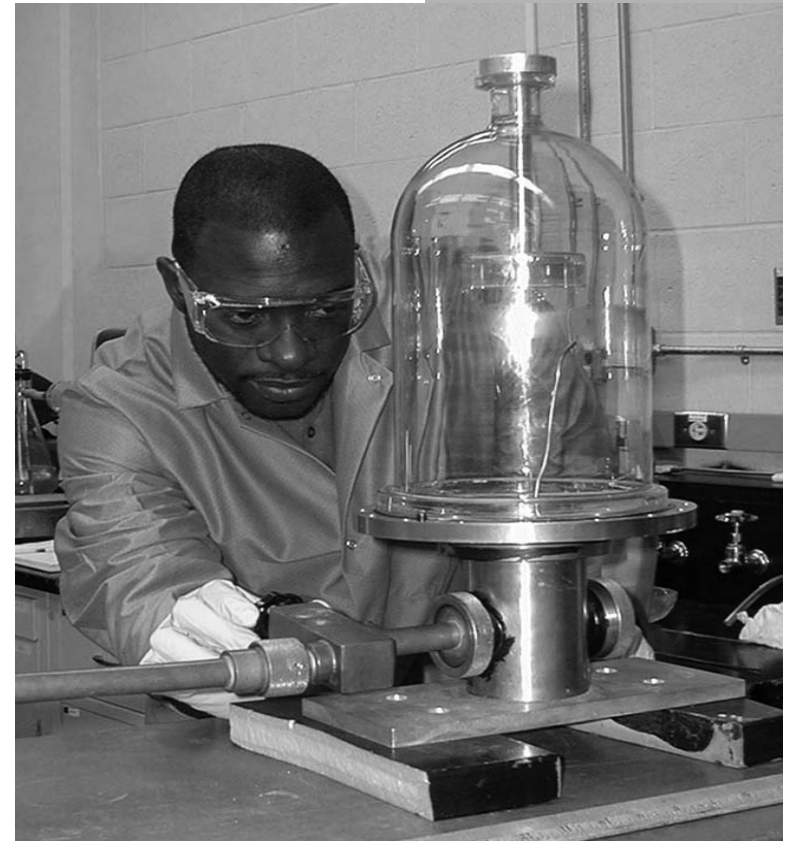
**[www.missourieconomy.org/occupations/](http://www.missourieconomy.org/occupations/)**

*Another valuable website to find state and national occupational information (profiles, wages, highest-paying, fastest-growing, declining occupations, etc.), industry information (profiles, fastest-growing, largest, declining industries, etc.), and state information (profiles and labor market links) can be found at:*

**[www.acinet.org](http://www.acinet.org)**

*One website with links to career profiles in varied industries can be found at:*

**[www.careervoyages.gov](http://www.careervoyages.gov)**



## WHAT'S O\*NET?

O\*NET, the Occupational Information Network, is a comprehensive, online database of worker attributes and job characteristics. It is a timely, user-friendly resource that supports public and private sector efforts to identify workforce skills. It provides a common language for defining and describing occupations. Its flexible design also captures rapidly changing job requirements.

O\*NET provides the essential foundation for assisting career counseling, education, employment, and training activities. The database contains information about knowledge, skills, abilities (KSAs), interests, general work activities (GWAs), and work context. O\*NET can also show you related occupations, education requirements, and current labor market information (wages, openings and outlook).

### O\*NET may be used to:

- Create occupational clusters based on KSA information
- Explore job descriptions or specifications and resumes
- Assist employee training and development initiatives
- Develop and supplement assessment tools to identify worker attributes
- Create skills-match profiles
- Explore career options that capitalize on individual KSA profiles
- Improve vocational and career counseling efforts
- Develop resumes to match individuals to occupations

*Two of the more user-friendly features of O\*NET Online are the Skills Search and the Find Occupations pages which can be accessed from the O\*NET home page at:*

**<http://online.onetcenter.org/>**



## O\*NET (Continued)

There are two ways to explore **O\*NET**:

- The **Find Occupations** page allows you to browse by occupational descriptors: (Knowledge, Skills, Abilities and Interests), by job family (from Architecture and Engineering to Transportation and Material Moving), and by high growth industry. This page links to Wage and Employment information and America's Career Information Network, a national and state comparison of wages and employment.
- The **Skills Search** page allows users to select from a list of skills, which are then matched to occupations.

The following categories are examples of some of the options **O\*NET** allows you to explore:

**Basic Skills:** Mathematics, Writing, Reading, Listening, etc.

**Cross-Functional Skills:** Skills that transfer between tasks such as Problem Identification, Resource Management, etc.

**Generalized Work Activities:** General types of job behaviors (Organizing, Planning and Prioritizing Work, Interacting with Computers, etc.) occurring on multiple jobs.

**Interests:** Occupational types that can be connected with a worker's personal interests to indicate which occupations would be most fulfilling.

**Work Styles:** Work style characteristics that can connect what is important to a worker with occupations that reflect or develop those values, such as Initiative, Achievement, Recognition, etc.

**Work Context:** Physical and social factors that influence the nature of work, such as physical and structural work characteristics.

**Experience and Training:** "Job Zones" that distinguish the levels of education and training connected to occupations.

