

# THE COLLEGE STUDENT'S GUIDE TO CAREER PLANNING



Career planning is learning about yourself and the world of work and then planning your career choices based on what you've learned. Knowing what you know about yourself, how do various occupations match up with your interests, skills, personality, and values?

An effective career planner is someone who:

- Views a plan as subject to change.
- Equates career success with personal satisfaction.
- Believes goals are independent of age.
- Assumes responsibility for his/her own career direction.

--Robert Barner, The Futurist

## THE CAREER PLANNING PROCESS

Career planning helps you to:

- Decide what type of job you want.
- Determine the skills you need to attain the ideal job.
- Discover how to obtain those skills.
- Develop ways to implement your plan.

To begin the process, ask yourself: What are my goals for the future?

### Keep in Mind That...

- The working world is changing rapidly.
- You need goals and strategies to make your dreams come true.
- You are in charge of your career.
- You will need to be proactive in your career search.
- Employers are looking for employees who will enjoy their work.

## CAREER EXPLORATION

Fortunately, you do not have to go through all the career options in the world to find a suitable occupation. In order to start your career exploration, you need to create a list of different occupations that might match your interests and skills. Before you begin narrowing down your possibilities, do some brainstorming to broaden your options.

### Brainstorm on Your Own

- Libraries, Career Services, and Employment Offices
- Labor market information: [www.bls.gov/ooh/](http://www.bls.gov/ooh/)
- Look back at your list of interests, skills, values, and traits that you possess

## Brainstorm with Others

Talk with friends, parents, teachers, neighbors, relatives, co-workers, etc. Tell them you are trying to figure out what to do with your life. They will probably jump at the chance to throw in their two cents. Keep in mind you are trying to come up with a master list of possibilities. Do not dismiss any suggestions. Do not make any commitments, either.

## Career Assessments

- Focus2 Career Exploration
- Reality Check - What can you earn?
- Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)
- Candid Career
- Career Decision-Making Difficulties Questionnaire

## GATHER INFORMATION

There are many methods of research that you can use to gather information about potential careers. The list below begins with the least time-consuming method. As you narrow down your options however, use methods that require more time.

### The Internet

There are plenty of Internet resources that contain useful occupational information. You can even research individual occupations through search sites. Many useful websites can be found on Career Services homepage at [www.careerservices.txstate.edu](http://www.careerservices.txstate.edu).

### Labor Market Information

This information focuses on such things as working conditions, wages, trends, qualifications, employer demands, as well as other factors which affect the market for labor.

## Informational Interviewing

The informational interview is a chance for you to reverse roles and become the interviewer while a representative from the organization or occupation in which you are interested becomes the interviewee. The goal is to gather information about a particular job or career directly from an employee to help you find out if it is the kind of job in which you would be interested.

### Volunteering

There are many advantages to volunteering. It gives you a firsthand look at possible occupations, provides a great way to network, enhances your resume, and will help you explore the pros and cons of possible fields.

### Job Shadowing

Job shadowing gives you an insider's view into career positions you are targeting, giving you a chance to learn what the career is all about without a significant time commitment.

### Interning

An internship can be a paid or unpaid position and allows you to gain relevant experience in your chosen career field, or rule out certain career options.

## NARROW THE FIELD

Now it's time to evaluate each of the options that you have identified and narrow your possible career options to a few. In order to evaluate your choices you should:

### Check the Fine Print

Check out Career Services, Texas State's Alkek Library, your academic advisor or department advisor. There are a wide variety of resources available to help gain critical information about your career options.

### (Once Again) Surf the Net

Now that you have a list of interesting occupations, the Internet can help explain those professions in even more detail. Some sites recommended to help narrow your scope are:

**Bureau of Labor Statistics:** [www.bls.gov/oooh/](http://www.bls.gov/oooh/)

**Occupational Outlook Handbook:** [www.bls.gov/oooh/home.htm](http://www.bls.gov/oooh/home.htm)

**Career One Stop:** [www.careeronestop.org](http://www.careeronestop.org)

## MAKE A DECISION

You have now come to the point where you need to make some choices. This may be more painful than the research. Follow these steps to help you through the process of making a decision.

### 1. Name the Decision

Stating precisely what it is that you need to decide may help give you some perspective on the situation. What exactly is it that you need to know? What does a career mean to you in the first place? Five years?

### 2. List the Alternatives

Write down at least two occupations that stood out during your search.

### 3. Test Your Choice

Think of ways to test the alternatives you have chosen.

### 4. Evaluate your Decision

How well did your choice work? If you need to, you can begin the process again.

## PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

Having chosen one of the career options, you can now begin developing and implementing a plan of action through internships, cooperative education, relevant summer employment, volunteer work, and campus activities. Some additional steps that you will need to take are:

### 1. Investigate Any Additional Education or Training Needed

Does the career path require additional courses and are you willing to complete these?

### 2. Develop a Job Search Strategy

Plan how you will find a job once you meet the requirements. Networking and gaining experience can help get your foot in the door.

### 3. Write Your Resume and Compose a Cover Letter

Career Services has 48-hour resume and cover letter critiquing, as well as Career Counselors/Advisors that can give professional advice.

### 4. Prepare For a Job Interview

Draft answers to difficult questions that you could be asked. Career Services is available for mock interviews throughout the year.

### 5. Gather Company Information

Investigate a potential employer to prepare for the interview, as well as to ensure that it is a workplace that fits your needs.



[www.careerservices.txstate.edu](http://www.careerservices.txstate.edu)

LBJ Student Center Suite 5-7.1 • 512.245.2645 • [CareerServices@txstate.edu](mailto:CareerServices@txstate.edu)