

Chapter 9

Career Planning

Lesson 1

Career Exploration Strategy



Key Terms

advancement
attitude
aptitude
career
employee
entrepreneur
internship
job
job posting
mentor
occupation
profession
promotion
telecommuting
virtual worker
vocational

What You Will Learn to Do

- Investigate a career

Linked Core Abilities

- Take responsibility for your actions and choices
- Apply critical thinking techniques

Skills and Knowledge You Will Gain Along the Way

- Identify personal strengths and interests and link them to possible career paths
- Identify jobs/careers of interest
- Explain the difference between a job and a career
- Determine qualifications and education/training necessary for desired career

Chapter 9

- Discuss the effects of education and training on a career
- Identify the steps in developing a career exploration strategy
- Analyze future job trends
- Define the key words contained in this lesson

Introduction

As a high school student, you are faced with many decisions. Selecting a career may be one of the most important decisions that you make. Although some students in your class may know exactly what they want to do after graduating from high school, others may not. If you are one of those who have not yet decided, don't panic as the student in Figure 9.1.1 is doing! This is the time in your life to try different things, to discover your interests, and to understand how your interests relate to career decision making.

Because much of your adult life will be spent working, it is important to start as early as possible selecting a career. When determining your interests and personal preferences about a career, you may want to consider how much education you want to pursue. Is it important for you to find a career that has high prestige, allows you to work independently, is especially creative, or relates to other common work values? This lesson helps you start planning for your future.

Planning a Career Strategy

Developing a satisfying career requires careful planning and informed decision making. This is an exciting time for you, but it can also be overwhelming. You must spend time gathering information, understanding what alternatives you have, and thinking about your personal preferences in regard to your career. The career decisions that you make in the next few months or years will not be the only career decisions that you will make. Most people have many careers over the course of a lifetime, but the decisions you make soon will be key ones. Therefore, to use your career exploration strategy as a tool to help you make those important career decisions; it should focus on three tasks:

Figure 9.1.1: Do not panic over career decisions rather do some career planning and research.
Courtesy of James Whitmer.



- **Discovering your aptitude, interests, abilities, and personal preferences**
- **Matching your aptitude, interests, abilities, and preferences with occupations**
- **Learning where and how to get information on different careers**

If you have not yet decided what type of a career you would like, now is the time to start planning a strategy that will help you to decide. In addition to teaching you career exploration skills, developing a career exploration strategy can motivate you to learn more about yourself and the occupations that you might find rewarding. Such a strategy can help you to see how your aptitude, interests, abilities, and personal preferences match career opportunities.

An effective career exploration strategy can also help you to decide whether you want to attend college, a **vocational**-technical school, join one of the military services, or go directly into the world of work after high school.

Identifying What You Want to Become

Do you know at this time in your life what career or job you would like to pursue after graduating from high school? Your answer can be anything: doctor, plumber, hot dog salesman, **entrepreneur**, instructional designer, baseball star, electrician, and so on. In the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* the Department of Labor lists over 2,000 different jobs performed in the United States.

Although you may believe that discovering your aptitudes for certain jobs or careers may seem like a difficult task, it can actually be easier than identifying a career that interests you. Your guidance counselor (career counselor, occupational specialist) has career tests that can match your skills, abilities, and interests with specific job titles. The results of these tests allow you to eliminate jobs that may not be suited for you (because you scored low on them) so that you can concentrate your time and research on those jobs that better match your skills, abilities, and interests.

The Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) test is a good indicator of how well you have developed your academic and occupational abilities. It measures aptitudes that are related to success in different types of civilian or military jobs. The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) has provided the nationally normed, multiaptitude test battery to high schools and post-secondary schools since 1968. The ASVAB Career Exploration Program has been designed to encourage students to increase their level of self-knowledge and to understand how that information could be linked to civilian and military occupational characteristics.

The ASVAB program was recently redesigned to be helpful to virtually all students, whether they are planning on immediate employment after high school in civilian or military occupations, or further education at a university, community college, or vocational institution. Visit www.asvabprogram.com/ for more information.

There are several Web sites that are dedicated to helping you assess your potential in the job market. Some offer a free assessment and some offer the assessment for a fee. The following Web sites are just a few examples:

Key Note Terms

vocational – of, relating to, or being in training for a skill or trade to be pursued as a career

entrepreneur – one who organizes, manages, and assumes the risks of a business enterprise

- **www.assessment.com:** Provides a free online career assessment test and appraisal through MAPP, also known as Motivational Appraisal of Personal Potential
- **www.personalnature.com:** Personal Nature Career assessment service measures talents and work styles to provide a ranking of career suggestions for a fee

When thinking about your future, you should first consider all the jobs that interest you the most and why. Try to understand what draws you to those professions. Then, identify the qualities and traits that you have for those jobs as compared to the requirements for them.

Maybe you do not have any idea what you would like to do. If that is the case, you might be eliminating some career choices because of negative thinking:

- **You assume certain jobs are not realistic.**
- **You do not have the resources to pursue certain jobs or careers.**
- **You may not have direct experience.**
- **You feel that you cannot even guess at jobs or careers that may interest you.**

What Am I Going to Do After Completing High School?

This is a question that you may be asking yourself right now. Because you have been in school most of your life, you might be wondering, “What will I do after graduation? Should I go to college or look for a job? Do I have any other alternatives? What about technical or vocational training? Is college something I can handle now, or should I wait until later? Do I have the resources to obtain further education? If I do try to find a job, what kind should it be? Should I join the military? How do I find out which occupations are best for me? Where will I likely succeed and be most satisfied?”

To answer those questions, you should find out as much as possible about the many career opportunities that exist, and which ones match your aptitude, interests, abilities, and personal preferences. To do all of that, you will need the following:

- **Information about your aptitude, interests, abilities, and personal preferences**
- **Information about the world of work, including educational requirements, work environment, and career opportunities for specific occupations**
- **Information on how to match your personal characteristics to the characteristics of the world of work**

You must first decide how you will conduct your career exploration, how many hours you plan to take in your search process, and a date when you will make a tentative decision. The time limitations you set are important. It is easy to postpone big decisions. If you commit yourself to a plan, you are less likely to become overwhelmed by such a big decision.

The deadline that you set is there to help you make timely decisions about your future. It does not mean you must make a career decision that is not changeable.

You may even find it helpful to set a time in the near future to review your research. That review will give you the opportunity to see if you are still satisfied with your choices. When looking for a career, it is important to be creative. Explore all possible avenues. Use techniques such as brainstorming, researching, networking, canvassing, testing, counseling, and volunteering to assist you in making your career decisions.

What's Hot in the Career Market

Not sure what kind of career to pursue? You might want to consider the computer or health fields. The number of jobs in these areas is projected to grow very quickly within the next few years. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the ten occupations with the fastest projected employment growth for 1996 through 2006 are the following:

1. Database administrators, computer support specialists and all other computer scientists (118% more jobs by 2006)
2. Computer engineers (109%)
3. Systems analysts (103%)
4. Personal and home care aides (85%)
5. Physical and corrective therapy assistants and aides (79%)
6. Home health aides (76%)
7. Medical assistants (74%)
8. Desktop publishing specialists (74%)
9. Physical therapists (71%)
10. Occupational therapy assistants and aides (69%)

As you can see, the top three careers with projected growth are related to the Information Technology (IT) field. One of the reasons for the interest in the IT field, which involves working with computers, is that it provides the opportunity to work at home by the use of an electronic linkup with a central office, called **telecommuting**. There are thousands of organizations throughout the country that offer the benefit of telecommuting to their employees. Improved work performance and employee morale, reduced operating costs for items such as office space, and a more efficient work environment all contribute to the benefits of telecommuting. Employees who telecommute are sometimes called **virtual workers** because they are performing work tasks virtually, via the Internet, phone, and fax machine. Another in demand career field will be almost any career in the health sciences area, such as a dental hygienist.

Key Note Terms

telecommuting – working at home by the use of an electronic linkup with a central office

virtual worker – employee who telecommutes and performs work tasks virtually, via the Internet, phone, and fax

Brainstorming

Spend 10 minutes listing careers that you know you are not interested in. Next, spend another ten minutes listing all the careers that you think may interest you. Finally, evaluate both lists. Commit yourself to exploring the possibilities you like the most. Set a date to review the list to see if you still feel the same way about the choices you have made. Remember, you can always change your mind at any time during the career exploration process and add or delete choices from your lists as you learn more about those choices.

Researching

Two good resources that should be available in your school career center or library are the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* and the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles*.

- **The *Occupational Outlook Handbook* is a career information resource produced by the U.S. Department of Labor that provides detailed information on approximately 250 civilian and military occupations.**
- **The *Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT)* defines civilian careers and assigns them a DOT code. As a result of an extensive task analysis performed by the authors of that book, you can link comparable occupations. This capability is particularly important when linking civilian to military occupations, and vice versa, to determine occupational counterparts.**

Other resources that you may want to consider for obtaining information about career fields are *Dunn and Bradstreet's Million-Dollar Directory*, *Thomas Registry of Corporate Profiles*, and *Standard and Poor's Corporation Registry*. These books should also be available in your school career center or library.

Your research should also include the following:

- **Visit a local Job Services office. This office has more job postings in more occupations than any other single source.**
- **Use the yellow pages in the telephone book. The yellow pages group companies together according to what they do or make. Try to match your interests or abilities with a company most likely to meet them.**
- **Read the newspaper ads. These ads list job categories alphabetically. Remember, the type of work you can do may be listed under several different categories.**
- **Listen to the radio or television and read the business section of the newspaper to find out what new businesses may be opening.**
- **Visit local Chambers of Commerce, professional societies, or community organizations, attend trade shows, or go to industrial or craft unions.**
- **Contact city, county, state, and federal personnel offices.**

Networking

Networking means meeting people and making contacts. It is one of the most successful ways that people learn about job or career openings. Ask your friends, relatives, or neighbors about possible careers. People who are working often hear about job openings before businesses make them public, and those people may be able to give you “the tip of a lifetime.”

Canvassing

Talk with professionals and the people who visit your school during career day. Attend the career days sponsored at most technical or vocational schools, junior or community colleges, and the major colleges and universities that are in your area. Use these events to learn about the requirements for entering into various occupations.

Key Note Term

job posting – A published notice of a job vacancy

Additionally, make appointments with managers or other key people in the fields in which you are most interested. Generally, people will gladly take a few minutes of their time to discuss their career field with you.

Testing

There are a variety of tests that can help you determine your **aptitude**, interests, and abilities. This may refer to your capability to learn a particular type of work or your potential for general training; both are measurements that are essential for success in determining a career.

You may have already taken a career test. Career tests match possible careers to your interests and they also give you an idea about the type of job for which you are best suited. You can obtain additional information about career tests from your instructors, the media center, or any of the school counselors.

Counseling

Guidance and career counselors and occupational specialists are available in most schools and communities to help you make decisions about your career. If you think you will have trouble making up your mind about a career, speak to a counselor for assistance. Counselors and occupational specialists can match your aptitude, interests, and abilities with potential jobs or career fields. Remember, it is important to start your career plan early and these counselors and occupational specialists will be able to help you.

Volunteering/Working a Summer Job

After you make a decision about your career, consider volunteering for a job that relates to your career decision or working a summer job in that field. For example, if you want to be a teacher, find a job at a camp or day care center. If you want to be a doctor, volunteer at a hospital. Volunteering and working part-time can help you decide if the career choice you made is right for you.

Although making money may seem important, an **internship**, volunteer work in an area that interests you or while in college a student assistant position, as depicted in Figure 9.1.2, can be more beneficial in the long run. Besides, a job in itself is a good learning experience.

How Will a Summer Job Help My Future?

A summer job can

- Give you work experience.
- Boost your self-esteem and make you more responsible.
- Give you references for future jobs/careers.
- Give you the chance to meet a role model or **mentor** who can help you plan your future.
- Help you grow and learn your true interests and talents.

Key Note Term

aptitude – the capabilities that you have developed so far that indicate your readiness to become proficient in a certain type of activity

Key Note Terms

internship – an advanced student or graduate, usually in a professional field (such as medicine or teaching) gaining supervised, practical experience (such as a hospital or classroom)

mentor – a trusted counselor or guide

Figure 9.1.2: A student assistant position with a college professor will provide a mentor and valuable information about careers in the professor's discipline.

Courtesy of Brian Smith.



When Should I Choose a Career?

Nearing high school graduation, you may be feeling pressured into making a decision about what career to pursue. At this point in your life, however, you may not be prepared to make that kind of a decision. You may not even be aware of all the career possibilities that exist, especially since so many new careers are created yearly! Unfortunately, in the United States, our society does pressure young adults to make career decisions that can have a lasting effect. What happens if you choose the wrong career? What if you want to change your mind after a few years of study?

It may help ease the pressure to know that the U.S. Department of Labor has estimated that “young people of high school age should expect to have an average of fourteen jobs throughout their lifetimes, in possibly six to eight different career fields.” What a change from a generation ago when individuals often began working right out of high school and worked for the same company until they retired!

What does this prediction about the job market mean for you? On the positive side, it probably means you will never be locked into one particular job. You will have the opportunity to try new skills, learn new information, and experience new adventures throughout your life. On the other hand, it will mean you will have to have or develop the skill of being flexible with your career. You will need to learn how to transition from one job to another with minimum time, training, and possibly even education.

If you are unsure about what career you want to pursue, relax. Career counselors will tell you that it is okay not to be locked into a career decision at your high school graduation. In fact, they will most likely urge you to take some time to self-reflect, explore your options, take exploratory classes, and make an informed decision when you feel comfortable doing so.

But taking the pressure off doesn't mean you should stop thinking about your options now. This is the perfect time to begin exploring what the future holds in terms of employment and to begin reflecting on your personal values, interests, and skills.

What Should I Know about the Future Job Market?

Although no one can predict the future perfectly, you can look at trends and get a general picture of what the job market will be like a few years down the road. The Bureau of Labor Statistics offers the following information for the years 1996–2006:

- **Industry employment growth is projected to be highly concentrated in service-producing industries, with business, health, and education services accounting for 70 percent of the growth:**
- **Health care services will increase 30 percent and account for 3.1 million new jobs.**
- **Educational services are projected to increase by 1.3 million teaching jobs.**
- **Computer and data processing services will add more than 1.3 million jobs.**
- **The labor force will become increasingly diverse:**
 - **The labor force growth of Hispanics, Asians, and other races will be faster than that for blacks and white non-Hispanics, stemming primarily from immigration.**
 - **Women's share of the labor force is expected to increase from 46 percent to 47 percent.**
- **Jobs will be available for job seekers from every educational and training background.**
- **Almost two-thirds of the projected growth will be in **occupations** that require less than a college degree. However, these positions generally offer the lowest pay and benefits.**
- **Jobs requiring the least education and training—those that can be learned on the job—will provide two of every three openings due to growth and replacement needs.**

Job growth varies widely by educational and training requirements:

- **Occupations that require a bachelor's degree are projected to grow the fastest. All of the twenty occupations with the highest earnings require at least a bachelor's degree. Engineering and health occupations dominate the list.**

Key Note Term

occupation – the principal business of one's life

- **Education is essential for getting a high-paying job; however, many occupations, such as registered nurses, supervisors of blue-collar workers, electrical and electronic technicians, automotive mechanics, and carpenters do not require a four-year college degree, yet they offer higher-than-average earnings.**

These projected trends give only a brief profile of what the future job market will be like. One thing does seem certain: The more technological skills you learn, the better your chances of landing a high-paying job. Figure 9.1.3 illustrates predictions about occupations that will have fast growth, high pay, and largest numerical growth.

Figure 9.1.4 illustrates job growth rates based on education and training.

Don't despair if you are passionate about a career that isn't listed in the top 25 future jobs. If you are passionate about a specific career, you should pursue that goal! Although you might find that you have to work harder at finding a job, that you have to work more than one job until you can pursue your dream full-time, or that you don't earn as much money as others, you will be happy in your **profession**. Greater job satisfaction will reflect positively in other areas of your life.

Additionally, if you diversify your skills, have a well-rounded background, and continue to be a lifelong learner, you will find that you have more opportunities, and that it is easier to move into a wide variety of jobs.

Key Note Term

profession – a principal calling, vocation, or employment

Exploring Careers

As a high school student, this may be the first time you've seriously explored your career options; however, career exploring and planning may occur many times over the course of your life. As society advances, new opportunities are created. If you continue to explore careers and keep up-to-date with your skills and education, you will be ready when something new and challenging comes along.

One of the most important points to remember right now is that you do have time. In fact, the first two years of college are generally spent fulfilling general education requirements such as math, writing, communications, arts, science, and social sciences. These freshman- and sophomore-level classes give students an opportunity to strengthen critical-thinking skills and develop a solid background in the basics that will help them succeed in upper-level classes and give them the opportunity to explore various fields of study.

As you begin college, you will have several opportunities to meet with an academic adviser to discuss career goals and academic planning. If, at an advising session, you are given a degree plan that you are uncertain about, don't worry. You are not locked into pursuing that degree. Advisers often give you this one or degree plans to get you to think about your college and career goals. These degree plans list all of the courses a student in that field of study is required to complete to earn a certificate or degree. After you have declared a major, these degree plans act as a contract between you and the college. If you are following an established degree plan and the school revises and changes the degree plan, you will probably not be required to take additional classes, only the classes listed on your original degree plan. Often, the first two years of any degree plan are similar because every student is completing the general education requirements.

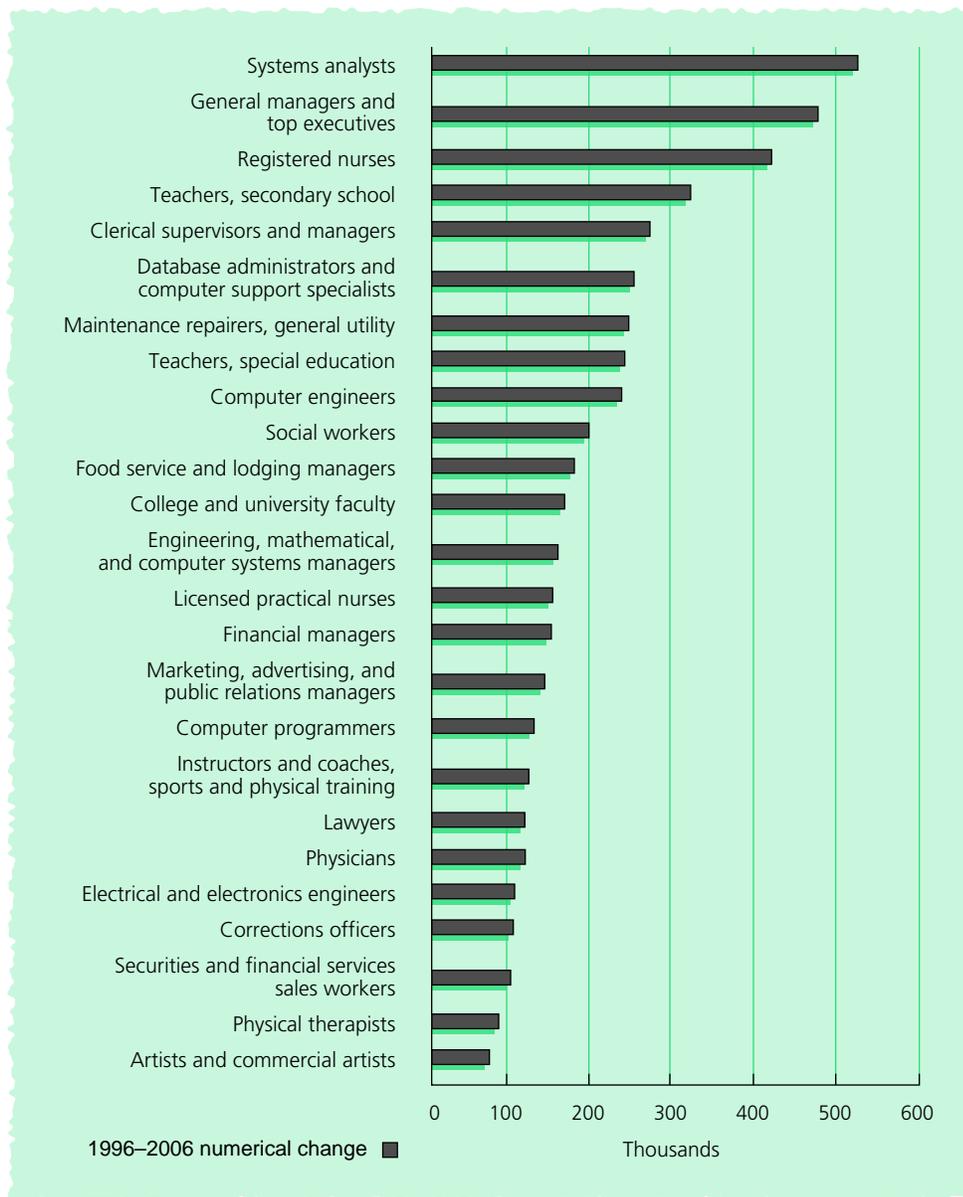


Figure 9.1.3: Occupations with largest numerical growth.

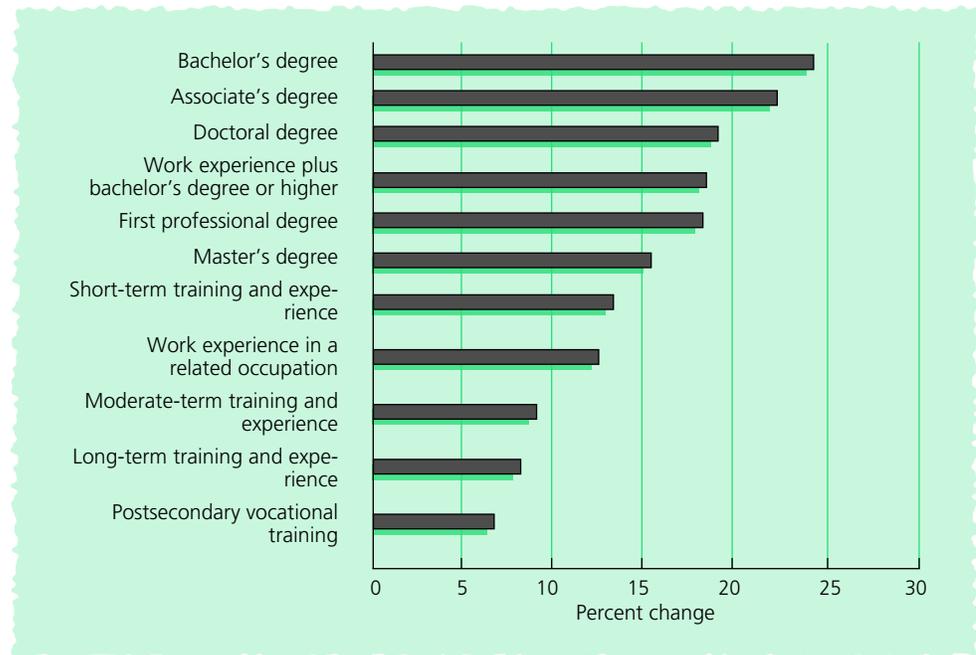
Reprinted from *1998–1999 Occupational Outlook Handbook*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor.

Although you are free to change degree plans whenever you want, you should be advised that the best time to change majors is before you take a significant number of upper-level courses. Often, the credits for one degree don't match those for another, so you end up taking extra semesters to complete your degree. If you are using financial aid to pay your college expenses, the money may run out, and you will have to pay for the extra classes on your own.

Choosing a degree plan, or career, can be a difficult task; however, you can begin the exploration process right now so that the decision becomes less complicated. Two steps you should consider are self-assessments and occupational research.

Figure 9.1.4: Growth rates
by education.

Reprinted from 1998–1999
*Occupational Outlook
Handbook*, Washington, DC:
U.S. Department of Labor.



Self-Assessments

Self-assessment tools are created to help individuals gather information about themselves. Some assessments focus on your personality, values, interests, and work styles; other assessments focus on skills and competencies. Examples of available self-assessments include the following:

- **Campbell Interest and Skill Survey.** Matches interests and skills to occupations
- **Career Skills.** A computerized program that determines the type of skills a student would like to use in his or her work
- **Choices.** A computerized interest and skills inventory
- **Compass.** Measures basic skills
- **Discover.** A computerized guidance tool that assesses interests, abilities, values, and skills and matches those with the world of work
- **FOCUS II.** Identifies interests, skills, and values and relates them to occupations
- **Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.** Determines personality and matches it to work styles
- **Self-Directed Search.** Matches interests and abilities to career fields
- **SIGI Plus.** A computerized guidance tool that looks at interests, personality, values, and occupational options
- **Strong Interest Inventory.** Matches interests to occupations

Another valuable self-assessment tool is the *Prentice Hall Self-Assessment Library* on CD-ROM.

These assessments will ask you questions about yourself, your interests, your values, and your skills. Your high school counseling office, the U.S. Department of Labor, or the career counseling office at any college can provide you with a number of self-assessments.

You can also choose to create your own self-assessments. For example, you could

- **Look at your personal mission statement to reflect on your personal values.**
- **Create a table that lists all your accomplishments. For each accomplishment, list the skills you used in that activity.**
- **Write in your journal about the things that interest you, your aspirations, and people you admire.**
- **Compare jobs you have had or would like to have. Create a list of pros and cons associated with each job.**
- **Create a list of your personal traits and characteristics and think about what jobs might match them.**
- **Join activity clubs and organizations to see what interests you. Evaluate what you like or dislike about your experience.**
- **Take a class that focuses on career exploration. Your high school, local adult basic education, community education center, or local college may offer these courses.**
- **Complete a personality-style inventory and compare the results to various job requirements.**

The process of self-assessment is ongoing because you grow and change with each new experience. What you value now may not be as important in a few years, and you need to take these changes into account when you are considering careers.

After completing one or more self-assessments, you should have a self-profile that you can match to various jobs. If you work through specific programs in career centers, your self-assessment tool may give you a computer-generated list of suggested careers that would suit your profile. Think of this as a starting place for more specific types of research about careers and occupations.

Occupational Research

In addition to self-assessments, you should also plan to spend time researching occupations. Your research may include looking through books and occupational guides, but you may also want to interview someone in the job you are considering, shadow someone in the job, take on part-time work in that field, volunteer, or try a cooperative education experience.

There are specific points of information you should gather during your research. For example, you will want to find out answers to the following questions:

- **How much knowledge or training would I need to be hired for this job?**
- **What kind of other skills would I need to learn (communication skills or team-building skills, for example)?**
- **What kind of responsibilities would I have in this job?**
- **What are the working conditions of this job?**

Key Note Terms

advancement – a promotion or elevation to a higher rank or position

career – an occupation or profession; the course or progress of a person's life

- What opportunities for **advancement** would I have in this job?
- What is the salary range for this job?
- What is the future outlook for this job?
- What are similar jobs that I might consider?

The place to begin researching jobs is your high school counseling office or library. Most likely, it will have specific occupational guides that you can browse through, as well as numerous books, videos, and computer programs that offer comparable information. As you complete your research, take notes and compare the various jobs you research but don't feel pressured into making a decision immediately. Leave your options open as you work through the exploration stage of **career** planning.

Interviewing people performing the job you are interested in is a great way to obtain more information and makes the information from the books real for you. You can ask questions that might not have been answered in your previous research as well as questions that pertain to specific geographic jobs. For example, the research might show you that there are a large number of available jobs nationwide, but in an interview you might discover that there are a very limited number of job openings in your city or state. Interviews can also open the door for you to shadow someone performing the job.

Job shadowing is an opportunity for you to work side by side with someone who is hired in that profession. Depending on the type of job, you might find yourself observing others, or you may even get the chance to help. Benefits of job shadowing include discovering both the good and bad aspects of a particular job, learning about the job environment, and making contacts with others in the profession. Job shadowing may also open the door for you to be hired in part-time employment.

One of the best ways to find out if a particular type of work is suited to you is to do it. There are several ways: part-time or full-time paid work and volunteer work. At this point in your education, you may find that you are too busy with academic and extracurricular activities to take on a job, which is okay because you are learning valuable skills in school, organizations, and sports. But when you evaluate your time, you may discover that you could work one or two days after school or one day of the weekend. You don't want to overload yourself; however, even a minimal amount of work experience will certainly help you decide whether you like certain jobs and teach you work-related skills such as communication, leadership, team building, and problem solving. You may even get referrals for future jobs.

Cooperative education provides you with the opportunity to have paid employment in positions that complement your academic program. Although most co-op positions are obtained at the college level, more and more high schools are taking the initiative and offering high school students co-op positions. In these cases, students generally take classes for half a day and work for half a day.

If you have the opportunity to complete a co-op program, make the most of it by developing learning objectives in consultation with your supervisor, monitoring your progress, and making changes to your goals and strategies, if necessary.

However you choose to research occupations and careers, take time to reflect on your experiences. What do you like or dislike about the job? Do you like the work environment and the pace of the job? Do you have the skills, or can you easily learn the skills, to make you successful in the job? Does the job challenge or bore you? Would you be happy in the job for more than a few years? Does the career offer multiple yet similar job opportunities that you could take advantage of?

As you analyze these questions, consider whether you want to pursue this type of job. If not, consider yourself lucky that you discovered that answer now, not five or ten years down the road. If you do think this is a career worth pursuing, it may be time to think about what to major in at college.

How Are Careers and Majors Related?

After you have decided on the type of career you want to pursue, you should research the type of skills and education you will need. The required education will indicate what type of degree you will need and what you will need to major in. A major is a group of classes that are required to earn a degree in a specific area. Some careers, such as heating and air-conditioning technology or business and office technology may only require a one-year certificate or a two-year degree. These types of careers take very specialized training and education, so you will need to declare your major early in your academic career so that you can get into the classes you will need.

Some careers don't require specific majors in entry-level positions. For example, a person entering a career in marketing might major in marketing, accounting, communications, or public relations. As you research your career options, find out what type of major or degree is required so you can plan accordingly.

Understanding the Differences Between a Job and a Career

Throughout this book, you will see the words *job* and *career*, each being defined differently. Basically, a **job** is a series of tasks or activities that are performed within the scope of what is called work. These tasks relate to a career in that a career is a series of jobs. However, a career is more than just jobs; it is a sequence of **attitudes** and behaviors that are associated with work and that relate to your total life experience. A career is really an integration of your personality with your job activities. Therefore, your career becomes a primary part of your identity or your self-concept. This is illustrated in Table 9.1.1.

Although they are often used interchangeably, the words *career* and *job* have different meanings. Jobs can be both the individual pieces of a career or random, isolated events in a person's work history. Careers are formed over time; they consist of related jobs that build on one another. One job does not make a career; several jobs do.

Key Note Terms

job – a position of work or employment that is performed regularly in exchange for payment; a task or undertaking; a specific activity or piece of work

attitude – a feeling, emotion, or mental position regarding a fact or state

Table 9.1.1: Job versus Career

What is a Job?	Example
A piece of work, task or undertaking	Babysitting, mowing lawns; duty done by agreement to pay
What is a Career?	Example
A principal business or profession	Teacher, engineer, writer; occupation or lifework

Working behind the counter at a fast-food restaurant until you can do something else is a job. If, however, your goal is to become a manager and invest in franchises someday, it is the first step in a career. The knowledge and skills gained from working behind the counter are a foundation on which you can continue to build as you move up in the fast-food industry.

In the past, people chose a career early in life, and they tended to stay in it most of their lives. Farmers worked on their farms, secretaries stayed in the office, and teachers taught until retirement. More recently the trend in America has shifted toward multiple careers. You can now expect to have four or more careers in your life. Furthermore, with the rapid changes in society as well as in economic conditions, jobs, and technologies, many traditional jobs are becoming obsolete.

This is markedly different from the world in which your parents worked. Thus, the expectation that after you find a job, you are home free, secure, or set for life is no longer realistic. The traditional **employee** contract, although unwritten, implied an honest day's work for an honest day's wage, employee loyalty in exchange for job security, and raises and **promotions** in return for seniority. Today's new employee contract simply implies continued employment for individuals who possess skills that continuously meet a business need.

More than ever it is important to give considerable thought to what you want to do and structure your training and education to be relevant both to your interests and to trends in the job market. You will find it beneficial to assess your skills and identify those that are transferable from a previous career to a newly emerging field with a minimum amount of retraining. Knowing yourself and developing a plan of action based on both your needs and the needs of the job market will help you embark on the career most satisfying for you rather than just following the latest trends in one field or another.

Demands in the job market rapidly come and go. Some time ago, teachers were in great demand; then, for about a decade, there was a glut of teachers on the market. Now there seems to be a renewed need for teachers in the workforce. The same is true of engineers. If you base your career decision primarily on current trends, by the time you obtain the training necessary to get into the hot field, it may well have cooled down. This strategy leaves you with slim prospects for a job that can lead to a career, and quite possibly with skills and training in a field that you weren't terribly excited about in the first place (except as a quick opportunity).

Key Note Terms

employee – one employed by another, usually for wages or salary

promotion – the act or fact of being raised in position or rank

You have the potential to be satisfied in any number of occupations. Getting to know yourself better through self-assessment will help you identify careers that are best suited to your personality. People who are not prepared for change allow that change to make decisions for them. They are often frustrated and unhappy because they are forced to work at jobs they don't enjoy. They may never have realized that they have choices, or perhaps they never took the time or energy to become aware of their preferences. They settle for less than what might be best for them. Dad says "get a job in business" even though his child has a special talent in art. The high school adviser recommends engineering because scholarships are available. The employment department directs a job applicant into an electronics training program because there's an opening. By knowing your own preferences, you will be ready to manage your career path instead of merely following others' suggestions.

Striving for Career Satisfaction

Survey after survey on job satisfaction among American workers indicates that well over 50 percent are dissatisfied with their jobs. In a study for *U.S. News & World Report*, people were asked to name the three things that contribute most to their quality of life. The top categories for men and women were "job/career satisfaction," "relationship with family," and "money." Because people may be changing jobs and careers several times in their lives, it is more important than ever before to have accurate knowledge about yourself and the world of work.

In its annual Labor Day survey for 1999, the Gallup poll indicated that only 39 percent of workers are completely satisfied with their jobs. In another Gallup survey, two-thirds of a group of adults said if they were starting all over, they would try to get more information about their career options. You will face the need to continually reevaluate yourself and your career path. It is useful to know about the changing world of work and which occupations allow you to best express yourself and best use your strengths and talents. When analyzing your personal assets, it is to your advantage to ultimately think about the total job market. Search for jobs that will lead you into a career. You will benefit greatly from identifying a variety of alternatives that allow you to express your personality. Once you have looked within yourself and identified what you want and need in a job, changes will be easier to make because you'll know when you have outgrown one job and need a new one.

For most people, career planning is not a simple, straightforward, linear process in which they follow certain prescribed steps, end up at a specific destination, and live happily after. It is instead a feedback loop that continues to self-correct as you add information about your changing self and the world around you. You are constantly revising your career plan as you grow and change. This means that there isn't any one "right" career. Instead, there are many careers in which you could be equally happy, equally successful, equally satisfied.

You are looking, then, not for the one right career but for the series of alternatives and career options that seem to make sense for you, given your background, your personality, your career and life stages, and the changing world.

Choosing and Changing Careers

Each one of us, regardless of our stage in life, is in some phase of career development. You may be starting your first job or looking for a job. You may be planning for your first career, reentering the job market after some time at home, considering your next career, planning for part-time employment, or looking for meaningful volunteer experience.

Because there is no crystal ball that will predict the one right career for you, you will want to consider several options as you explore career development. It is possible to survey your needs, values, interests, skills, aptitudes, and sources of information about the world of work to create a broader career objective. Some careers do have established or common career paths. Teachers, for example, often start out as tutors, work up to student teacher, and then become an assistant teacher before taking on the task of a full-time teacher. In the marketing profession, people often start in sales; therefore, you need to think about career goals in the sense of their being both short term and long term. A short-term career goal is one that can be rather quickly attained. For example, in the process of career planning, you may discover you want to be a lawyer. Law is considered a long-term career option because it generally takes many years of study and preparation; however, a short-term career goal related to law might be obtaining a job as a legal secretary or a paralegal. Either of these would give you the opportunity to work in an environment that excites and energizes you long before you actually achieve your final and ultimate career goal. In addition, relevant experience enhances your appeal to future employers.

Real-Life Stories

Sandra was 17 when she started her first secretarial job in a legal office. For 10 years she was happy being a secretary involved with the legal profession. This left her time to raise her family. But her employers encouraged her to continue her education. Not only did she attend evening courses, but she also became involved with the Professional Secretaries' Association. By the time her children were grown, she had completed a two-year college degree program, served as president of her association, started a training course to become a paralegal, been promoted to legal assistant, and is now teaching legal terminology at a local community college.

There is a final, important reason that this effort at personal assessment is crucial as the first step in your career-planning process. After you know who you are and what your preferences and talents are, you can better make sense of the information that continually bombards you regarding the world of work. It's almost impossible to read a newspaper, listen to a news broadcast, visit a Web site, or watch a television show that does not have some implication for you and your career. In fact, you may feel you suffer from information overload. Looking at the want ads and reading about employment projections and trends can cause confusion, frustration, and often discouragement about what place you might have in this elusive job market.

One of the best ways to achieve a sense of control and perspective on this constant stream of information is to know who you are, so that when you are listening, reading, watching, and experiencing, you will have a means of processing information through your consciousness, through your personality and preferences, and through your values and skills. Eventually, you will be able to recognize and reject information that does not apply to you, and to internalize and add to your career plan information that does. If a group setting such as a career class is available to you, all the better! The opportunity to discover yourself and expand your horizons is multiplied by the added benefit of group interaction.

Conclusion

This lesson explained the importance of career exploration skills and career planning. Specifically, it introduced a career exploration strategy, discussed how to link information about yourself to specific occupations, and showed you how to use that strategy in making career decisions. You should be able to organize information about yourself and the world of work and be able to see which occupations best fit your aptitude, interests, abilities, and preference.

Many people never work at jobs or careers that use their full talents and abilities or that interest them. You do not have to work at a boring job. You can do something that interests you and still make good money.

By answering the following two questions that career seekers must answer, you are on your way to a satisfying and personally meaningful career:

- **What do you want to do?**
- **What are you suited to do?**

In the following lesson, you will learn how to create a career development portfolio and use it as you expand your ideas about the perfect career for you.

Lesson Review

1. **Explain the difference between a job and a career.**
2. **What are some of the experiences you've had that might lead you to your career?**
3. **How can networking help you determine the career you want and find a job?**
4. **What kind of job or career would you like to have? What do you need to do to get it?**