

Want Help Choosing a Career?

Dear Student,

In your Universal Encouragement Program guidance survey, you indicated that you would like some help or advice in choosing a career.

Choosing a career does **not** mean that you have to decide now what you will do for the rest of your life. A better goal is to identify several possibilities that interest you, learn more about them, and gain experiences that help you decide what may be a good fit.

Career planning usually involves four important steps:

1. Learning about yourself: your interests, skills, values, strengths, and goals.
2. Exploring careers that might fit those characteristics.
3. Experiencing work firsthand through job shadowing, volunteering, internships, part-time work, or apprenticeships.
4. Learning what education or training different careers require.

Explore career possibilities

Two excellent free resources are:

My Next Move

<https://www.mynextmove.org/>

My Next Move lets you search more than 900 careers, browse careers by industry or career cluster, and explore occupations based on your interests. Career pages describe the work, skills, education, technology, wages, and employment outlook for each occupation.

CareerOneStop Career Profiles

<https://www.careeronestop.org/ExploreCareers/Learn/career-profiles.aspx>

CareerOneStop provides detailed profiles for more than 900 occupations, including typical job duties, education and training, wages, employment outlook, and short career videos showing what the work is like.

Take a career assessment

Career assessments can help you identify possibilities you may want to investigate. They should be used as guides for exploration, not as tests that tell you what career you should choose.

Useful free assessments include:

- O*NET Interest Profiler:
<https://www.mynextmove.org/explore/ip/>
- CareerOneStop Interest Assessment
- CareerOneStop Skills Matcher
- CareerOneStop Work Values Matcher

CareerOneStop's three assessments focus on interests, skills, and values and provide lists of related careers to investigate.

If you are an Indiana student, you can also use:

Indiana Career Explorer (for Indiana students only)

<https://indianacareerexplorer.com/>

It provides career assessments, career information, educational planning tools, and information about pathways after high school.

Watch people at work

Sometimes reading about an occupation is not enough. Career videos can help you see the workplace, hear about the work, and understand what people actually do.

CareerOneStop includes short videos in its occupation profiles. You can also explore career cluster videos, which introduce groups of related occupations.

While watching, ask yourself:

- What parts of this work look interesting?
- What parts might I not enjoy?
- What skills seem important?
- What would I like to know that the video does not tell me?

A video is a good starting point, but it cannot show everything about a career.

Learn about careers through gathering experience

Job shadowing: Spend a few hours observing someone doing a job that interests you. Ask questions about what the person does, what they enjoy, what is difficult, and how they prepared for the career. Your counselor may be able to help you identify local opportunities.

Volunteering: Volunteer work can help you learn what it is like to work with people, animals, technology, community organizations, health programs, environmental projects, and many other settings. It also helps you develop skills such as communication, teamwork, responsibility, and problem solving.

Internships and part-time work: An internship, summer job, or part-time job can give you firsthand experience in a workplace. Even a job that is not your intended career can teach you a great deal about what you enjoy, what you are good at, and what kind of work environment suits you.

[BigFuture](#) recommends talking with your counselor, teachers, family members, and other adults about possible internship opportunities.

Youth apprenticeships: Some high school students can combine classroom learning with paid, supervised work experience. Apprenticeships are available in fields such as advanced manufacturing, construction, technology, health care, business, and skilled trades. Ask your counselor whether your school offers youth apprenticeship or other work-based learning programs.

<https://www.apprenticeship.gov/>

Youth apprenticeship programs can combine academic and technical instruction with workplace experience and may provide high school or college credit.

Mentoring: Talking regularly with someone who works in a career that interests you can be especially valuable. A mentor can describe the realities of the occupation, explain how they entered the field, answer questions, and suggest experiences that may help you prepare.

Talk with people who do the work

One of the best career exploration activities costs nothing: ask someone about their career.

Try asking:

- What does a typical day look like?
- What do you enjoy most about your work?
- What is the most difficult part?
- What education or training did you need?
- What skills are most important?
- What do you wish you had known when you were my age?
- Would you choose this career again?

A twenty-minute conversation can sometimes teach you more than pages of career information.

Explore different paths after high school

Once you identify careers that interest you, find out what preparation they require.

Depending on the occupation, that might include:

- learning on the job,
- an industry certification,
- an apprenticeship,
- military training,
- a one- or two-year college program,
- a bachelor's degree,
- graduate or professional education.

There is no single educational path that is right for every student or every career.

Don't try to find the one "perfect" career.

Most people have the potential to be interested in and successful at more than one kind of work.

Instead of asking "What career should I choose?" try asking, "What careers seem interesting enough for me to explore next?"

Choose three to five possibilities. Research them, watch career videos, talk with people doing the work, and look for opportunities to experience the work yourself.

As you gain experiences, your interests may change. That is not a problem. It means you are learning more about yourself and the world of work.

Your career choice is not a single decision you make once. It is a process of discovering possibilities, testing them through experience, and gradually deciding which directions have the most meaning for you.

If you would like help exploring your career possibilities or discussing your assessment results, please come to the counseling office to make an appointment.

Sincerely,

Your School Counselor