Planning for a career is a job in itself. It takes time, energy, and careful management. So why do it? Putting effort into career planning can help you set realistic and attainable goals for education. It can help you identify your strengths and weaknesses, so you focus your resources on finding a career that you will enjoy. Spending time exploring career opportunities can also be fun and exciting, because you experience new situations and activities.

This appendix covers these career planning skills in the following sections:

- Identifying Types of Careers
- Individual Assessment
- Occupational Research
- Employability Skills
- Recognizing the Value of School
- Safety in the Workplace
- Suggested Activities
Identifying Types of Careers

A career is a chosen field of work in which you try to advance over time by gaining responsibility and earning more money. Another word for career is occupation. A job is any activity you do in exchange for money or other payment. A job does not necessarily lead to advancement.

The career you choose has a major impact on the kind of life you will lead. Your career determines the type of training and education you will need. It might impact where you live and even who you will marry. Your career choice affects how much money you earn and how you spend most of your time. Most workers in the U.S. spend between 40 and 50 hours each week at work.

- Where will you be? In a large office, a hospital, or on a construction site?
- Who will you be with? Will you work alone or have coworkers? Will you be supervising children, helping animals, or caring for the elderly?

Even if you have no idea what career you want in the future, you can start now to identify different types of careers. Learning about careers now will help prepare you to choose the career that is right for you.

Individual Assessment

The first step in identifying a career is self-assessment. That means taking a close, objective look at your interests, values, and abilities. You then use that information to select careers or career clusters to investigate further. There are many ways to perform a self-assessment. There are Interest Surveys and Self-Assessment Worksheets that you can obtain from a teacher, career counselor, or online. You can also develop your own worksheet using the following steps:

1. List your two favorite school subjects.
2. List at least four specific skills you have acquired in your favorite subjects.
3. List at least four achievements in your favorite subjects.
4. List at least four of your abilities.
5. List at least two interests.
6. List at least four work values.
7. Analyze the information to identify connections that point to a career.
8. List the two career clusters or pathways that best match your interests and abilities. (See page D-5 for information on Career Clusters.)
**Interests** Your interests tell what you like to do and what you do not like to do. They are the subjects or activities that attract your attention and that you enjoy doing or learning about. There are six general interest categories: the arts, business, crafts, office operations, science, and social.

Knowing your interests helps you identify a career that you will find interesting. For example, if you have an interest in growing plants, you might enjoy a career as a botanist, farmer, or florist. If you have an interest in automobiles you might enjoy a career as an auto mechanic, auto salesperson, or automobile designer. When you know your interests early in your career search, you can identify careers that use those interests. If you discover that many of the tasks listed in an occupation are not interesting to you, reconsider your choice, and research careers that match your interests.

**Values** A value is the importance that you place on various elements in your life. Knowing what values you feel most strongly about helps you avoid compromising the things that are most important to you. Recognizing your values also helps you prioritize what matters most to you in a career. Money might be more important to you than leisure time. Working with people might be more important to you than what shift you work. Work-related values include the following:

- **Job security.** Is it important that you find a job immediately upon the completion of your training program? How important is job availability?
- **Leisure time.** Is it important for you to have extra time for leisure activities?
- **Wages.** Is an average wage acceptable if you like your work, or is a very high wage necessary?
- **Recognition.** Is it important that the job you choose is respected by the people in your community?
- **Creativity.** Do you like to come up with new ideas to solve problems, or do you prefer a job in which there is exactly one way to do things?
- **Advancement.** Do you want a career that provides opportunities for promotion?
- **Working environment.** Do you prefer to work indoors or outdoors?
- **Home life.** Do you want to work a daytime schedule (9 to 5) with some overtime and with weekends and holidays off, or are you willing to do shift work (all hours, any day of the week)?

Figure 1 What types of interests and values might someone have who wants to be a firefighter?
- Responsibility. Do you want a job that requires you to make a number of decisions?
- Management. Do you want to be responsible for supervising the work of other people or for organizing many tasks at once?

All of these factors affect your job choice. Make a list of these work values and put them in order of their importance to you. When you research an occupation, refer to your list so you do not choose a job that conflicts with your values.

**Abilities** An ability, or skill, is something you do well. You have many abilities. For example, you may work well with your hands, or you may be very good at mathematics. It is much more pleasant to work in an occupation that uses your abilities. If you choose an occupation that is too far below your ability level, you will be bored. If it is too far above your ability level, you will be frustrated. It is important to evaluate your abilities during your career search. List your abilities, and use the list when researching an occupation. Match your abilities to the job description.

There are fourteen general categories of abilities: artistic, clerical, interpersonal, language, leadership, manual, mathematical/numerical, musical/dramatic, organization, persuasive, scientific, social, visual, and technical/mechanical. You might have abilities in more than one category.

**Occupational Research**

By conducting occupational research, you learn details about a career, including tasks performed, the job outlook, the education required, the working environment, and many other things. It requires time and effort to research the occupations that interest you and to prepare for a specific career. If possible, find a mentor who performs this occupation. Spend time following them on the job site. Remember, your efforts allow you to find a job that gives you satisfaction.

There are many resources you can use in your research. Two of them are the Dictionary of Occupational Titles (http://www.occupationalinfo.org/), which lists job titles, tasks, and duties for 20,000 occupations, and the Occupational Outlook Handbook (http://www.bls.gov/oco/), which discusses the nature of the work, employment outlook, training and qualification requirements, earnings, and working conditions for a variety of occupations. Work Briefs by Science Research Associates, the Career Exploratory Kit, the Encyclopedia of Careers, and computer programs are also good resources. In addition, check career-related pamphlets, microfilm, and videos. You can find all of these resources in libraries and career centers. Also, interview individuals who are already working in an occupation that you are interested in.
The Career Clusters  The U.S. Department of Education organizes careers into 16 clusters, listed below. The careers in each cluster are in related industries or business areas. Each cluster is organized into pathways. Each pathway leads to a set of specific careers. The careers in a cluster require a similar set of skills and the same core training and education. You can narrow your career search by identifying a cluster that interests you. You can investigate the career clusters and pathways at www.careerclusters.org.

- Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources
- Architecture & Construction
- Arts, Audio/Video Technology & Communications
- Business Management & Administration
- Education & Training
- Finance
- Government & Public Administration
- Health & Science
- Hospitality & Tourism
- Human Services
- Information Technology
- Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security
- Manufacturing
- Marketing
- Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics
- Transportation, Distribution & Logistics

Employment Trends  Employment trends influence the number of available jobs in a certain industry as well as where the jobs are. A trend is a general move in a certain direction. An employment trend is one way the job market is changing over time. Sometimes trends in a specific field or industry are called the job outlook, which means it is a forecast or prediction about trends affecting that job. Knowing how to identify employment trends can help you choose a career in a growing industry with a positive outlook.

Technology has a strong influence on employment and job outlook. It creates new jobs, replaces old jobs, and changes the way some people perform their existing jobs.

- The development of new technology such as mobile phones and handheld devices creates new jobs in areas such as application development, sales, and research and development.

Figure 2  Careers in information technology are on the rise due to our growing reliance on technology in the workplace.
The trend toward smaller computers has shifted the manufacturing of systems from desktops to notebooks and e-books.

Improvements in robotics have made it possible to use robots in positions that people once held, such as on automobile assembly lines.

Electronic recordkeeping in fields such as healthcare has changed the way medical professionals enter patient information, order prescriptions, and access patient records.

The trend toward storing information and applications on the Internet instead of on local computers has eliminated the need for some information technology managers at large companies.

The trend toward using video conferencing instead of traveling to meetings impacts travel agents, hotel workers, and people who work in restaurants where travelers might eat.

A good source for information about employment trends is the Occupational Outlook Handbook, which is published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. It describes more than 200 occupations, including responsibilities, working conditions, education requirements, salary ranges, and job outlook. Look it up at www.bls.gov/oco.

Nontraditional Occupations

A nontraditional occupation is any job that a man or woman does that is usually done by someone of the other gender. Try not to rule out a nontraditional career because you associate it with one gender or another; it might be a good match for your skills and abilities. Some nontraditional careers include:

Men:
- Nurse
- Administrative assistant
- Flight attendant
- Hair stylist
- Childcare worker
- Elementary school teacher

Women:
- Construction worker
- Auto mechanic
- Detective
- Architect
- Chemical engineer
- Pilot

Figure 3 Would you be surprised to see a woman engineer? What jobs might you consider that would be nontraditional?
Employability Skills

Employability means having and using skills and abilities to be hired and stay hired. Even if you are capable of diagnosing and repairing the most complex networking problems, if clients think you are unfriendly, or co-workers resent that you come in late every day, you might lose your job. Once you recognize the skills that make you employable, you can practice and develop them in school and at home, so you are ready to use them on the job.

Transferable Skills

Employability skills can generally be placed into two groups: hard skills and transferable skills. Employers often look for people with hard skills to fill specific jobs. For example, a software development company looks to hire people skilled at writing code.

Transferable skills can be used on almost any job. They are called transferable skills because you can transfer them from one situation or career to another. The foundation skills you use to succeed in other areas of your life, such as decision-making and problem-solving, are transferable skills. You can practice and develop these skills in school and at home.

Some computer skills are also transferable. There are very few jobs today that do not require basic computer use. If you have these basic skills, you can take them wherever you go:

- Turn a computer on and start a program.
- Type on a computer keyboard without making many mistakes.
- Access the Internet and move from one Web site to another.
- Use a search engine to do basic Internet research.
- Write and send e-mail.

Professional Qualities

Professionalism, or work ethic, is the ability to show respect to everyone around you while you perform your responsibilities as best you can. It includes a basic set of personal qualities that make an employee successful. These qualities include:

- Integrity
- Courtesy
- Honesty
- Dependability
- Punctuality
- Responsibility

Figure 4 If you were an employer, what characteristics would you look for in someone you were going to hire?
Cooperative
Positive
Open-minded
Flexibility

**Professional Appearance**  Dress standards vary depending on the career that you choose. For example, you wouldn’t expect your car mechanic to be wearing a suit and tie, and you wouldn’t want your lawyer to be wearing grease-covered clothing. However, good grooming habits are required in all professions. The following are recommendations for maintaining a well-groomed, professional appearance:

- Dress according to your workplace’s dress code. This usually means that clothes will be clean, neat, and in good repair. They should not be of extreme fashion.
- Wear clean and appropriate shoes every day.
- Keep your hair neat and clean. For males, this includes your beard and/or moustache.
- Brush your teeth at least twice a day.
- Floss daily.
- Use mouthwash or breath mints.
- Bathe daily.
- Use unscented deodorant. Remember that odors can be offensive and some people may be allergic to perfumes and scented deodorants.
- For women, keep makeup conservative (e.g., no dark, heavy makeup).
- Keep jewelry to a minimum. Body piercings do not indicate a professional appearance and can cause infections.
- Do not use perfume or cologne.
- Keep nails clean.

**Figure 5** How could a well-groomed appearance affect your job performance?

**Recognizing the Value of School**

Finishing school is an investment in your future. Most companies will not hire an employee who has not graduated from high school, and many will not hire an employee who has not graduated from college. If a company does hire dropouts, it usually pays them less than it pays graduates.

School also provides an opportunity to prepare for a career. Core subjects such as reading, writing, and math are vital for the career search process. Science, social studies, music, art, technol-
ogy, family and consumer sciences, and sports all help you gain knowledge and build skills you will need to succeed at work, such as teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving. School clubs and organizations also help you build skills for future success.

Most of the classes you take in school are required. But, as you move into higher grades, there will be more opportunity to take electives—classes you choose because you are interested in the subject—and advanced level courses. Electives allow you to explore new subjects outside the standard core courses. Advanced courses can help you learn more about a subject and prepare for college.

**Personal Academic Plan**  A personal academic plan is a document that you use to set goals for the things you want to accomplish while you are in school. Some schools call it a personal career plan. It serves as a map that helps you achieve your educational goals. You create a personal academic plan with help from your school counselor. Some things that you might put in your plan include:

- Goals beyond high school
- Assessment of your skills, knowledge, and experience
- Assessment of factors that will contribute to your success
- Assessment of factors that might interfere with your success
- Basic skills assessment
- Graduation requirements
- Plan for achieving graduation
- Plan for achieving goals beyond high school

**Developing a Portfolio**  Some academic plans include a portfolio. A portfolio is a collection of information and documents that show the progress you make in school and in your career planning. It helps you stay on track to achieve your educational and career goals. You can also take it to interviews and job fairs so you have the information you need to fill out applications and the documents you want to show to potential employers.

A portfolio may be an actual folder that holds printed documents and other materials, or it may be electronic and stored on a computer. Some things to include in a portfolio are:

- Resume
- Sample cover letters
- List of references
- Letters of recommendation
- Examples of achievement
- Awards and certificates

**Figure 6** What are your goals beyond high school? What types of further skills or experiences do you think a future employer might look for?
Creating a Resume Your resume may be your most important job search document. It is a written summary of your work-related skills, experience, and education. It provides a snapshot image of your qualifications. It summarizes you, your skills, and your abilities. It is a statement of who you are, what you have done in your life, and what you hope to do next. Your resume may be the first communication between you and a potential employer. You will make a positive impression if your resume is:

- Neatly printed on white paper
- True and accurate
- Free of any typographical, grammatical, or spelling errors
- Direct and to the point

You want your resume to describe you in a way that makes the employer want to meet you. A well-written resume will help you to get an interview.

There are many ways to organize or format a resume. Most word-processing programs come with resume templates—sample documents. You can also find sample resume designs in books and on the Internet. Choose a format that highlights your experience and skills so they stand out to someone who might just glance at the resume quickly. You may also want to consider these tips:

- Make it easy to read. Leave space between lines so it is not crowded or overloaded.
- Use one, easy-to-read font, and apply different font styles and sizes for emphasis.
- Bullets are effective for making lines of text stand out.
- Use proper spelling, punctuation, and grammar.
- Keep it to one page, if possible; two pages at the most. (If you use two pages, be sure to put your name in the header or footer on page 2, in case it becomes separated from page 1.)

Sometimes you will mail your resume in an envelope with a cover letter. Sometimes you will send it electronically by e-mail. Make sure it looks professional when it is printed, as well as when you view it on a computer.

Lifelong Learning Lifelong learning means continually acquiring new knowledge and skills throughout the course of your life. It can help you achieve your career goals and find career satisfaction. Education and training are not limited to learning new skills for the workplace. You should consider educational opportunities to enrich your life at home, with friends, and in your community.

Ways to achieve lifelong learning include enrolling in educational classes, developing hobbies and interests, joining clubs, and joining professional development groups. You can also stay informed by reading newspapers, news magazines, and Web...
sites, discussing current events with family and friends, paying attention to government policies and actions, and volunteering for organizations that support your goals, values, and beliefs.

**Safety in the Workplace**

In 1970, the federal government passed a law called the Occupational Safety and Health Act. This law requires all employers to provide a safe and healthful workplace. Workers must be provided with safe equipment, protective clothing when needed, and education about safety practices. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) was formed to inspect companies and enforce safety laws. Even so, more than 5,000 Americans die from on-the-job accidents every year. As a worker under the Occupational Safety and Health Act, you have the following rights and responsibilities:

- **Right to know.** You have the right to know about hazards in your workplace, as well as the right to training to learn how to identify workplace hazards and what to do if there is an incident.

- **Right to refuse unsafe work.** If you have reasonable grounds to believe the work you do or the piece of equipment you use is unsafe, you can stop work immediately. You cannot be laid off, suspended, or penalized for refusing unsafe work if you follow the proper procedures.

- **Responsibility to follow safety rules.** It is your employer’s responsibility to teach you the safety rules; it is your responsibility to follow the rules.

- **Responsibility to ask for training.** If you feel that you need more training than your employer provides, it is your responsibility to ask for it.

- **Responsibility to speak up.** It is your responsibility to report incidents and unsafe work practices as well as unsafe conditions.

Part of your responsibility as a worker is to make sure that you keep your work environment safe for yourself and for others. You can practice this at school and at home. You have to take some responsibility for your own safety. That means using equipment properly, according to instructions. If you are a new worker, enroll in any safety classes offered by the company. If you work around chemicals, poisons, or dangerous machinery, ask how they can be handled safely. If a company offers you hard hats or other safety equipment, use them. Read your manuals and handbook, and don’t take shortcuts if it means endangering your safety or the safety of customers or co-workers. Remember—failure to follow safety guidelines is cause for dismissal.
Suggested Activities

• Careers in technology range from software programmers to aircraft mechanics. The skills, abilities, and interests required are just as broad. Use the Internet, library, or your school’s guidance resources to learn more about careers in technology. Make a list of five industries that offer careers in technology, and then list five types of jobs in each industry. Select one job that interests you, and prepare a presentation on it. Include the educational requirements, job responsibilities, career pathway, potential salary range, and more.

• Take turns role playing a job interview with a classmate. Take turns being the interviewer and the interviewee. After, write a note thanking the “interviewer” for his or her time.

• Select and research a business in your community. If possible, obtain an application form from the business. Identify the different parts of the application, and practice completing the form.

• Use a word-processing application template to create a resume.

• A career plan is a map that shows you the way to reach your goal. You can develop a career plan on your own, or with help from your parents, teachers, or school counselor. Start your career plan by writing a statement that describes your long-term ultimate career goal. For example, write: I will be an occupational physical therapist in California by the time I am 30 years old. Add short-term career goals that define how you will gain the skills, knowledge, and experience that you need to achieve your ultimate career goal. Include a timeline for achieving each one.

• Working with a partner, research ethics, behavior, and legal responsibilities in the workplace.

• You can practice safety in school or at home. Working with a partner, brainstorm safety guidelines for your computer lab, classroom, or other area of the school. Write a booklet outlining the guidelines and illustrate it with a poster.

• As mentioned earlier in this section, even if you’re good at your job, it takes more than that to succeed. Employers take note of people who are, among other things, considerate of others, proud of their work, punctual, and observant of safety procedures. In small groups, brainstorm the behaviors and qualities that enhance your employability. Prepare and present a skit showing how you can model those behaviors and qualities in school and at home.