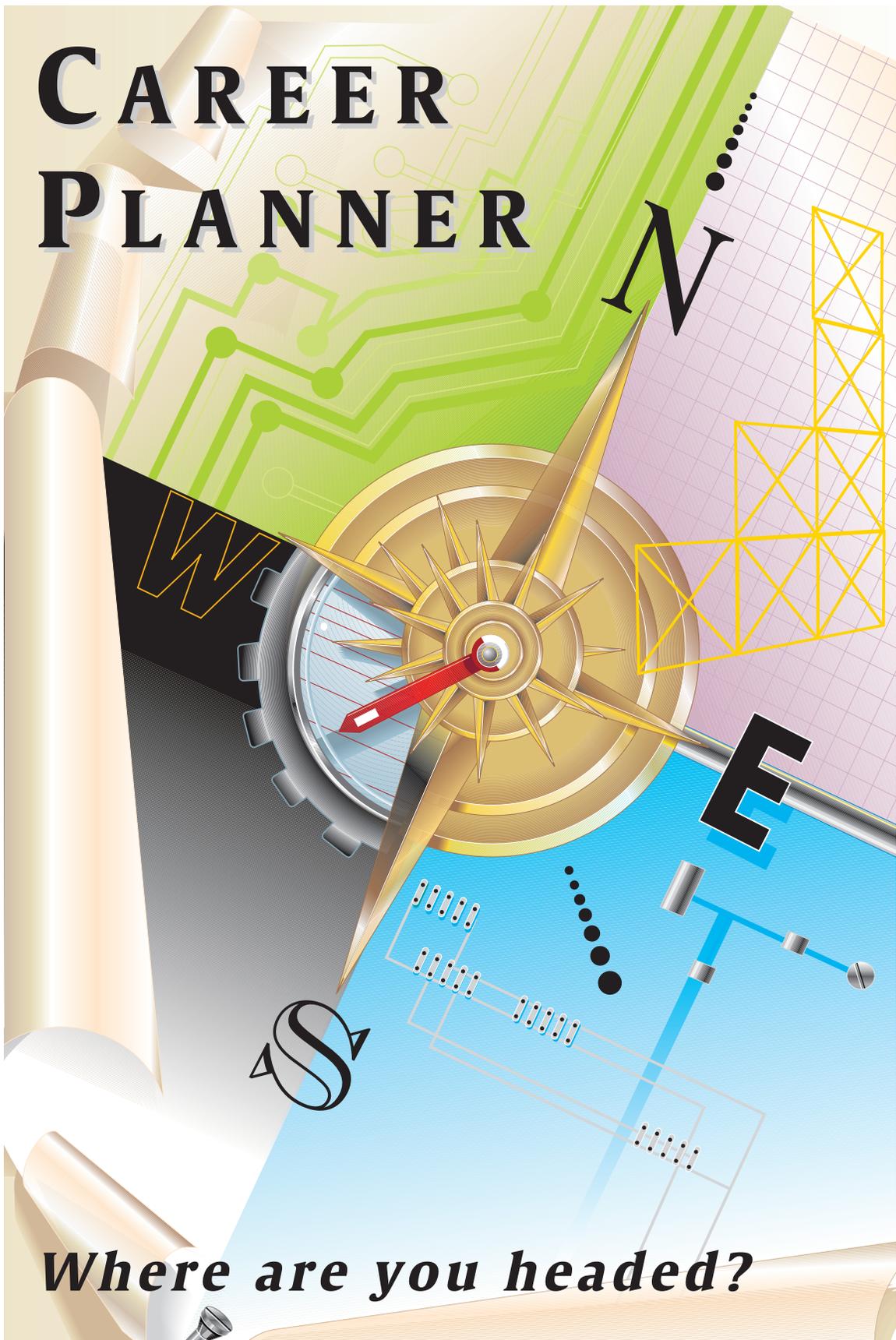


CAREER PLANNER



Where are you headed?

◆ C A R E E R P L A N N E R ◆

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www.usatoday.com/educate/college/careers/

The lifetime journey of career development

What will be your life's work? If you haven't decided, you're not alone. Career development experts say that far too many people focus on finding jobs — not the work that will give them satisfaction for the rest of their lives.

The good news: You've been in the process of career development since childhood. If that seems surprising, think about your “work history.” You've had responsibilities as a family member, been involved in clubs, gone to school and may have worked summers or nights.

“All of these are positive work examples,” says Kansas State University professor Ken Hoyt, “and we need to remember that school is work. [During your school years], you learn productive work habits like following directions, staying with it, doing the best you can, working with other people and finishing assignments on time” — skills you'll also need on the job.

By this time, you've probably also learned what you enjoy doing. Once you're committed to the world of work, says Hoyt, understanding your inter-



Suzy Parker, USA TODAY

ests and abilities will help you determine your career's direction.

But that doesn't mean you won't encounter some rough waters. For one thing, identifying your talents isn't always easy.

Richard Bolles, author of the popular career manual *What Color Is Your Parachute?*, says we can have a “blind spot” when it comes to our own abilities and often “see other people's gifts better than our own.” He suggests listing your “enthusiasms” — from the kinds of people and activities you enjoy, to the books you read and the types of movies you like to see.

As you make the list, pay attention to whether you're most interested in people, things or information; whether you like to work in teams or by yourself; and

whether you like to work outside or inside. Knowing what kind of person you are, says Bolles, can save you “a lot of grief in the world of work.”

Both Bolles and Hoyt agree that the employment picture has changed dramatically in the past 20 to 30 years. While your grandparents — maybe even your parents — worked their whole lives at the same job, future workers can't expect that to be the case for them.

“Nobody's job is safe anymore,” Bolles says. “You may find yourself thrown out of work at any time, and it may have nothing to do with the way you were doing your job ... You're probably going to have to fight harder to get a job, and you're probably going to have to fight harder to keep it.” Or, you may decide on a new direction, and that's fine. According to Hoyt, “the right to change your career direction is just as sacred as the right to choose it.” After all, the process of career planning isn't one that ends with your first position. It's a process that you'll repeat for the rest of your life.

A job that fits

Work is more than just a way to earn money, important as that may be. It's also a way to achieve personal satisfaction and happiness.

Unfortunately, too many Americans don't enjoy the work they do, which is sad considering how much of our lives is spent working. Often, people are unhappy with their jobs because they didn't take the time to understand what is significant in their lives and then choose work that would have meaning for them.

Your selection of a career must reflect what you consider to be important and worth doing. If you do not value the work you do, no other incentive can compensate for your lost sense of importance.

Simply put, your chosen career needs to fit your personality just as your shoes fit your feet.

How can you determine the type of work that will best suit you? First, take a look at what you have done in the past that you cherish and enjoy. Then, think about what you might like to do in the future and what activities would be important to you.

The following is a list of qualities that are significant in people's jobs. Go through the list and check off your top five preferences. Those are the priorities that you should keep in mind when you start planning your career.

- Variety ~ Performing different activities.
- Teamwork ~ Working with others.
- Recognition ~ Being known and recognized by others.
- Independence ~ Doing things by myself.
- Creativity ~ Thinking up a new idea; using my imagination.
- Affluence ~ Having a high income.
- Autonomy ~ Controlling my own activities.
- Aesthetics ~ Appreciating beauty.
- Leadership ~ Influencing others.
- Productivity ~ Doing useful work or making a useful product.
- Orderliness ~ Working in a routine with predictable tasks.
- Adventure ~ Experiencing exciting and new things.
- Service ~ Working to help others.
- Security ~ Having a stable position.
- Challenge ~ Being motivated and taking risks.

(From: *Life After High School: A Career Planning Guide*, by Carolyn Males and Robert Feigen.)

Careers TODAY Connection

[www.usatoday.com/
educate/college/careers/](http://www.usatoday.com/educate/college/careers/)

Read several of the Roadtrip Nation interviews on the Careers Today website. Look for examples of people whose work involves one or more of the five qualities you chose from the list at left. Have you ever considered any of these jobs? Did you gain any insights from the interviews?



USA TODAY

A job that fits, continued.

► Rank the job qualities you chose from the list, leading with your top choice. Do the decisions you've made so far in life indicate that these qualities are indeed important to you? Give an example of how you cultivated each quality in the past. If the item is a new focus, explain why it has become a priority. Are your reasons sound?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

► List three jobs that you believe would foster these five qualities.

► Now, list three occupations that might stifle them.

Priorities change . . .

At some point during a person's career, he or she may find a job no longer meets with personal needs.

This was the case with Joe Gibbs, who resigned as coach of the Washington Redskins in order to spend more time with his family.

Gibbs, who coached the football team to three Super Bowl victories, left his successful, high-profile career because he "just wanted to be a regular dad." In resigning, Gibbs gave up a great salary and lots of public attention, but he gained something more significant to him.

For other people, it's not the work itself that conflicts with personal needs, but the environment in which they work.

This was true for Wendy Goad, who left a secure, well-paying position as corporate advertising manager for Coors Brewing Co. in order to pursue freelance writing opportunities and to be her own boss.

"I'm a competitive water skier and I needed more flexibility in my schedule in order to train," she says. "The corporate world was just too rigid. I actually work more hours now, but *I'm* in charge of when I work, not someone else.

"Leaving a 9-to-5 job was a lifestyle decision," she adds. "Being self-employed is helping me to meet some important personal goals."

People who make changes in their careers are becoming the norm in our society. In fact, employment experts state that the average worker will undergo five major career changes. This happens not only because of external changes in the marketplace, but because our own personal priorities change over time.

The process of understanding what is important to you will continue throughout your lifetime.

► Which of the priorities that are most important to you right now might change over time? What events might cause those changes?

. . . but some dreams never leave you.

Prize-winning playwright Wendy Wasserstein's first love was always the theater. Growing up as a young girl in New York City, she attended Broadway matinees with her parents on Saturdays. On Sundays, she would "pore through the New York Times Arts and Leisure section looking for any information ... about the theater."

By the time she was in junior-high school, she was writing comedy; a biting satire of a teacher landed her in trouble. Her first plays were written while she was a student at an all-girls high school.

"I realized they'd let me out of gym if I wrote something called 'The Mother-Daughter Fashion Show,'" she says. "I don't know anything about fashion, but I knew very clearly that I wanted to get out of gym."

After college, she tried acting in New York City, where she met a playwright who encouraged her to write. Still, she hesitated. She applied to Columbia Business School and the Yale School of Drama and was accepted at both. Encouraged by her family and friends to pursue writing, she went to Yale and

drew national attention for her first major play, *Uncommon Women and Others*.

In 1989, Wasserstein won a Tony Award and the Pulitzer Prize for another play, *The Heidi Chronicles*. And she says winning the awards has given her the confidence to take risks in her work.

Still, there are moments of insecurity. The life of a playwright can seem less than completely stable to anybody with a practical streak.

"I can assure you," she says, "that my parents never said to me, 'Wendy, honey, become an off-off-Broadway playwright. Be sure to have a life that is as insecure as possible. Have no idea how you'll make a living ... and be sure to work someplace where there will never be health benefits.'"

But for Wasserstein, there is something that hasn't changed since she was a little girl.

"To this day," she says, "nothing makes me as happy as when I'm in the theater and the lights go down and the tension of the beginning of the play begins."

► Is there something you've always dreamed of doing? What is it? Is this dream part of your ultimate goal? What is your ultimate goal?

► What are some possible obstacles to the achievement of your goal? How might you overcome them?

Turning dreams into goals

Mary Verdi-Fletcher is the founder of Dancing Wheels, a Cleveland dance company for people with and without disabilities.

“Dancing Wheels developed out of my true love and desire to dance. Stereotypically, people who use wheelchairs [she has spina bifida] are not included in activities related to physicality, so I was pretty much isolated from opportunities.

My mother was a dancer and my father was a musician. They instilled in me the ... appreciation for the art form (which stayed) with me during my formative years.

I had (become a) special events director for a non-profit agency. I had a lot of skills, but dance kept call-

ing me. Then one day, 13 years ago, I decided that the time was right. Since there were no positions for me to be paid as a dancer, I created one. When I made that commitment and took on the attitude that there had to be a place for me, things started to come together.

Dance is an emotion and can be demonstrated in so many ways. We’re proving that – and I hope we inspire others to look at their own goals and dreams and ambitions and to look beyond their own inner barriers to see what they can accomplish. Dancing has personally brought me so much joy and so much freedom beyond any expectation I ever had.

When I graduated from

school, it was the saddest day of my life. I didn’t drive; I didn’t have a job. I was offered a scholarship for college but couldn’t get there. I was told I should get a job that was oriented toward office work – find something safe and non-mobile.

I hit rock bottom. I lived a very dependent lifestyle, and the community was not very helpful. I had gotten a lot of “nos.” It got to a point to where I stopped taking “no” for an answer. A lot of people who never encounter obstacles or achieve a great hurdle don’t know what it’s like to have to put so much determination behind something. So you see (many) people who are not working at their maximum potential.”

Taking risks can pay off in life

But keep the following in mind:

- ✓ Start by setting small, achievable goals.
- ✓ Expect to make mistakes, but don’t let the mistakes defeat you.
- ✓ It’s OK to be scared. Move forward anyway. Act as if you *feel* confident.
- ✓ Seek out people who will encourage and support you. Discount those who tease or dismiss you.



By Walter Seng, handout

Sabatino Verlezza and Mary Verdi-Fletcher of Dancing Wheels.

C A R E E R P L A N N E R

8

Taking inventory



<p>How would you describe your personality? Are you a “self-starter”? Do you panic under pressure?</p>	<p>How might your personality traits impact your lifelong career?</p>
<p>What are your natural talents or aptitudes?</p>	<p>Describe the skills you have developed during your life. Which are the strongest?</p>
<p>What skills would you like to learn or improve?</p>	<p>How might a potential employer benefit from the skills and characteristics you identified?</p>

Decisions, decisions

A friend calls and asks: “What would you like to do tonight?” Planning for the evening or even the next day sounds easy. But what if your friend had asked: “What do you plan to do with your life?” Obviously, planning a career takes a little more thought. Experts tell us that planning ahead is the key. But how do you know you have made the right decision? When do you find out if your decision has paid off? It’s never too early or too late to establish a career goal. To help get you started, here are some tips and guidelines to use not only for planning your future, but also for making day-to-day decisions. (See worksheets on pages 10 and 11.)

Guidelines for decision-making

1. Identify your goal. Think about what you want to achieve in five or 10 years and state that as your goal.

2. Gather information. Read newspapers, newsletters and trade journals. Visit the U.S. Department of Labor’s Occupational Outlook Handbook at www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm and the Occupational Information Network at <http://online.onetcenter.org/>. Peruse the websites of different companies. Most importantly, talk to people who hold jobs in the fields you are considering.

3. List and evaluate actions that could help you achieve your goal. Weigh all the possible actions and their consequences. Ask yourself: Will I feel good about this decision? What risks are involved? What obstacles or difficulties might I encounter? How will I handle them?

4. What is your game plan? Decide which actions are reasonable. Then, list (in order) the steps you will take to achieve your goal. (Note: Keep the number of steps to less than 10 – if there are too many steps, you may not feel as if you’re getting anywhere!)

Decision-making tips

- ✓ Write your goals and objectives down on paper. That way, you can see where you’re headed.
- ✓ Break your lifetime career goal into smaller steps.
- ✓ Talk your ideas through with a friend or family member – this gives you a built-in reality check. That person may also have ideas for alternatives to your plan.
- ✓ Volunteer or take on a part-time job in the career area that you’re considering. This way, there are no surprises or disappointments down the road.
- ✓ Create deadlines for the steps you take to reach your goal. Deadlines help keep you on track.

C • A • R • E • E • R P • L • A • N • N • E • R

Plan.

Steps I will take to reach my goal:	Deadline:
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10	

Possible obstacles:	Solutions:

Job-market outlooks

If you want to learn more about a particular occupation, there's no better reference guide than the ***Occupational Outlook Handbook*** compiled by the U. S. Department of Labor.

The handbook describes about 250 occupations in detail, covering about 107 million jobs — or about 87 percent of all jobs in the nation. You can use the handbook to find out about the duties of a particular occupation; the education and training required; the advancement possibilities, earnings and job outlooks; and similar occupations that you might want to consider. Visit: <http://www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm>

► Research careers using the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*. Below, list the three fields that appeal to you most.

1.

2.

3.

Questions to consider:

- Will you need additional education for any of the careers you listed?
- Do these jobs make use of the skills and interests that you deemed most satisfying?
- Is the market for each occupation projected to grow, decline or remain about the same. How could the job's prospects affect you?
- Consider where you want to live. Some jobs are concentrated in specific geographic locations. Where could you find employment in the fields you chose?
- Do you want to work 9 to 5, or would you prefer a more flexible schedule? What kind of work schedule is required of those in the careers you selected?

Notes:

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[www.usatoday.com/
educate/college/careers/](http://www.usatoday.com/educate/college/careers/)

Visit the Careers TODAY website and peruse the articles under "In the News" and "Hot Topics." Identify at least three workplace trends or issues that might affect you.



Work environments

Cliff D'Avignon loves a challenge — and that's one thing that attracted him to a job as a junior lineman for a power company in Tooele, Utah. "I work out of helicopters. I work in a lot of dangerous situations," he says. "To me, it's an art."

The job also allows him to spend a lot of time outdoors — "I've always got a good view wherever I work," he says.

"It would kill me to be in an office," he adds. "That's one thing I like — you don't go to the same building and sit there, or do the same job over and over. My work takes me to different places."

There is a down side, though: he's on call 24 hours a day and his job involves finding trouble spots when power lines go down. "I don't get to sit and enjoy a nice electrical storm ... I need to be at work."

"It would kill me to be in an office."



clipart.com

"I wear blue jeans every day."

Lavonne Adams, on the other hand, has thought about switching careers — from radio disc jockey to public relations. But, she adds with a laugh, "I don't have the wardrobe."

"I wear blue jeans every day," she says — one big advantage to being a disc jockey. She says the relaxed attire also helps her do a better job. "It makes me casual and a little more comfortable in my on-air presentations."

That's important because it brings Adams closer to her listeners. Even though she doesn't see her audience, "I've met some really neat people," she says, by phone and by mail. "It's interesting the way you can touch a lot of people's lives ... you're part of their day."

► What kind of work environment are you looking for (e.g., relaxed, formal, employee-centered, hierarchical, competitive, collaborative, etc.)?

► At your ideal job, what would the dress code be?

► Do you want to work for a large company (e.g., Ford, Gannett, etc.) or a small one (e.g., a local law firm)?

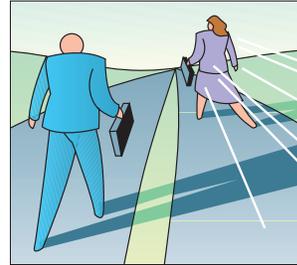
► What characteristics would your supervisor possess?

Exploring occupations

Informational interviews

The purpose of informational interviews is to find out as much as you can about a particular occupation. Here are some questions to ask a person already holding a job in which you're interested:

1. What are your duties and responsibilities?
2. What previous jobs helped prepare you for this career?
3. What education, skills and personal qualities are required?
4. Are there any special materials, equipment, tools or machinery that you have to know how to use?
5. Do you have a regular routine?
6. What are the challenges of your job? The demands? The rewards?
7. Have you achieved your career goal? If so, how long did it take you? If not, what do you hope to accomplish in the future?
8. Are there other people you can recommend to give me more information about this career?



USA TODAY

Mentoring pays off

Robert Robinson entered the Space Academy with an interest in computers and engineering, but no career focus.

He discovered, after working side-by-side with many different types of engineers, that he wanted to become a civil engineer. Robinson also found a mentor — a young California Institute of Technology grad student who tutored him in math and physics, and offered on-going encouragement.

At 17, Robinson became a paid employee at the Jet Propulsion Lab, producing computer graphics for JPL engineers. He did so well that they invited him to work part-time during the school year.

► With whom could you arrange an informational interview?

► Who are some possible mentors?

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When exploring occupations, don't overlook the possibility of working for yourself — as an entrepreneur. Entrepreneurs must be able to identify opportunities and problems, develop innovative ideas and solutions, bring necessary resources (e.g., human, physical and financial) together and be willing to take risks. Learn more about these intrepid individuals on the Careers TODAY website. Click on "Case Studies" and "Profiles" to peruse relevant articles.

USA TODAY

C A R E E R P L A N N E R

Education pays big dividends.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 26% of adults now have a bachelor's degree or higher. You are probably already aware that extending your education introduces you to new ideas and people, and helps you acquire skills. But did you also know that the more education you receive, the higher your earnings are likely to be? The *2002 Current Population Survey* confirms education's impact on earning potential:

Average yearly gross* earnings for full-time workers by educational level:

Professional	\$109,600
Doctorate	\$89,400
Master's	\$62,300
Bachelor's	\$52,200
Associate	\$38,200
Some college	\$36,800
High school grad	\$30,400
No high school diploma	\$23,400

*Before taxes and other deductions.

Looking at living expenses

Take a look at the average yearly earnings above. When you are working full time, approximately 20-25% of your salary will automatically be deducted for taxes and Social Security. Also, count on deductions for healthcare and any other benefit programs – retirement plans, life insurance, etc. – in which you choose to enroll. But for the purpose of this exercise, let's say that a minimum of 20% will be deducted from every paycheck.

► Based on this figure, what is the average monthly net income (i.e. – income after taxes and social security) for a person with no high school diploma?

\$ _____

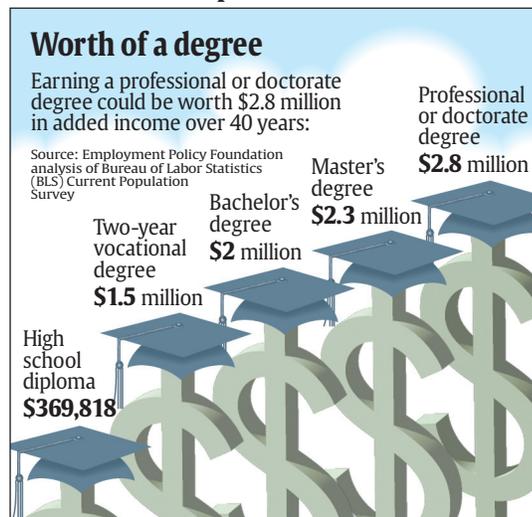
► For someone with a bachelor's degree?

\$ _____

► For a lawyer (professional)?

\$ _____

USA TODAY Snapshots®



By Darryl Haralson and Quin Tian, USA TODAY

C A R E E R P L A N N E R

Looking at living expenses

► Now, estimate the monthly expenses you will incur when you are living on your own. (Make your estimates as accurate as possible by doing Internet, newspaper and/or telephone research.) If you don't think an expense will apply to your situation, simply cross it out. If there are other payments you know you will be making, such as for a student loan, note those under "Other."

- Rent \$ _____
- Car payment \$ _____
- Car insurance \$ _____
- Gas or transportation costs \$ _____
- Electricity, AC & heat \$ _____
- Phone \$ _____
- Water/Sewer \$ _____
- Food \$ _____
- Other \$ _____
- _____ \$ _____
- _____ \$ _____
- _____ \$ _____

MONTHLY TOTAL \$ _____

► List additional expenses that you might have on a monthly basis – for clothing, entertainment, pet care, furniture, a cell phone, cable, etc.

- Cell phone \$ _____
- Cable \$ _____
- Internet \$ _____
- _____ \$ _____
- _____ \$ _____
- _____ \$ _____

MONTHLY TOTAL \$ _____

► Finally, calculate the final total for all the monthly expenses you will have. In order to live comfortably, what should your net income be each month?

\$ _____

► Are your educational goals adequate to meet your needs?

► If not, what adjustments can you make to the expenses you listed or to your plans for the future?

Learning never stops

While people often continue their education to fulfill personal goals, companies also want their employees to keep learning. A key reason: global competition.

“Technology is changing so rapidly that in order to keep up with the changes, we have to do constant education,” says Ken Patch, former director of Motorola, Inc.’s Career Management Center in Tempe, Ariz.

During Patch’s tenure with the company, it invested millions of dollars in a program to train every employee. After the company taught employees how to operate new robotic equipment that made its redesigned pager, the company went from zero sales in Japan to becoming a leading supplier there.

Every profession undergoes changes, so it is imperative that employees have the necessary skills to carry out new responsibilities. Workers can improve their skills by enrolling in classes at community colleges and continuing education centers. To make learning more convenient for the harried professional, most educational institutes now offer classes online. Plus, more and more companies have tuition-reimbursement plans to encourage their employees to acquire new job-related skills.

In short, when you graduate from college, your education doesn’t stop. In fact, your real-world education is just beginning.

Tips for brushing up your skills

- ✓ Take advantage of courses and seminars offered by professional societies in your field or by your employer.
- ✓ If your company or organization is looking to expand internationally, learn an appropriate foreign language.
- ✓ Technology is advancing in every field. If your company doesn’t offer technology training courses, take them on your own.
- ✓ Companies appreciate employees that are aware of the bottom line. If it’s appropriate for your job, consider classes in business practices or finance.

The 21st Century Workforce Commission’s

Hot Tech Jobs for the 21st Century – Are you qualified?

- **Computer engineer:** Develop and test hardware and software.
- **Computer Programmer:** Write programs that perform specific functions.
- **Computer Scientist:** Design and improve computers.
- **Computer Support Specialist:** Provide technical expertise to computer users.
- **Database Administrator:** Devise ways of organizing and storing information.
- **Systems Analyst:** Design computer solutions for business, engineering and scientific problems.

C A R E E R P L A N N E R

First impressions

Resumes

Your resume is the most important tool in your search for a job. Books and Internet sites on resume writing abound, but to summarize, here's what yours should include:

- **Who you are:** Include your full name and address. Don't forget your phone number and e-mail address.
- **Education:** List the schools you have attended, the names and dates of degrees received and your major areas of study.
- **Honors and achievements:** If you're just starting out, you may want to include any school honors or special educational achievements.

- **Business skills:** If you can speak another language or have expert computer or technical skills, list them here.

- **Work experience:** List any work experience you feel would help you perform the job for which you're applying. If you have limited job experience, don't worry. List whatever experience you've had, whether or not it comes from a paid position. If you've volunteered or worked on a political campaign, for instance, that experience will be seen as a plus.

Don't feel you have to list every detail of your experience. The main purpose of a resume is to communicate skills and competencies — not to provide a detailed chronology of your background.

Cover Letters

Your resume is one of the most important things you'll present to a potential employer. So don't risk the chance that he or she won't read it by attaching an inappropriate cover letter. A good cover letter draws attention to you and can separate you from the competition. What makes a good cover letter? Here are some tips:

- ◆ If at all possible, address the letter to a specific person and double-check the spelling of his or her name. If you can't get a name, don't make the mistake of assuming the employer is male by addressing it to "Dear Sir." "Dear Sir or Madam" is acceptable if no name is available.
- ◆ Avoid qualifiers like "I think" and "I feel." Use matter-of-fact language.

- ◆ Avoid cliches, such as the fact that you want a position with "opportunity for advancement." It's obvious to the employer that you'll want to advance.

- ◆ Be careful about using words that might overstate your abilities. Dick Irish, author of *Go Hire Yourself an Employer*, says a lot of people claim to be "creative." Of the 10,000 people he's interviewed, only four were actually creative.

- ◆ Don't repeat information found in the resume. Use the cover letter to elaborate when it's appropriate.

- ◆ Be brief. Remember, your goal is to get an interview.

Help for getting hired

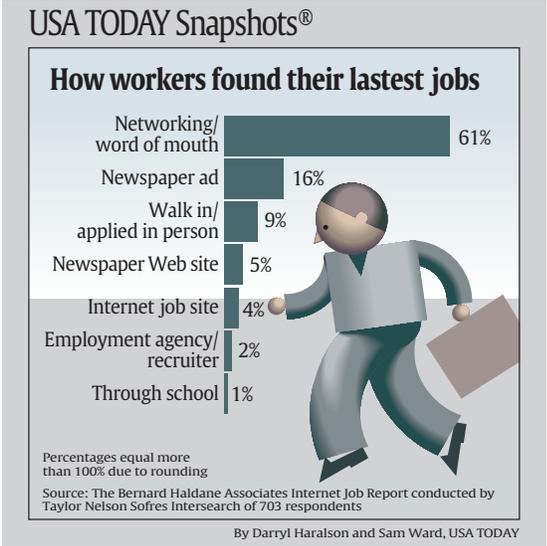
We all know a person who got a terrific job because they “knew somebody.” Whether you’re looking for a job or ahead to your next position, it’s the people you know who will make a difference.

“Networking” is an important part of career growth. A network is made up of the people you regularly come into contact with – relatives, friends, fellow workers, industry colleagues, acquaintances and professional people like your doctor or minister.

The key to the network is developing and maintaining these relationships and expanding them to include other people. Some strategies according to author and career expert Dr. Ronald L. Krannich:

- Make a list of everybody you know. Identify those who can offer you job advice, referrals or – more importantly – names of other people.
- Link your network to the networks of others. Doing so will provide you with more contacts and expand your chances of finding the right job. Carry business cards with you everywhere you go.

► In the space below, list your 10 most promising contacts:



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www.usatoday.com/educate/college/careers/

For more networking how-tos, click on “Jobs Center” from the Careers TODAY website. Then, go to “Job Hunt Index” and read the articles listed under “Networking.”

Interview prep 101

Some tips from Harvey Mackay — president of Mackay Envelope, job counselor and bestselling author of how-to books on successful job-hunt strategies — on preparing for a job interview:

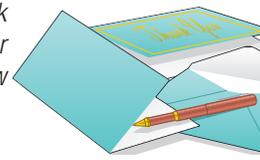
- ✔ Be letter perfect. There's one sure way to miss the first cut on any job application: misspellings or poor grammar on your resume or cover letter.
- ✔ Learn to communicate better. Focus on the most important job skill you can have. The ability to communicate effectively is the key to success. Employers are looking for people who know how to speak, read, write and think clearly.
- ✔ Be yourself. Interviewers are experts at seeing through disguises.
- ✔ Practice. The pros make it look easy — not because it is, but because they practice. Before you go to an interview, practice. Be like Michael Jordan. He was always the last guy to leave the playground.
- ✔ Do your homework. You have to distinguish yourself from the pack. Parachuting in for your interview in a tuxedo is memorable, but not marketable. Instead, try having superior information. It wins almost every contest, whether it's a card game, a ball game or a job search. Talk to the company's customers and employees. Find out all you can about the company, its history, its corporate style, its products and competitive position. Go the extra mile and talk to the company's competitors. You want to be as familiar and comfortable with the company culture as the people who will be evaluating your application. If you make the effort to learn about a prospective employer, you'll be one of only two percent of job candidates who bother.
- ✔ Never quit. At this very moment, someone, somewhere is landing a job. Someone else is being promoted. Whoever these people are, they are no smarter and no better than you are. If they can do it, you can do it. Hang in there, and one day that someone will be you!

► Below, list the information you would gather and the actions you would take before an interview (e.g., prepare questions; review your resume; etc.).

Careers TODAY Connection

[www.usatoday.com/educate/
college/careers/](http://www.usatoday.com/educate/college/careers/)

Although looking for a job can be stressful, it's important to take the time to thank those who interview you or provide you with contacts. Visit the Careers TODAY website, and click on USA TODAY.com Jobs Center. Then, read the tips on writing thank you notes under "Post-interview follow-up."



USA TODAY

C • A • R • E • E • R

P • L • A • N • N • E • R

Starting at the bottom

USA TODAY asked Harvey Mackay to write an adaptation of his thoughts on getting and keeping a job.

“Today’s job hunters are smart when it comes to getting the job they want.

Take Cathy Paper.

Many long months and hundreds of resumes after graduating from Williams College, Cathy still hadn’t struck oil. Now, she has.

She didn’t land the job she wanted, but she did land where she wanted to be – at a major advertising agency. With her foot on the bottom rung of the ladder, she now has a chance to prove herself

and move ahead.

Her strategy? Contacts. Someone who knew someone came through for her and set up an interview at a local ad agency. Here’s a mind-boggling statistic: According to a survey of 1,500 successful job seekers, 63 percent got jobs through personal contacts, 11 percent through ads and only 2 percent by sending in unsolicited resumes.

Aside from digging up a fabulous “someone who knew someone,” she decided to use a strategy that would give her an edge – something that would differentiate her

from others seeking the job.

At her interview, she offered to work free for six months. That was enough to entice the powers-that-be to give her a second look. While her offer was refused, two interviews later she was offered a sub-entry level job at \$6 an hour. Cathy’s theory: You can’t get dealt a straight flush unless you’re in the game.

Cathy’s story has a happy ending, or at least a happy start. She got the job and a chance to prove herself.”

Moving along the career highway

You’ve won a job by perfecting your job-seeking skills. But that doesn’t mean your work is done. Now it’s time to focus on job-keeping tactics. Here are some of the most effective:

Document your achievements

Record the skills you acquire, jobs or projects you complete and any other results or contributions you make that show a benefit to the company.

Learn what others are doing

Expand your horizons and offer to help others when you can. The more skills you have, the more valuable you are.

Always be thinking about your next job

Ask for more training, take a night class or enroll in a course. It will pay off in the long run.

Inform your supervisors of your achievements

Without boasting, promote yourself. Let your supervisors know what you are doing and what you’ve accomplished. Maintain your enthusiasm!

Is your knowledge ‘hit or myth’?

Often our knowledge about the job market and the workplace is built on what we hear from others or assume for ourselves. Here are some common myths – and a dose of reality:

Myth #1: The bigger the company, the greater job security you'll have.

Reality: Massive employee layoffs at larger companies show that no company is immune from economic problems. In fact, the larger the company, the bigger a layoff is likely to be.

Myth #2: If you do your job well and exceed the expectations of your supervisors,

your work will be noticed and appreciated.

Reality: This may be true in some cases, but often you have to work just as hard at getting noticed as you do at your job. Ways to gain recognition include volunteering for special committees, writing articles for the company newsletter and taking a leadership position in professional associations.

Myth #3: If you work hard, you'll be rewarded with regular promotions.

Reality: Today's companies are getting rid of excess layers of management. This means there are fewer promotions available and more

employees competing for them. Rewards are more likely to come in the form of money or recognition instead of a promotion.

Myth #4: If you learn one skill and learn it really well, you'll always have a place in the working world.

Reality: This may have been true a generation ago, but today's workers have to be generalists. You'll be much more valuable to your employer – and have greater job security – if you can offer a variety of talents. Think about it: When it comes time for layoffs, would you keep the person with one skill or four?

YOUR RIGHTS

- ▶ An employer must be willing to grant you unpaid leave to care for a newborn child or a sick family member.
- ▶ If you are employed by the hour, you must be paid overtime wages if you clock more than 40 hours a week.
- ▶ If you work in public transportation, you must be willing to submit to random drug tests.

These are just three examples of the labor laws that affect the workplace. Most of the laws exist to protect you from being exploited by your employer.

Workplace regulations cover everything from what can and can't be asked during an interview to employees' rights to form unions or go on strike. But the

regulations differ depending on the type and size of the organization and whether or not it is a government agency.

As an employee, you have the right to know the laws that govern your workplace. To find out about regulations that may affect your job, contact the human resources department in your company or call your state's Department of Labor and Employment.

▶ **Address, phone number and website for my state's Department of Labor and Employment:**

The 'unwritten' rules of the workplace

All companies have rules that govern employee behavior on the job. These rules include such things as working hours, safety guidelines and whether or not smoking is allowed. Usually, employees know these rules within their first few days on the job.

But every workplace also has unwritten rules that employees should be aware of. Unwritten rules may involve such things as keeping your desk neat, not using office supplies for personal reasons and not addressing senior managers by their first names.

Unwritten rules differ greatly from company to company and often have a lot to do with the culture of the organization, the type of work that is being done and the personalities of the employees.

Sokha Men, a secretary at Seattle Central Community College in Seattle, Wash., for two years, says there were many unwritten rules

at her workplace.

"I had a problem with a co-worker and went to the department manager for assistance," Men explains. "I learned I should have first talked to the co-worker, then gone to my direct supervisor if the problem was not resolved. If the problem was still not fixed by that point, then – and only then – should I have gone to the 'big boss.' But this was never explained to me, and I was very embarrassed to have gone about it backward."

Unfortunately, learning the hard way is often the only way people pick up on these unwritten rules and expectations, explains Marlene Palazzo, a business and communications instructor at Seattle Central.

"I knew of a person in an office administration position who didn't know he was expected to help others when his work was done," she says. "So, when he finished his tasks for the

day, he would read books that he thought would help him become a better employee. But when the time came for promotion, he was passed over because he had shown no initiative."

Palazzo suggests that when you're new to an organization and want to learn the unwritten rules of behavior, you should ask the person who hired you about the work styles of the department and the expectations of department managers. "Often the manager sets the tone for how a department operates," she says.

"You also can ask employees who have been with the company for a while to give you advice. But other than being told what the unwritten rules are, the only way to learn about them is to spend time studying the work environment," Palazzo says. "Follow your own instinct about what is and isn't appropriate behavior."

Resolving workplace conflicts

When two people are together for any length of time, there's an opportunity for conflict. This is just as true in the workplace as it is anywhere else. In fact, problems on the job are to be expected. Organizations are made up of many different people — each with different motivations, agendas, lifestyles and ways of communicating. Some common problems you might experience when working with others:

- Incompatible work styles or personalities
- Hostility or bullying
- Extreme competitiveness
- Feeling unappreciated or undermined by supervisors

► Jot down at least five actions that might help you avoid workplace conflicts:

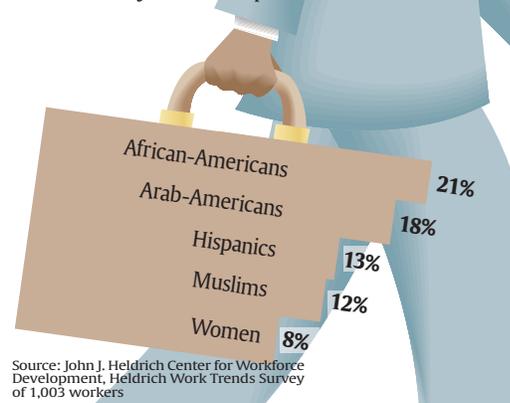
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► How would you resolve a conflict with a co-worker or supervisor?

USA TODAY Snapshots®

Unfair treatment in the workplace

Workers were asked who is most likely to be treated unfairly in the workplace?



Resolving workplace conflicts, continued

Sara Minkoff, a management consultant in Philadelphia, offers several suggestions for resolving workplace conflicts.

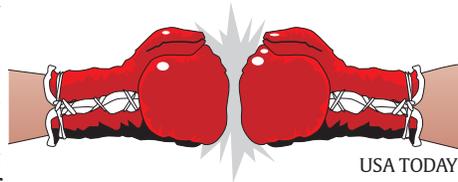
Resolving conflicts with co-workers:

To resolve a conflict with a co-worker, it's important that you speak directly with that person about the problem. "Our basic philosophy is that if you don't communicate, nothing will be resolved," Minkoff says. "Don't talk to other people about the conflict because this kind of gossip can sabotage a relationship and magnify a simple problem."

If talking directly with the co-worker doesn't resolve the problem, Minkoff suggests speaking to your immediate supervisor. "This isn't gossiping," she says, "because the supervisor is there to make sure you're able to work effectively. If you're involved in a conflict, you're probably not going to be as productive."

How the supervisor handles the situation will differ depending on your

company's organizational structure. The supervisor may choose to talk directly with the other person or speak to both of you at the same time. Regardless, a good supervisor will want to help you resolve the conflict.



Resolving conflicts with your supervisor:

If you experience a conflict with your supervisor and have respect for that person, Minkoff again says the best solution is to speak directly to him or her. "It is usually easier to talk to a supervisor about a problem than it is to talk to a co-worker because (ideally) supervisors have your best interest in mind."

Sometimes the conflict will continue even after you talk about it. In this case, contact the company's human resources department. Most organizations have procedures in place for resolving this

kind of dispute.

Resolving conflicts with corporate policy:

Some conflicts workers experience on the job have nothing to do with other people; instead, they involve company policies. A person may disagree with a policy about working hours, for example, or feel a policy regarding sick leave is unfair.

If you have an understanding supervisor who values your work, he or she may be willing to bend the rules to keep you satisfied. But if the problem is with a policy your supervisor has no control over, the best way to begin is to discuss your grievance with a human resources representative.

"No matter what the conflict is about or who is involved," Minkoff says, "you must talk about the problem. Holding it in creates stress, which can lead to a loss of happiness and job satisfaction. Besides, conflicts won't go away on their own; they must be dealt with."

It's to your benefit

How much you'll be paid is an important factor in deciding what company or organization you'd like to work for, but salary is only part of your total compensation. The vast majority of companies also offer full-time employee benefits such as paid vacation and health insurance.

Many inexperienced job seekers focus on salary alone – completely ignoring the value of employee benefits. But to make good decisions about whether to accept a job, you must know about all the benefits a company offers.

For instance, if you are young, healthy and have no children, a generous health insurance plan may not be as important to you as it would be if you had a family. And if you have children, a high salary may sound more attractive than a lower one – but in the

long run you may have less disposable income if the company has poor medical coverage and you're paying for every trip to the doctor or dentist.

Other benefits companies may offer:

- Participation in a 401k savings plan, which allows you to deduct income from your paycheck and invest it in a variety of funds. You don't pay tax on the contributions until you use them.

- A stock purchase plan that allows you to invest in your company.

- Life insurance, for yourself or for your family.

- A retirement plan, which would provide you with a monthly retirement income dependent on length of service and your earnings with the company.

- Family support services, which can include maternity and paternity leave, child-care referral services, company-sponsored child-care facilities and adoption assistance.

In addition to financial benefits, another way to evaluate a potential employer is to look at the company's investment in training. Organizations with a strong commitment to training may be in a better position to grow in the future.

Finally, many companies offer extensive perks: on-site health spas, catered meetings, memberships to shopping clubs, yearly cruises, lavish parties, etc. While accepting a position solely because of its perks is probably unwise, the type of amenities offered at a company says a lot about its culture.

► Make a list of the company benefits and perks that you desire. Then, rank them in order of importance.

Benefit	Rank	Benefit	Rank

C • A • R • E • E • R P • L • A • N • N • E • R

The benefits of change

Even the most successful employees can become bored with their jobs or feel burned out. Rather than leaving the company, there are ways to breathe life back into your job if you're willing to break out of your work pattern.

Here are some possible options:

- Ask about rotating jobs with a co-worker.
- Expand your responsibilities to include some that put some spark back into your job.
- Do you want to cut back on your hours? Have your company consider making you a part-time employee. If your job duties make that impossible, ask about sharing your job with another worker.
- Ask to be retrained for a different job that interests you.
- If all else fails, see if your company offers sabbaticals or leaves of absence. Sometimes, stepping back from the situation for awhile will help you see some solutions.

Career experts agree that the watchword for the future is change. The outlook for the future and its impact on you:

Outlook: Changing jobs is acceptable if it demonstrates career advancement and not a lack of dedication to or satisfaction with work in general.

Impact: People entering today's job market will undergo many career and job changes. A one-career life plan may not be a reality. In addition, small businesses offer limited advancement opportunities. The bottom line: People will advance in their careers by changing jobs — and job-hopping will increase.

Outlook: Prepare for change. Change is part of today's society — jobs and organizations are constantly being created and eliminated.

Impact: People will continually need to revitalize their careers. One way is by finding further training, taking additional courses or volunteering for other tasks. Another is by rotating jobs or taking on other duties and responsibilities. These may lead to promotion possibilities.

Outlook: Relocating will be part of the career picture.

Impact: More and more people will look at attractive job and career opportunities in other locations and decide to pull up stakes and move. Growth and decline in various areas will continue. People will be faced with new lifestyle changes.

If at first you don't succeed. . .

As you work toward your career goals, you will probably encounter obstacles and rejection. Plenty of people, however, have faced and overcome setbacks. For example:

- ★ Henry Ford, who pioneered the assembly-line techniques that led to mass-produced automobiles, went broke five times before he succeeded.
- ★ Legendary movie producer and actor Woody Allen flunked motion-picture production courses at two colleges.
- ★ The novel *M*A*S*H*, by Richard Hooker, was rejected by 21 publishers before it was printed. A successful movie and television series resulted from the book.
- ★ Baseball legend Babe Ruth, famous for setting a home-run record (851), also holds the record for strike-outs (1,030).

What are some strategies for overcoming rejection? Write an inspirational message that will become your motto for dealing with tough situations.

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