



Resources for Career Changers

Navigating the Transition for a Career Change

Making a career change can be a complex and time consuming process. Where to start, what to do, what career is right for you? However it can be time well spent if the outcome leads to finding rewarding work. For most people there is more than one career alternative so choices and priorities must be based on an assessment of skills, interests, values, strengths, and opportunities. You need to take time to look at who you are, what you've done, where you'd like to go and what you need to do to get there. The following resources are designed to guide you throughout this process.

You can go through the process at your own pace -- spend a few hours a day, or focus on a section each week -- whatever works best for you.

Career Decision Guide

Know yourself

The first step in the career transition process involves gathering information about yourself. Understanding your values, interests, aptitudes, abilities, personal traits, and desired life style will help you become aware of the interrelationship between you and your career choice.

Identify your interests

What do you want to accomplish professionally? What's important to you in a career? What do you enjoy doing? What areas do you excel in? These are important questions to ask in the career planning process.

Take a self-assessment to help determine your attitude and interests as they relate to possible career choices: [Online Assessments](#)



What types of work activities do you prefer?

Do you enjoy working with people, organizing and analyzing data, creating ideas, doing hands-on and practical activities, or some combination? What are specific examples from your previous experiences that support your preferences?

Discover your personality

In many cases, people tend to seek work environments that complement and are similar to their personality type, which usually produces greater job satisfaction. To better understand your personality type, try using this online tool: [Personality test](#)

Determine your personal and work values

In trying to determine a new career it is important to understand your values. Your values have been shaped by your life experiences and become the criteria for your judgments, preferences, and choices. Making career choices that agree with your values is critical to job satisfaction. Use this [worksheet](#) to help you determine your work values.

Identify your transferable skills

Transferable skills are the skills you've gathered through various jobs, volunteer work, or other life experiences that can be used in your next job or new career. In addition to being useful to career changers, transferable skills are also important to those who have been laid off, and to those re-entering the workforce after an extended absence. Use this [worksheet](#) to help you organize and rate your skills.

Consider your MS

How does it impact you on the job? Use this [worksheet](#) to help you to identify how your MS symptoms may impact a career decision and determine how or if they may be accommodated.

Know What's Out There

Research the occupations and career fields that interest you

This step involves extensive research and investigation of the world of work. Utilize the resources below to gather career/industry information and compare it to what you already know about yourself.



[O'NET](#), an online tool for career exploration and job analysis, has detailed descriptions of the world of work. A summary report can be obtained for 280 occupations, including a brief description, sample job titles, tasks, work activities, work context, interests, work styles, work values, knowledge and skills required, wages, employment trends, and related occupations.

The Dictionary of Occupational Titles provides concise, accurate job descriptions for more than 12,000 occupations. Each occupation is assigned a nine-digit DOT code number. You can search for occupations using the alphabet letters and subgroups. Access the DOT online at [Dictionary of Occupational Titles](#) to search for specific job titles.

The Occupational Outlook Handbook can be found online at [Occupational Outlook Handbook](#). Use the A-Z index to find a specific occupation by clicking on the letter that corresponds with the first letter of the occupation you want to review. You can also type in the name of an occupation or job title directly.

Know the job outlook for jobs of interest

What are the career fields that will offer the most work opportunities in the next five to ten years? [Jobs of the Future](#)

Job Compatibility Assessments

How do you know if a job may be right for you? [Job Behaviors](#) provides access to dozens of job compatibility assessments for high-demand occupations. Job seekers are able complete an online assessment (free of charge), receive instant comparative results (with a narrative), select a preference for training, employment (or both), and are able to "opt-in" to share their result and contact information with companies providing training and/or employment opportunities.

Obtain first-hand career information

Explore internships, [networking](#) and [informational interviewing](#) that can help you gain more information about career options. Informational interviewing can be a very important tool when considering a career change. It involves meeting people who are currently working in a field that you are looking to become a part of to learn first-hand if this may be a good match for you.



Additional resources:

[How to Set Up an Informational Interview](#)

[What is an Informational Interview and How it Can Help Your Career](#)

Is there a match between you and your career choice ?

This step involves the synthesizing of all accumulated information regarding one's self and the world of work you have identified and comparing it to various jobs/work environments that interest you. Utilize this [worksheet](#) to make your comparisons. Viewing this information side by side can help you determine if there is a match between you and a particular job choice. Do this for each career choice you are considering.

After you complete the worksheets write the barriers of each occupation/career field you have compared into two categories:

- What are the challenges (long and short-term)? Time? Money? Energy? Sacrifices? Health?
- What are the rewards (long and short-term)? Does it meet your goals?

Rank the options according to the challenges, decide what you can realistically accomplish, select a goal and develop a plan.

Develop a plan

Once you have gone through the exploration process and have decided on a career goal that meets your criteria you are ready to take the next steps.

Begin by developing a plan or strategy for achieving desired career goals. Consider the following:

- What additional education or training will be required?
Contact your [local vocational rehabilitation agency](#) to find out how they can assist you with planning your next steps and/or funding for additional training.



- What types of career-related work experiences; internships, part-time jobs, etc. will best assist you in reaching your career goals?

Explore ways in which to do this.

- Helpful websites for internship and part time opportunities include, [Idealist Internship Opportunities](#); [CareerBuilder.com Part Time Jobs](#); [Indeed.com](#). Use the Advanced Search option, then select Part Time from the Show Jobs of Type list; [Job Search Engines](#) use the advanced search option and search by type of position and narrow the results to include only part time jobs listings; [SimplyHired.com Part Time Jobs](#)
- Develop a timeline for getting career-related work experience
- Update your resume and cover letter toward your new career choice
[Career Changers' Most Powerful Resume and Cover Letter Tool](#)
[Career Change Cover Letter](#)
[Resumes for Career Changers](#)
[Resume Tips](#)
- Prepare for the interview. Switching to an entirely new field where you have little or no experience poses special challenges during the interview process. The following tips are designed to help you navigate this challenging task so you will be better prepared to interview with confidence.
[Interview Tips](#)
[Six Interview Tips for Career Changers](#)

Additional Resources:

Career Guidance Program

This [website](#) is dedicated exclusively to helping you discover a career direction that best matches your interests, skills and personality. It is a step-by-step program that guides you through the process necessary to help you determine a new career.



[Career Changers Website](#) is a comprehensive resource for resume writing tips, career counseling, networking, job-search tools and help for interviews.

[Careerology](#) provides career assessments, career counseling, helpful resources and articles about finding the career that is right for you.

[Job Hunters Bible](#) developed by Dick Bolles, author of *What Color Is Your Parachute: A Practical Manual for Job-Hunters and Career-Changers*, has everything you need to know and more about job hunting, counseling services, resume training, research on the internet and networking.

[The Department of Labor](#) Website has a page dedicated to career exploration.

[Career Quiz: Should I Choose This Occupation?](#) After you've gathered information on the occupations you are considering, take this quiz to find out if you are heading in the right direction.

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