

Career Planner

CHOOSING AN OCCUPATION



Career Practitioners

This publication is part of the Planning Series—*Career Planner, Education and Training Planner* and *Adult Back-to-School Planner*. These three easy-to-read workbooks contain information, exercises and resources to help clients make career and training decisions.

Career Planner will help your clients

- see that career planning is an ongoing process with a series of choices and decisions
- identify and discover their skills, interests, values and traits relating to work roles
- research the tasks, knowledge and attitudes needed in work categories

- develop action plans and problem-solving strategies in step with their preferred future
- connect with further information and resources

Your clients may also want to check out *CAREERinsite* at alis.alberta.ca/careerinsite. This interactive feature guides users through four phases of career planning. Each phase includes an introduction, questions to think about, activities, web links and further reading.

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The Province of Alberta is working in partnership with the Government of Canada to provide employment support programs and services.

ISBN 978-0-7785-8856-6

01/2002 – 40M
10/2002 – 50M
11/2003 – 40M
06/2005 – 50M
07/2007 – 50M
04/2009 – 63M
03/2010 – 33.2M
08/2013 – 9.5M
03/2014 – 34M
02/2016 – 22M
08/2017 – 30M

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Planning for Career Change

Is this book for you?

Some experts say that Canadians can expect to change their occupations at least five times in their lifetimes. More likely than not, you too will find yourself making changes in the way you work and live. But you may find change easier to deal with if you have a plan. A plan helps you see how far you've come and where you still need to go. A plan helps you set goals and track them.

Is this book right for you? Take a look at the following statements. How many of them do you agree with? If you agree with one or more, you'll want to read through this planner.

This book is for you if you

- would like to learn more about how to plan a career
- haven't done much or any career planning
- are not sure what occupations are out there
- would like to find an occupation to pursue

How to use this planner

This planner is intended to help guide you in a career direction and help you choose an occupation. Here, you will find easy-to-follow, step-by-step directions on how to make decisions about your life and your work. You will look at your choices and learn more about the occupations that are available. You will do research and collect information. You will talk to people. You will learn many of the things that are necessary for moving in a new career direction.

Maybe you haven't done much career planning or you don't even know what it is. Don't worry. We'll give you lots of help. If the information isn't in this book, we'll tell you where you can get it. By the time you finish this planner, you will have learned a lot about yourself. And with some hard work and enthusiasm, you'll have a good idea of what occupation is right for you.

Be flexible

When you reach the end of this book, we hope that you will have made a decision about your career. Don't worry about making the right or wrong decision. Your choice may be right for now, but things may change. New career opportunities present themselves. Life in general changes. People make choices all the time and respond to what is going on around them. The point is to be flexible and have the tools to help you make decisions throughout your life.

This planner is meant to be used as a workbook. You will be doing exercises and writing down information about yourself. Each exercise is intended to get you a step closer to making a decision about your career. We have listed resources that you can use if you feel stuck or want to talk to someone. We have also shown examples of how other people have worked to change direction in their lives.

As you work through this planner, you may not want to do the steps in exactly the same order as we've shown. That's okay. You can go back and do them later. But you will probably find it easier to do your career planning if you cover all the steps.

If, at any point, you want to talk to someone, contact the Alberta Career Information Hotline. See the Resources section for more information.

Career planning: Be aware and alert

Many of us already make decisions that are in fact career decisions. We choose where we live and work. We decide what we're going to do for fun. We get to know certain people. Career planning involves being more conscious and deliberate about our decisions. It also means being alert to opportunities and aware of choices.

Five Steps to a New Career Path

What is a career?

A career is the total of our work activities—at home, at work, at school and in our communities. A career includes the time we spend at our paid jobs. It includes taking care of a home and looking after children or the elderly. It includes volunteering at the school, coaching a team or helping out at the band office. A career also includes the time we spend learning new things.

Even if you don't think you have a career, you do! And you don't have to be in certain occupations to have a career. Anyone who has spent time working at anything has a career.

What is an occupation?

An occupation is a group of similar jobs for which people usually have to develop skills and knowledge. An occupation is a specific category of work. People can have several different jobs within an occupation. They can adapt their knowledge and skills to a variety of positions. Examples of occupations include electrician, engineer and teacher.

What is a job?

A job is the position a person holds doing specific duties. An example of an occupation is food and beverage server. A job within that occupation is serving at the Moosehead Restaurant. People usually change jobs more often than they change occupations.

Once you finish reading this planner, you will know much more about occupations. In fact, you will have made some decisions about what occupation interests you the most.



EXERCISE

My career

What kinds of *jobs* have you worked in?

In your lifetime, how many times have you changed your *job*?

What kinds of *occupations* have you worked in?

In your lifetime, how many times have you changed your *occupation*?

We're going to show you how to use five steps to make decisions about your career. But this will not be the first time—or the last—that you will be making decisions and choices. Once you have learned how to use the five-step model, you can follow these steps over and over again to make other decisions in your life.

Making a choice

We make decisions constantly. Some decisions can be quite small and take only a moment to make, such as what kind of cereal to eat for breakfast. Other decisions can be very important and take days, weeks or even months to make, such as where to live. But we go through similar steps for both. We stop and think. We get more information. We look at the options. We make a choice. We take action.

Using the five steps

As you go through the five steps, you will answer five main questions. Later, you'll also be answering a number of other questions. But for now, these are the five main things you'll want to think about.

1

Where am I right now?

When something happens and changes your life in some way, try to stop and think. Step back a bit and look at your situation.

2

What do I need to know?

Find out about the options that are open to you. Think about your needs, your wants and your abilities.

3

What are my best choices?

Go over each possibility and think about it. Choose the option that is best for you.

4

What do I need to do?

Plan how you will carry out your decision.

5

What action will I take?

Make up your mind and then do it.

Joe's story

I think it was turning 30 that did it for me. All of a sudden, I was really questioning myself. I realized that I had been working for the same company for 12 years. Sure, the people in the shipping and receiving department were really great. And they paid me OK. But what happened to my big plans to work with computers? Did I want to spend the next 12 years doing the same thing and *never* pursue my dream?

My answer was a big "no."

At first, the idea of changing my career direction was pretty scary. I didn't know how to get started. So I talked to a good friend about it. He told me about some workshops offered through the Alberta Works Centres. I went to one and learned about career planning. They also talked about career options. It's amazing what's actually out there!

I also learned about myself. I rediscovered my dream of working with computers. I used computers a little at work, but I spent much more time on them at home. I had become quite good at learning new software and solving problems. I loved using the Internet and playing games. I even helped my friends and family with their computers. I'd always enjoyed all of that, but it had been a long time since I'd thought about it as a possible career.

After doing some research and talking to people, I realized that I needed more training to get certified as a computer network administrator. I found a program where I could get the training in only one year. My family was very supportive. We worked out our finances and talked about how everything was going to work while I was in school.

I enrolled in the program and graduated near the top of my class. It wasn't easy, but I'm now working at a company with a bunch of other "techie." What I like most is there's always something new to learn. In this occupation, you can go in all sorts of directions.



How Joe used the five steps to make his decision

Let's look at how Joe moved in a new career direction. When he realized that he wanted a change, what did he do? How did he make his choice? Joe was able to turn something confusing into something exciting by asking himself five key questions.

1

Where am I right now?

In the beginning, Joe was afraid of changing his career direction. He wanted something he found interesting and challenging, but he didn't know how to get started. Joe also felt like he was taking a big risk in leaving a job he had been in since he left high school. He needed to feel comfortable about making a career change.

2

What do I need to know?

Joe talked to a good friend about his confusion. His friend told him about a career planning workshop in his community. Joe took a close look at his skills, interests, likes and dislikes. Then he considered his career options and learned how to make a plan.

3

What are my best choices?

Joe knew there was more than one way to work with computers. He looked at several options and figured out what would work best for him. Joe chose something that he liked and that had good prospects for the future.

4

What do I need to do?

Joe needed to go back to school. He did his research and talked to people. He discussed going back to school with his family and made a plan.

5

What action will I take?

Joe enrolled in the program and finished near the top of his class. He is now doing work that he enjoys and that can also lead to other opportunities.

Now, let's look at Felee's story. Can you see how she uses the five career planning steps?

Felee's story

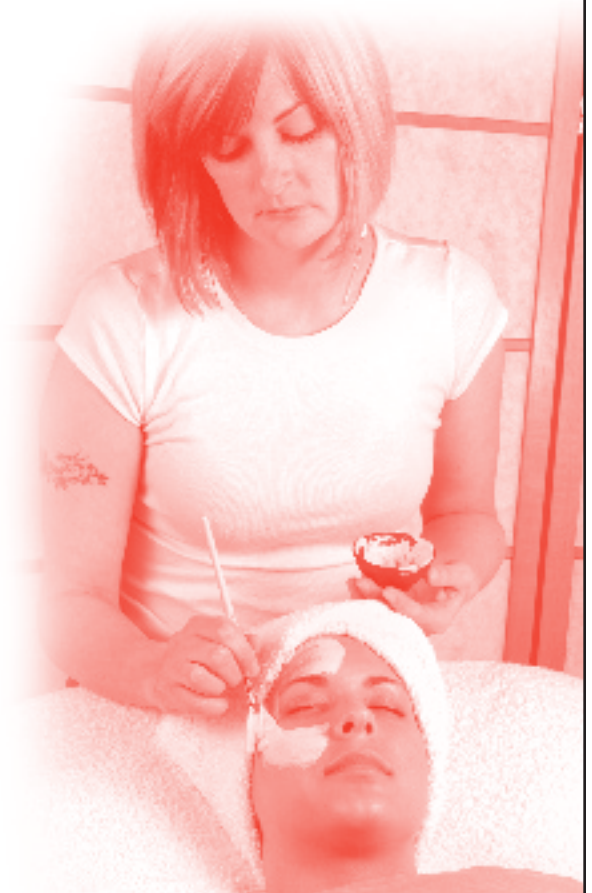
Before Felee came to Canada with her husband, she worked as a stylist in a hair salon. She really enjoyed working with her hands and meeting the new people who came into the shop every day. She liked to try new styles and learn about the latest cutting techniques. Her customers were very happy with her work and came back to see her regularly.

Felee's husband had a reliable job in Canada, so she spent several years at home with her children. When her youngest daughter started school, Felee thought it would be a good idea to go back to work. But it had been a while since she had worked outside her home. Felee wasn't sure if she still wanted to be a hairstylist. Maybe there was some other way she could use her skills. Felee had lots of friends in her community and asked them for advice. One suggested that she go to an Alberta Works Centre and even offered to go along.

With help from a career counsellor, Felee learned about the other kinds of work she could do. She could still probably get a job as a hairstylist. But, with her experience and skills, she could also move in a slightly different direction. If she took some training, she could become any number of things—an esthetician, a cosmetician or a makeup artist. Felee had always wanted to learn how to do facials and manicures so she decided to become an esthetician.

Felee also looked at some of the schools that offered courses. She chose a private school and finished her program within a few months.

Felee started to offer esthetics services in her own home. As part of her plan, she checked the rules for having a small business in her home and made sure that she had all the right paperwork. Felee doesn't make tons of money, but she likes being her own boss. Running her own business and having flexible hours also allows her to spend time with her family. She is slowly purchasing equipment and already has a small group of loyal customers. When her children are older, she wants to expand her business and maybe even open her own shop some day.



EXERCISE

Felee's five steps: Fill in the blanks

Let's look at Felee's career planning. When she wanted to go back to work after her youngest child was in school, what did she do? How did she make her choice? Fill in the steps she followed.

When you're finished, go to the next page to see how you did. Don't worry about getting it exactly right. The point is to see how the five steps of decision-making work.

Step one: Where am I right now?

Step two: What do I need to know?

Step three: What are my best choices?

Step four: What do I need to do?

Step five: What action will I take?

How Felee used the five steps to make her decision

Let's look at how Felee moved in a new career direction. When she decided to go back to work outside her home, what did she do? How did she make her choice? Felee was able to build on her previous experience and skills by asking herself five key questions.

1

Where am I right now?

At first, Felee wasn't sure where to turn. She knew it was time to go back to work, but she wasn't sure that she wanted to do what she did before.

2

What do I need to know?

Felee talked to people in her community. A friend told her about the help she could get at the local Alberta Works Centre. Felee talked to a career counsellor and learned what other options were available to someone with her skills, interests and experience.

3

What are my best choices?

Felee knew that someone with her training and experience had more than one option. She figured out which option would work best for her. She chose something that she had always wanted to do. She wasn't worried about making a lot of money as long as she was happy and still had time for her family.

4

What do I need to do?

Felee knew she had to go back to school. She thought about what program would be best for her.

5

What action will I take?

Felee enrolled in the program and was finished in a few months. She is now in an occupation that she likes. It gives her the freedom to look after other things in her life.

Plan for change

Once you have a plan, use it to help you stay on track. Continue to focus on your goals and measure your progress. But stay alert to new possibilities. When you're busy planning for one thing, something better may come along.

Think about your own experiences. How many times has something good happened that you didn't expect? Chances are you did something—you made a choice, even a small one—that made it happen. You were open to the possibility of a good thing. It's the same with planning your career. As you begin your career planning, keep your mind open to unexpected opportunities. Consider taking a risk. You never know what is around the corner!

Get advice

As we look for answers, we can ask for information and advice from many experienced people: career counsellors, workers and employers, friends and relatives, teachers and others.

Now you try it!

You've read how Joe and Felee made decisions about their careers. They each went through five steps to help them figure out where they were, where they were going and what they needed to get there.

You can do the same thing. In the next chapters, you'll learn to use the five steps of career planning to help you choose an occupation. The five steps are really questions that you must answer in order to get the information you need to make a decision. Each question or step is made up of smaller questions. Going through these steps and answering all of the questions—big and small—will help you successfully plan your career.

Step One:

Where Am I Right Now?



In order to answer this question you'll also want to ask yourself some other questions:

- *What has made me stop and look at my life?*
- *What have I done before?*
- *What do I like to do?*
- *What don't I like to do?*
- *What do I want to do?*

On the following pages, you'll find exercises to help you answer these questions. Go through these questions just as Joe and Felee did. Think about the past, present and future. When you've answered these questions, you will have taken a good look at your life.

EXERCISE

My story

What has made me stop and look at my life?
(Think about what is happening now.)

What have I done before?
(Think over your past. Write a short story about your life.)

What do I like to do?

(Think of the things that you like to do best. What activities make you happy or satisfied?)

What don't I like to do?

(You'll probably spend a lot of time working. It's a good idea to avoid something you really don't like.)

What do I want to do?

Dream a little!

Nearly everyone dreams about the “perfect job.” Or they have ideas about what they want to do with their lives. Joe and Felee also had dreams. When they were clear about what they wanted in their careers, they made plans to work toward their dreams.

For a number of years, Joe forgot his earlier dream of working with computers for a living. But with some help, he was able to rediscover what career he really wanted to pursue. He made a plan, took some training and is now working in an area that he finds interesting and that has a positive future.

Although she had worked as a hairstylist, Felee had always liked the idea of doing facials and manicures. She loved working with her hands and talking to the customers who came into the shop in her homeland. Now she is running her own esthetics business in her home and is still able to spend time with her family.

Dreams help us find out what we want to do.

What are your dreams? Have you ever thought you would like to become a painter or a paramedic? What about being an electrician or bookkeeper or teacher? Maybe you’ve wanted to run heavy equipment, build houses or make furniture for a living. What would you like to be doing in the future?

Sit down in your favourite place. Make sure there are no distractions. Get comfortable. Close your eyes and relax. Begin to imagine and dream.

If you could have your dream job, anywhere in the world, what would it be? Don’t worry about money or school or anything else. Just let your imagination wander.

In your dream, what do you see around you? What does it feel like? Are you working with people or things? Are you working with many people or just a few? Are you alone? Are you the boss? Are you making a lot of money? Do you enjoy the work so much that money doesn’t matter?

When you finish your dreaming, write your dream down. Take as much time as you need. Dreams alone will not change your life. Turning your dreams into goals and working toward them will.



Step Two:

What Do I Need to Know?



In step one, you discovered why you are doing career planning. You answered the question “Where am I right now?” You also uncovered some of your dreams. Now you will move another step closer to choosing an occupation that might suit you.

In this second step of career planning, you will find out about yourself and your abilities. And then you will find out about work opportunities. In order to answer the question for step two, you’ll want to ask yourself some other questions:

- *What kinds of things am I good at?*
- *What types of occupations are out there for me?*

It’s up to you

It may seem like some expert will give you all the answers about the occupation you belong in. NOT true!

As we saw with Joe and Felee, there are different ways to reach a new career choice. Joe's interest grew out of his earlier dream about working with computers and the activities he did in his spare time. Felee's occupation grew out of the hairstyling she did before she came to Canada.

Many kinds of "smart"

Research shows that there are many kinds of "smart." We all have our own talents and abilities. For example, some of us can see the order in things. We just seem to know where things belong. Others can learn languages easily or are good with their hands. Maybe you are a gifted musician or excel in sports. Perhaps your friend is good at understanding structures and can easily build things. You may know people who are great at dealing with others because they read people really well.

As you work to choose an occupation, try to think about what your own gifts are. Nurture them. Celebrate them. When you're feeling unsure of yourself, remember your gifts. Look for occupations that use your gifts.

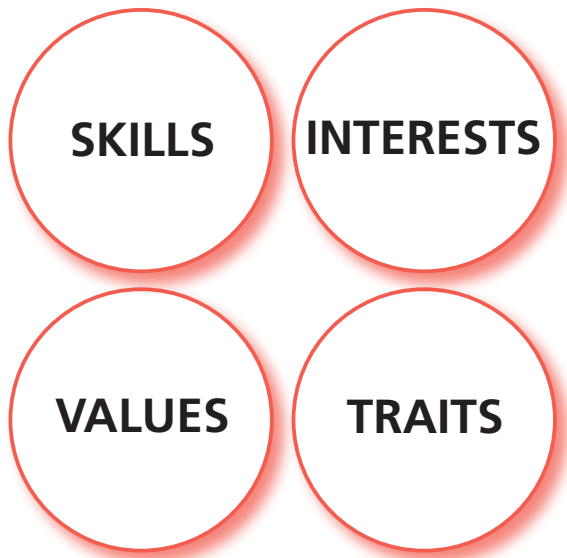
What am I good at?

When you choose a career path, it's important to have a full and clear picture of yourself. You know yourself best. Only you know what you really believe in, what you can do and what you enjoy doing. You understand yourself. You also know about your work likes and dislikes.

This information may be jumbled around in your head. It may feel disorganized and disconnected. Don't worry. It's the same for many people. When you are at this stage of planning your career path, you have two challenges:

- to get the information about yourself down on paper
- to organize the information in a useful way

You will complete these steps as you work through the next exercises.



Skills, interests, values and traits

You can make a career choice based on any of your skills, interests, values and traits. These things are a big part of who you are.

Skills are things that you have learned to do.

Examples include

- driving
- painting
- cooking

Interests are things that you like.

Examples include

- sports
- music
- talking to people

Values are things that are important to you.

Examples include

- being happy
- helping others
- being independent

Traits are things that you are.

Examples include

- energetic
- shy
- easygoing

Where do we get these interests, skills, values and traits? Well, we get some in school. We get some from our families. But many, many more just develop as we live our lives day to day.

The following activities will help you discover your own skills, interests, values and traits. These are not tests. There is no wrong answer. Nobody will mark your work. You are the expert!

EXERCISE

What are my skills?

Skills are things you have learned to do. Examples include

- writing
- sewing
- welding
- filing
- listening
- painting

My skills

Can you do these things?

For each skill, check the circle for "Yes," "Maybe" or "No."

	Yes	Maybe	No
Speak more than one language	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cook	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sew	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Add numbers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Follow plans or patterns	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Follow directions when someone tells me what to do	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use a tape measure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Give clear directions to someone	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Get other people to do what I want them to do	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Make good decisions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Start something on my own before my supervisor tells me what to do	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lead a group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Make a budget	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Remember details	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Help other people with their problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work as part of a team	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stay calm in an emergency	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do the same thing again and again and not get bored	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lift heavy objects	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sell things	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Organize people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Plan a party	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Entertain people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clean	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Grow plants	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



	Yes	Maybe	No
Do tax forms	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Build a fence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Build furniture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Style hair	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fix car engines	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fix small appliances	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Install computer software	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Care for small children	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Help people who are upset	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use a computer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Speak to a group of people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Paint a picture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Play a sport	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tell a story	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Make a room look nice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other things I can do:

Now go back over the whole list. Pick out the five things that you do best and write them down.

My main skills

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

EXERCISE

What are my interests?

Interests are things you like. This question is easy to answer. You know what music you like to listen to, what food you like to eat and what games you like to play. You may also know what you like about work. Examples of interests include

- hiking
- collecting
- gardening
- fishing
- golfing
- reading

My interests

Do you like to do these things?

For each interest, check the circle for "Yes," "Maybe" or "No."

	Yes	Maybe	No
Be active	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Listen to music	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Drive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fix things	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Draw pictures.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work with plants.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work with animals.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do things with my hands	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Shop	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do housework	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Go to the theatre	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Play sports.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Garden.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Walk.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Watch nature programs on TV.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coach sports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Talk on the telephone.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learn about the environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Handle money	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use small hand tools	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Operate machines and equipment.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cook	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sew	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Yes	Maybe	No
Style hair.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use computers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Search the Internet.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Arrange flowers.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Paint houses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Take photographs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Make things from different materials (For example: crafts, sculpting, woodworking)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Act, sing or dance.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Play a musical instrument	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Make people laugh.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teach adults.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teach children	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Help people with their problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Serve people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sell things.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Be the boss.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bookkeeping.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work with numbers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other things that I like:

Now go back over the whole list. Pick out the five things that you like best and write them down.

My main interests

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

EXERCISE

What are my values?

Values are things that are important to you. Joe valued helping other people solve computer problems. Felee valued making customers happy.

Values are very personal. You may have picked some of them up from people close to you, but you alone know what is most important to you. Examples include

- being part of the community
- being secure
- making the world a better place
- being healthy
- having friends
- making money

My values

Do you think these things are important?

For each value, check the circle for "Yes," "Maybe" or "No."

	Yes	Maybe	No
Having good health.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learning new things	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Growing personally	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having time and energy for my life away from work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meeting new people.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having a lot of friends.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having a steady job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having an employer who is fair.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having an employer who is easy to get along with.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Working in a comfortable place.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Working in a safe place	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Working with people I like	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Knowing exactly what to do	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Making the world a better place.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Doing something that I feel is important	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Making a lot of money.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Seeing the results of my work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having an impressive work title.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having good family relationships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being responsible for other workers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Protecting the environment.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



	Yes	Maybe	No
Growing spiritually.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Doing physical work.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having a chance for advancement (related job and more pay).....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Making the world more beautiful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Finishing a difficult task	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Doing a job well	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Making decisions together with other people.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being my own boss.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being creative: to come up with new things or new ideas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Setting my own hours of work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Planning my work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Controlling the order in which my work is done	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Using my brain	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Showing my best abilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having a few close friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having interesting work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having challenging work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having exciting work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having easy work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other things that are important to me:

Now go back over the whole list. Pick out the five things that are most important to you and write them down.

My main values

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

EXERCISE

What are my traits?

Traits are who you are and how you act. They are a big part of your personality. Examples include

- risk-taking
- outgoing
- physical
- organized
- cautious
- self-confident

Joe's and Felee's stories showed some of their traits. Felee was creative. She liked to try out new hairstyles on her customers. She also liked working with other people. One of her favourite things about working as a hairstylist was talking to her customers.

Joe doesn't mind taking risks. He went back to school in order to change his career path. Joe likes a challenge and is confident in his abilities to do well.

My traits

Do these traits describe you?

For each sentence, check the circle for "Yes," "Maybe" or "No."

	Yes	Maybe	No
I am organized.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I finish tasks that I start.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do many different things.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do the same thing most of the time.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I need to see a finished job at the end of the day	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I'm working on something, I'm careful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I put lots of energy into work.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I work at a slow pace	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am creative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am outgoing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am different from most other people.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I want to fit in with other people.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I need a lot of time by myself.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think a problem through before I make a decision	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I go by my feelings when I make a decision	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I make a decision, I stick to it.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I don't mind taking risks.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am ambitious.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am a leader	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



	Yes	Maybe	No
I do things the way they have always been done	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I find new ways to do things	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like working by myself.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like working with other people.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I live to work. Work is the centre of my life.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I work to live. Work is not the centre of my life.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other things that describe who I am and how I act:

Now go back over the whole list. Pick out the five traits that best describe you and write them down.

My main traits

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

EXERCISE

Summary: My skills, interests, values and traits

To create your summary, list the five main skills, interests, values and traits that you chose. Refer to this summary as you complete the next exercises about occupational categories.

My main skills

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

My main interests

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

My main values

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

My main traits

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

What occupations are out there for me?

If you have done all of the exercises up until now, you have learned a lot of things about yourself. Now you will learn what kinds of occupations are out there.

People, things, ideas and data or information groups

Did you know that there are hundreds of occupations in the Canadian labour market that cover thousands of different job titles?* That's a lot of choices! But you don't have to find out about all 40,000—just the ones that might be right for you. Most occupations can be sorted into four groups, depending on what they work with:

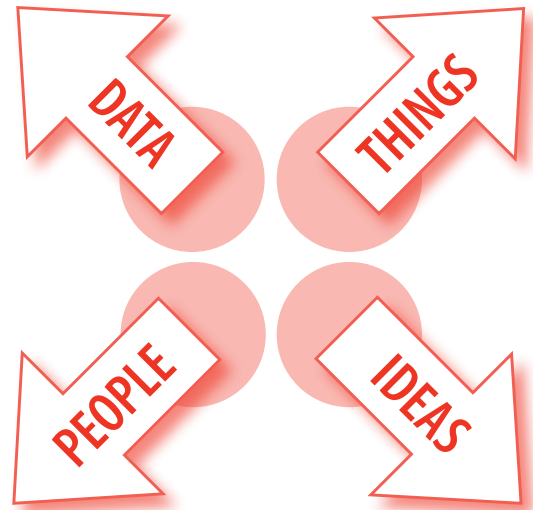
- people
- things
- ideas
- data or information

Using this approach is simple, but the four groups are really too big to help us make an occupational choice. Why? Because many occupations can fit into more than one group. For example, think about two different occupations where people work with things:

- floral designer
- truck driver

These occupations are quite different from one another. They would appeal to different people. So we need a more precise way to group them.

*The National Occupational Classification (NOC) organizes the world of work into 500 occupational groups classifying more than 40,000 job titles.

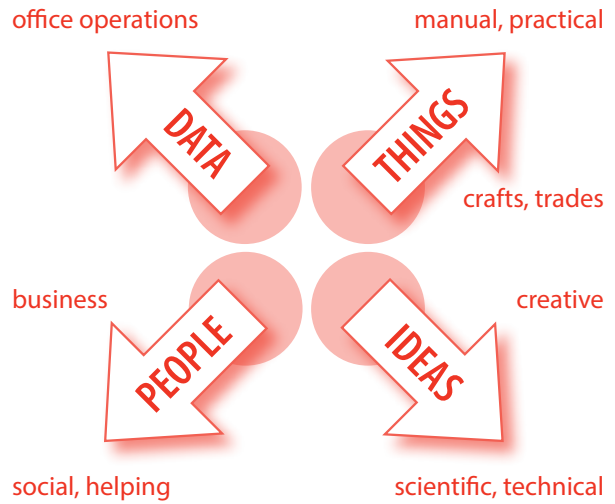


Occupational categories

To make the categories more precise, we break the four groups into sub-groups, called occupational categories. There are seven occupational categories:

- manual or practical
- crafts and trades
- scientific and technical
- creative
- social or helping
- business
- office operations

Some of these categories probably appeal to you more than others.



The following chart illustrates how different kinds of tasks relate to the four groups and how the four groups relate to the seven occupational categories.

Task	Group	Occupational category
Doing physical work	Things	Manual, practical
Working with your hands		Crafts, trades
Working with machines		
Working with ideas	Ideas	Scientific, technical
Expressing ourselves in work		Creative
Helping others	People	Social, helping
Managing others		Business
Working with data	Data or information	Office operations
Working with details		

Office operations

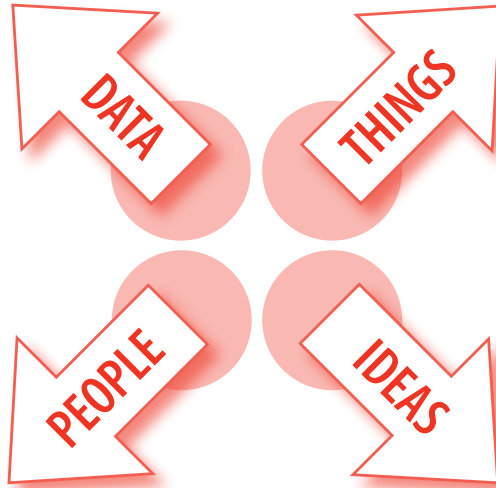
- clerical work
- computer data entry
- accounting

Business

- sales
- travel
- management
- advertising

Social or helping

- child care
- teaching
- recreation
- social services
- health care



Manual or practical

- sports
- fishing
- farming
- labour

Crafts and trades

- sewing
- carpentry
- house painting

Creative

- art
- photography
- stage management

Scientific and technical

- mining
- X-ray technology
- drafting
- surveying

The diagram shows some sample occupations within each category. There are many occupations in each category, but the people who work in them tend to share similar skills, interests, values and traits.

From bricks to food

Don't be surprised if you see some very different occupations grouped together. For example, crafts and trades workers usually deal with things. And how many things are there in this world? Well, everything from bricks to door locks to food. That's why there can be such a variety of occupations in one group. Some will have absolutely nothing to do with the others.

Fitting your summary to occupations

In the next several pages we are going to talk about the seven occupational categories in more detail. By comparing your own skills, interests, values and traits to the occupational categories, you can get closer to discovering what occupation may be most suitable for you. The better the fit between you and your choice, the more likely you are to feel satisfied.

Now let's look at how your summary on page 32 ties in with occupational choices. Compare your summary to the summary of each of the seven occupational groups on the next pages. Which occupational group or groups do you fit into?

Find your starting point

Maybe you're not 100 per cent sure that the occupational category you're choosing is the right one for you. Still, it's important to choose something as a starting point. You'd be surprised what new possibilities can come along once you get going. You can always look at other categories later.

Manual or practical category

Work that

- deals mostly with things
- is physically active

Here are *some* of the work settings (industries) and occupations.

Construction industry

Labourer, trades helper, plumber...

Agriculture and forestry industries

Farmer, farm or ranch worker, logger...

Sports and recreation industries

Groundskeeper, athletic equipment custodian, icemaker...

Hospitality industry

Dishwasher, housekeeper, food and beverage server...

Service industry

Mail carrier, taxi driver, firefighter...

Skills—Athletic, mechanical, strong

Interests—Action, physical work, sports, animals, plants, equipment

Values—Steady routine, being outdoors, being active, freedom of space

Traits—Independent, able to work alone, down to earth

Do you fit into the manual or practical category?

Yes Maybe No

Would you like to be a manual or practical worker?

Yes Maybe No



Crafts and trades category

Work that

- deals mostly with things
- depends on using your hands or operating machinery

Here are *some* of the work settings (industries) and occupations.

Construction industry

Any worker in the trades: painter, bricklayer, electrician, cabinetmaker...

Manufacturing

Assembly line worker, shipper and receiver, welder...

Agriculture and forestry industry

Nursery worker, taxidermist, landscape gardener...

Service industry

Locksmith, hairstylist, cook, office equipment technician...

Skills—Working with hand tools, working with numbers, working with machines

Interests—Structures, fixing, building

Values—Stability, creativity, a challenge, seeing results of work

Traits—Able to work alone, precise

Do you fit into the crafts and trades category?

Yes Maybe No

Would you like to be a crafts and trades worker?

Yes Maybe No



Scientific and technical category

Work that

- deals mostly with ideas and imagination
- makes ideas useful

Here are *some* of the work settings (industries) and occupations.

Universities and research facilities

Research lab worker, scientist, technician in biology, geology, forestry or astronomy...

Medical centres

Medical laboratory technologist, animal health technologist, therapist, medical doctor, dentist, veterinarian...

Engineering companies

Any type of engineer, technician, technologist, surveyor, drafting technician, computer programmer, systems analyst, software engineer...

Skills—Thinking, doing tests and experiments, working with numbers, researching

Interests—Science, math, ideas

Values—Order, freedom to make decisions, freedom of time, understanding things

Traits—Independent, creative, curious about how things work

Do you fit into the scientific and technical category?

Yes Maybe No

Would you like to be a scientific and technical worker?

Yes Maybe No



Creative category

Work that

- deals mostly with ideas and imagination
- finds new ways to do things

Here are *some* of the work settings (industries) and occupations.

Entertainment industry

Dancer, actor, makeup artist, set designer, film editor, cartoonist...

Galleries and museums

Curator, painter, sculptor...

Advertising and graphic arts industries

Illustrator, graphic designer, visual merchandiser...

Service industry

Floral designer, interior decorator, meat cutter...

Publishing industry

Reporter, creative or technical writer, translator, editor...

Skills—Finding new ways to do things; making things out of different materials; using sense of hearing, sight, touch, taste and smell

Interests—Decorating or designing, performing or acting, books or stories, art or music

Values—Freedom of time; unstructured situations; trust in own mind, body and feelings

Traits—Able to work alone, imaginative, expressive, risk-taking, independent

Do you fit into the creative category?

Yes Maybe No

Would you like to be a creative worker?

Yes Maybe No



Social or helping category

Work that

- deals mostly with people
- helps people

Here are *some* of the work settings (industries) and occupations.

Education industry

Teacher, teacher aide, child and youth care worker...

Social service industry

Social worker, probation officer, counsellor, community support worker...

Recreation industry

Recreation co-ordinator, fitness instructor, coach...

Health care industry

Nurse, therapist, paramedic, residential aide, dental assistant...

Service industry

Police officer, flight attendant, daycare worker, outdoor sports and recreation guide...

Skills—Listening, communicating, helping, leading

Interests—People, teaching, helping, taking care of people

Values—Being helpful, doing something worthwhile, variety, being co-operative

Traits—Trusting of personal feelings, understanding of other people, responsible, compassionate, creative

Do you fit into the social or helping category?

Yes Maybe No

Would you like to be a social or helping worker?

Yes Maybe No



Business category

Work that

- deals mostly with people
- involves managing or organizing people

Here are *some* of the work settings (industries) and occupations.

Wholesale and retail companies

Salesperson, public relations representative, manager, owner or operator...

Promotion industry

Advertising account manager, product demonstrator, fundraiser...

Service industry

Restaurant manager, real estate agent, travel agent, insurance salesperson...

Skills—Leading, persuading, motivating, communicating

Interests—People, managing, selling, discussing

Values—Independence, money, power, decision-making, contact with people

Traits—Decisive, self-confident, risk-taking

Do you fit into the business category?

Yes Maybe No

Would you like to be a business worker?

Yes Maybe No



Office operations category

Work that

- deals mostly with detailed information and ways to organize it
- uses office equipment

Here are *some* of the work settings (industries) and occupations.

Business offices

Bookkeeper, office personnel, dispatcher...

Government offices

Records management technician, administrative assistant, legal assistant...

Financial industry

Mortgage agent, accountant, insurance claims adjuster...

Skills—Keeping records, thinking logically, noticing details, working with numbers

Interests—Numbers, words, office equipment, computers

Values—Security, order, neatness

Traits—Precise, stable, organized, good at finishing tasks

Do you fit into the office operations category?

Yes Maybe No

Would you like to be an office operations worker?

Yes Maybe No



EXERCISE

My occupational category or categories

Now you have carefully studied the descriptions of each of the seven occupational categories. You have compared your summary with each category.

Which category, or categories, of occupations would you best fit into?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

What if...

My summary of skills, interests, values and traits doesn't match up exactly with an occupational category?

Just pick the category, or categories, that seem to match up most closely.

I match with more than one occupational category?

That just means that you have more occupations to choose from. You could find an occupation in one category and a hobby or volunteer work in another. You should also know that many types of occupations fit into more than one category.

I don't want to work in this category?

Even if your summary seems to fit a certain occupational category, nobody is saying that you have to work in this category. Make a choice based on your own values, needs and feelings.

I really don't understand this at all?

Go back to the career counsellor or whoever gave you this book and ask for help.

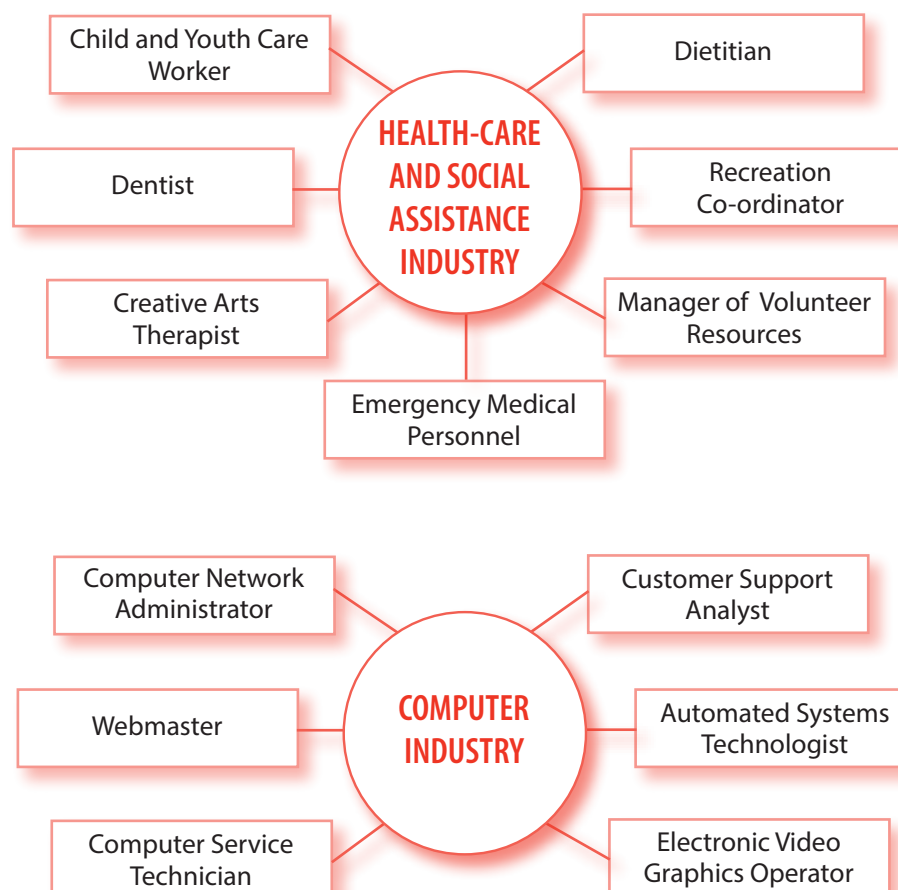
Related occupations

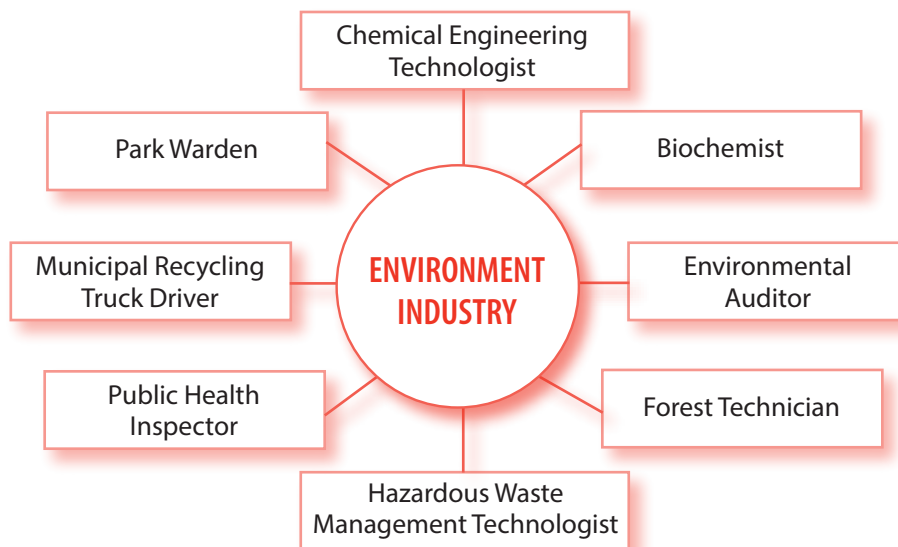
As you start looking into occupations, think about the kind of industry you might want to work in. Keep in mind that there can be many different occupations within one industry.

For example, in the health-care and social assistance industry, there are licensed practical nurses, chiropractors and dentists. Most of us are familiar with these occupations. There are also many other health-related occupations, such as athletic therapist,

chiropractic assistant, pharmacy assistant, food and nutrition manager, medical office assistant and hearing aid practitioner. All of these health-related occupations have their own education and training requirements. The workers do different tasks.

When you are looking at one occupation, you may discover that another occupation in the same industry suits you better. Keep an open mind and you may be pleasantly surprised by the possibilities!





These are just some of the related occupations and industries where people work. For information on others, visit alis.alberta.ca/occinfo. See Resources at the end of this book for more information.

Need some help? Talk to somebody

You've been working through this book for a while now. You've done a lot of thinking. You've asked yourself some important questions and learned about yourself and some occupational choices. You've come a long way already.

Now may be a good time to talk to somebody. If you need help and live in Alberta, call the Alberta Career Information Hotline (see the Resources section). They can answer your questions or direct you to the nearest Alberta Works Centre/Alberta Supports Centre. If you got this book from a career counsellor, you can make an appointment to talk with that counsellor. Discuss your progress. Look at the occupational category or categories that you have chosen.

After you talk to your counsellor, you will be ready to continue with the next steps in career planning.

Step Three:

What Are My Best Choices?



So far, you have read about Joe and Felee and how they reached points in their lives where they wanted and needed to change. They did two things at first.

- They stopped and looked at their lives.
- They found out about some career options.

Then Joe and Felee had to decide which career options suited them the best.

You have done the same things as Joe and Felee. In step one, *Where Am I Right Now?*, you discovered why you are career planning. You learned to stop and look. In step two, *What Do I Need to Know?*, you learned about your skills, interests, values and traits. You also learned about the many types of occupations and selected some occupational categories to explore further.

Now in step three, *What Are My Best Choices?*, you will move another step closer to choosing an occupation. You will find out whether the occupations you are considering will fit your needs. You will take a look at the many choices in your occupational group. You will do some more research and talk to people who work in the areas that interest you. Finally, with some time and effort, you will choose an occupation that you would like to pursue.

Take your time

We'll be asking you to research, complete some exercises and talk to people. Don't try to do it all in one day. As you get answers to some questions, you'll find that you have more new questions. Making decisions like this takes time. The point is to get the information you need to decide on the career path that works for you.

In order to complete step three, you'll want to ask yourself some other questions:

- *How do I find out more about the occupations that interest me?*
- *What information do I need?*
- *Am I still interested?*
- *Which occupation will I go for?*

A word about research

To make a good decision, you need lots of information. The process of getting more information is called research. Research is really just a matter of asking questions and getting answers. Why is it so important to ask questions and do research? Think for a minute about what automotive service technicians do (they used to be called mechanics!). Do they just spend time working on the engine? Or is there more to it than that? Most automotive service technicians must know how to use computers and other electronic equipment. Some of that equipment is used to test vehicles. Other electronic equipment is part of the vehicles themselves. Automotive service technicians today have a lot more to deal with than they did in the past.

This is just one example, but as you can see, an occupation may have more to it than meets the eye. By doing research, you'll find out all you need to know about an occupation to help you decide.

How do I find out more about occupations?

Who do you talk to? You have to ask the right people or you might not get the most useful answers. When you're researching occupations, the best people to talk to are

- workers in the occupation
- career counsellors
- representatives of educational institutions that offer training in the occupation

There are a number of places you can go to get information about occupations. These include

Alberta Works Centres / Alberta Supports Centres

These centres are all over Alberta. Call the Alberta Career Information Hotline to find out which one is closest to you.

At these service centres you can find resources to help you make a decision about your career.

Schools

These include public and private colleges, universities, technical institutes and private vocational schools. Many junior and senior high schools also have information about occupational choices.

Community agencies

Many organizations and agencies provide career-related information to specific groups of people, such as

- youth
- Indigenous Peoples
- women

- immigrants
- people with disabilities
- people over 45 years of age
- people receiving income support
- people receiving employment insurance

Professional associations and unions

These organizations have information on specific occupations, including education and training and certification requirements. Professional associations and unions can also tell you how many people are working in a particular occupation.

Workers in the occupation

It's a good idea to talk to someone who actually works in the occupation you are interested in. Some ways to do this include

- finding people you already know who work in the occupation
- asking your friends, family or neighbours if they know someone
- asking at a workplace that employs people in the occupation

Alberta Career Information Hotline

The Hotline is a free telephone service. You can call it from anywhere in Alberta with your questions. See the Resources section of this book for more information.

Alis

You can also get all sorts of information on occupations, career planning, educational programs and job opportunities at alis.alberta.ca.

What information do I need?

As you do your research, you need to get answers to some important questions:

What are my occupational choices?

What does a worker in this occupation really do?

How should I narrow my choices?

What else should I know about this occupation?

Will this occupation meet my needs?



EXERCISE

What are my occupational choices?

In step two, you saw some examples of occupations in each of the seven broad categories. But there are many, many more types of occupations within each group. Ask a career counsellor about other possibilities. You can also go to alis.alberta.ca/OCCinfo to find over 560 occupational profiles. As you read through these occupational possibilities, write down the ones that really interest you. Try to come up with four or five for the exercises on the next pages.

Look at your list of occupations (you should have four or five). The next step is to do some research. Maybe you already know quite a bit about some of these occupations. Maybe you only know a little about others. You shouldn't choose one just because you already know about it. And even if you know a lot about an occupation, new technology may have changed things. To make a good career decision, you'll want to find out as much as you can by doing some detailed research. You need to do the same research for each occupation.

Ways to research

You can do three main kinds of research as you look into possible occupations: online and paper, people and participation.

Online and paper research involves going to sources of information such as websites or public libraries. You usually write a lot of things down, bookmark pages and read through a variety of material. Online and paper research is a good first step in researching specific occupations.

Social media websites are generally used for connecting with friends, but they can also be used to let your contacts know you're looking for work. Many companies and organizations join these websites and post job openings on their pages.

People research is a more personal way to research occupations. It is an important part of career planning and involves talking to people who actually work in the occupations you are interested in. Talking to people is a good way to confirm information you have already collected. You can also get answers to questions that may not be available in printed material.

Participation research takes your research one step further. It involves participating in the occupation you are interested in. Volunteering is a great way to test out an occupation or at least an occupational category. You can also look into job shadowing as a way to learn more about a particular occupation.

The following can help you with your research:

- Alberta Works Centres/Alberta Supports Centres
- schools (including colleges, technical institutes and universities)
- community agencies
- career materials
- career counsellors
- professional associations and unions
- Alberta Career Information Hotline

The value of volunteering

Volunteer work can help you move closer to your career goals. Maybe you coach basketball at the youth centre. Or you help look after children in your community. No, you don't get paid. But you can learn some important skills that may be useful in getting work in the future. Many employers have a space for volunteer activities on their application forms. They consider volunteering to be an important part of a career. For people who have been out of the labour force for a while, volunteering can be a bridge to new work opportunities. Some people have even turned their volunteer jobs into paying jobs.

Volunteering can also be a way to explore different occupations. You can't volunteer to be an actual veterinarian. But you could explore occupations in the agriculture industry by volunteering at a zoo. Or you could explore health-care occupations by giving your time at a hospital.

Job shadowing

Job shadowing is another way to research an occupation. When you job shadow someone, you observe him or her at work. By spending some time on the job, you get a better understanding of what the work involves. You can set up job shadowing with workers in the occupations that still interest you after you have done all your research. For more information on job shadowing, call the Alberta Career Information Hotline or talk to a career counsellor.

Many possibilities

It will take some time to do this research properly. The purpose here is to find the best occupation, not the first one that suits you. You have hundreds of possibilities to choose from. Give yourself time to think about what you are learning.

The following exercise has a worksheet to help you with your research. Make several copies of the worksheet so that you will have a separate one for each occupation. Do one occupation at a time. You will be doing this research on all the occupations from your list, so it doesn't matter which one you start with.

How do you get information from a worker?

- Always phone first and ask if he or she has time to talk to you.
- Be polite.
- Make it clear that you are not asking for a job—you just want information.
- Ask for a short appointment—about 15 minutes.
- Ask about related occupations.
- Thank the worker for his or her time. Send a thank-you note if you feel comfortable.

EXERCISE

What does a worker in this occupation really do?

What is this occupation all about? This is a big question. The following questions will help you in your research. You can get answers to these questions by doing online, paper and people research and by finding a way to participate in the occupation. You will find a lot of information at the places we talked about earlier.

Once you have the answers, you'll have a better idea of what the occupations are all about. If you have some of your own questions, add them to the list. Take as much time as you need. Detailed research is hard work. Don't forget to take a break now and then!

Occupation being researched _____

1. What are the main tasks that a person in this occupation does?

2. What other tasks are involved? _____

3. Are there jobs in this occupation right now? _____

4. Are these jobs near where I live? _____

5. Will there be jobs in this occupation in the future? _____

6. Is the work usually full time? Part time? _____

7. Is the work usually all year-round? Seasonal? _____

8. Are the hours of work usually regular? Shift work? _____

9. What is the workplace like? (Examples: lots of people, outdoors in summer, noisy office)

10. Do you need physical strength to do this work? (Example: do you lift heavy things?)

11. Do you need special education to do this work? If so, what kind of education?

12. Do you need safety training to do this work? (Examples: first aid, safety orientation)

Where can you get the training? _____

What will it cost? (Examples: tuition, books, fees) _____

How long will it take? _____

13. Does this work ask for any licence or certificate? If so, what? _____

14. What can a person learn on the job? _____

15. Are orientation sessions provided for new workers? _____

16. Do you need social skills to do this work? (Example: do you talk to customers?) _____

17. What are the legal requirements? (Examples: do you have to be bonded? A certain age?) _____

18. Do you need your own tools? If so, how much do they cost? _____

19. Do you need special clothing? If so, who pays for it? _____

20. Do you need your own vehicle? (Examples: car, truck, bicycle) _____

21. Is there usually room for movement? Can you move to a related job after you have some experience?

22. What is the usual starting rate of pay? _____

23. What is the top rate of pay? _____

24. What are the usual benefits? (Examples: health-care plan, free uniforms, parking) _____

25. What do people like about this occupation? _____

26. What do people not like about this occupation? _____

27. How do people get to be in this occupation? _____

28. May I contact the worker again if I have more questions about the occupation? _____

Add your own questions and get answers to them.

EXERCISE

What else should I know about this occupation?

Even after you have done your paper research and talked to someone working in each occupation (people research), you may still have some questions. Use this space to write down anything else you need to know.

Occupation _____

Questions

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

EXERCISE

How should I narrow my choices?

Before you can narrow down your occupation choices, you need to finish your research for the two questions “What does a worker in this occupation really do?” and “What should I know about this occupation?” You should do this research for at least four or five occupations.

My short list of occupations

If no, go back to the exercise What are my occupational choices? and add a short note about why you’re not interested. Draw a line through this occupation. It is off your list. Don’t feel bad. It’s good to know what you don’t want to do and why you don’t want to do it.

To help narrow down your choices, answer this question for each occupation that you researched.

Now that I know what is involved in this occupation, am I still interested? Yes No

If yes, write the name of that occupation in the short list below. Try to have at least three occupations that you can look at more closely.

Personal needs

All people have needs. For some people, doing something worthwhile is more important than making lots of money. For others, personal enjoyment is the strongest need.

Needs often change as people's experience and circumstances change. When your family is young and depends on you for food, clothing and shelter, you might need a job that pays well. You may need work with lots of stability. After your kids have left home, your needs might shift toward personal enjoyment or opportunities to try something different.

Needs are often similar to values. But they include other things as well, such as

- needing to be home with your kids after school
- needing to stay in your community near your family

Each of us must balance our personal desires and our responsibilities as well as we can. We will still see some needs as stronger than others.

Pay attention to your needs

When you are choosing an occupation, pay attention to your needs. For example, your skills and interests may fit into the manual or practical occupational group. But if you have a strong personal need to help people, maybe you can put your occupational group and your need together. For example, you could drive a bus for people with disabilities.

Decide on your priorities

Sherry wanted to change her career path so her children would have a better future. She was tired of working in low-paying jobs that seemed to go nowhere. But she hadn't finished high school.

She really wanted to try something new and start on a fresh path. But there were so many occupations out there. She didn't know where to start. A big concern was that she was a single parent and her kids were still so young. What kind of occupation could she go for and still give her kids the attention they needed? Sherry also needed an occupation that would not require a lot of training. Sherry met with a career counsellor. They spent a lot of time talking about what Sherry needed in an occupation. Deciding on her priorities helped narrow down the choices. Sherry got a little bit closer to making a decision.

EXERCISE

Will this occupation meet my needs?

This list of questions is about personal needs.

Make several copies of this worksheet so you can write down the answers for each occupation you are researching. Write down the name of the occupation you are researching and answer the questions about that occupation. Then look at your list of personal needs. You may have more questions. Add your questions to the end and answer them.

Occupation being researched _____

1. Will I make enough money doing this work? _____
2. Will I be happy doing this work? _____
3. Will I be learning and growing if I do this work? _____
4. Do I feel that this work is worthwhile? _____
5. Will this work affect my home life? _____
6. Will this work put stress on my family? How can we handle the stress? _____
7. Will this work affect my relationship with my friends or family? _____

8. Will I have to move in order to do this work? Am I able to move? _____
9. Will I have time for my hobbies and other interests if I do this work? _____

Add your questions here.

Does this occupation match most of my personal needs? Yes Maybe No

Do I want this occupation? Yes Maybe No

EXERCISE

Summary: What I know

You have finished the detailed research on each of the occupations you have been studying. It is now time to stop and summarize what you know so far. You should still be considering more than one occupation.

Make a list of all the good and not-so-good things about each occupation you have been researching. Along with the other information you have collected, this summary will help you decide what occupation may be a good choice for you.

Make several copies of this worksheet so you can write down the answers for each occupation you are still researching.

Occupation _____

Good

Not so good

Which occupation will I go for?

You have researched some choices. You've talked to a career counsellor. You've talked to people who work in the occupations that interest you. You've been collecting information and getting answers to important questions. You've thought about what is good and not so good about the occupations you are still considering. You've taken many steps toward actually choosing an occupation. Now you're ready to make a decision.

Write down the name of your occupational choice here:

My chosen occupation

Congratulations! You've worked hard to get this far. You've been taking action to move in a new career direction. Now it's time to firm up your decision and make a plan that will turn your decision into reality.

Confused?

Don't worry if you haven't chosen an occupation. Talk to your career counsellor.

Step Four:

What Do I Need to Do Now?



You have stopped and looked at your life. You have discovered many things about yourself and the world of work. You have thought about your career choices and made a decision.

My chosen occupation
(write down your choice from the last section)

Now it's time to do some planning on how to reach your goal. Then you can begin to act on your plan.

In order to answer the question for step four, you'll also want to ask yourself some other questions:

- *Do I meet the requirements of my chosen occupation?*
- *Where do I stand now?*

EXERCISE

Do I meet the requirements of my chosen occupation?

Workers in most occupations need to meet four types of requirements. These are

- educational requirements
- training requirements
- special occupational requirements
- specific job requirements

Find out the requirements for your chosen occupation. Then you will be ready to plan your next actions.

My chosen occupation

1. Educational requirements

For most occupations, you need a minimum level of education or schooling. Some require a university, college or other post-secondary education. For others, it may be Grade 12.

What education level does my chosen occupation require?

2. Training requirements

For many occupations, you have to take special training or courses even after you meet the educational requirements. This is true even if you go to university. Other examples include the many trades that are available through apprenticeship programs. In order to be qualified to work, tradespeople must take a combination of classroom and on-the-job training. Some companies or businesses offer their own training, such as training for salespeople.

Does my chosen occupation require any special training? Yes No

If yes, what is the special training called?

Where do I take it?

Do I need training?

Sherry did a lot of research into occupations. She worked closely with her career counsellor. They looked at occupational profiles and learned about occupational requirements. Finally, Sherry decided to pursue a career in retail sales. She had always had a knack for selling things, had an eye for fashion and was good with people.

She knew she would have to finish high school first. And once she got working, she would have to start at the beginning. Sherry talked to some employers and learned that there are great opportunities for people who are willing to work hard and learn. Some of the companies offered training programs. Sherry also found out that the mall near her home usually had openings in retail. The great advantage was that the mall had a day care centre. That would help her do two important things: pursue her occupation and look after her family's needs.

3. Special occupational requirements
 Even if you have met the general education and training requirements, some occupations may require even more from you. Some occupations require you to have your own tools. Others require you to own and drive a car. Some require a special talent or physical ability. Artists, musicians and actors all require special talents. Many occupations expect you to pass a physical fitness test and complete a safety training session.

Does the occupation that I chose require anything special? Yes No

If yes, what does it require?

Assessing special occupational requirements

List the special requirements of your chosen occupation so you can plan how you're going to meet those requirements. Use the following table as a guideline.

Occupation	Special requirement (Examples: car, talent, physical ability)	I have	I don't have	How I can get or develop	Date completed Done ✓

4. Specific job requirements

Employers in some occupations may need workers who can meet specific job requirements. Perhaps their employees must be willing to travel, work shifts, be on call at times, wear uniforms or use safety equipment.

You, too, may have specific work needs. You may, for example, need work that leaves you free in the evenings, work that you can get to by bus or work that pays you well enough to provide for your family. Look back at the exercises about your needs.

Does the occupation I chose have specific job requirements? Yes No

If yes, what are the requirements?

Assessing specific job requirements

List the specific job requirements of your occupation so you can plan how you're going to meet those requirements. Use the following table as a guideline.

Occupation	Specific requirement (Examples: shift work, being on call)	I can meet	I can't meet	How I can manage this	Found solution Done ✓

EXERCISE

Where do I stand now?

1. Do I meet the educational requirements for the occupation that I have chosen?

Yes No

If no, see the book *Education and Training Planner*. See Resources at the end of this book for information on how to get a copy. If yes, move to the next question.

2. Do I meet the training requirements for my occupation?

Yes No

If no, see the book *Education and Training Planner*. See Resources at the end of this book for information on how to get a copy. If yes, move to the next question.

3. Can I meet the special requirements for my occupation?

Yes No

If no, see a career counsellor at your nearest Alberta Works Centre. If yes, move to the next question.

4. Can I meet the specific job requirements for my occupation?

Yes No

If no, see a career counsellor at your nearest Alberta Works Centre / Alberta Supports Centre. If yes, see a career counsellor or read books like *Work Search Basics* to help you get started on your job search. See Resources at the end of this book for information on how to get a copy.

Step Five:

What Actions Will I Take?



In order to answer the question for step five, you'll also want to ask yourself another question:

- *How do I set up an action plan?*

How do I set up an action plan?

You've been taking action for each step of your career planning. You've done research, you've discussed your plans with a counsellor and you've talked to people who work in a variety of occupations. Now it's time to set up an action plan for the final steps.

An action plan is a way of recording what you need to do to reach your goal. It is also a way of keeping yourself on track. Joe planned to make a big career change. He made an action plan to go back to school so he could work with computers.

Here is part of Joe's action plan. This is just a sampling of what he did. Joe took many other actions as he moved toward a new career.

Joe's action plan	Date	Done ✓
Make an appointment to see counsellor	February 17	✓
Attend career planning workshop	March 2	✓
Do self-assessment exercise	March 4	✓
Contact colleges and schools to see what programs are available	March 16	✓

Now it's your turn! On the next page, we have provided space for you to write down your own action plan. Think of what things you must do to reach your goal. Make a list. Here are some of the things you should consider:

- Do you need to meet with a career counsellor?
- Do you have to get more information?
- Do you need to find out which schools offer the training you want?
- Do you have to discuss things with your family?
- Do you need to look over your finances?
- Do you have to leave your current job?

Write down every task that you must do, even if it seems minor. Give yourself a deadline for each item and check it off once it's done. If you change your plan, write down the changes.

EXERCISE

My action plan

Action	Date	Done ✓
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

EXERCISE

Stick with your plan: Dealing with problems

You've done a lot of work to decide on an occupation. However, when you least expect them, problems can make it hard for you to reach your goal.

Possible problems include

- your child getting sick
- your car breaking down or the bus route changing
- money problems

For each problem, there is usually more than one possible solution. Here's an example of two possible solutions for one of the problems we just mentioned. Can you think of a third solution for the problem? Write it on the third line.

Problem

You have an appointment to meet your career counsellor, but your child gets sick.

Solution

1. Phone the counsellor and make another appointment.
2. Ask a friend to babysit your child.
3. _____

What were some of your problems in the past?
What solutions helped you overcome each one?
Write them down here.

Past Problems

Past Solutions

EXERCISE

Plan ahead

Don't let problems keep you from reaching your occupational goal. For each action in your plan, write down any possible problems. Then think about how you're going to get around the problems. Write down your possible solutions. For every problem that you list, there should be at least one solution.

Try to be as specific as you can. The more precisely you can describe the problem, the easier it will be to find a solution. By planning your solutions in advance, you'll find it much easier to solve problems if they do come up. Solving problems quickly will help you to keep working on your occupational goal.

My action plan

(If you need more space, make extra copies.)

Action	Potential problems	Potential solutions

Remember the five steps

You've just used the five steps of decision-making to help you look at some options and choose an occupation. Once you finish your action plan and really get going, you will be well on your way toward creating a new career direction.

As you go through life, you will need to make many other important decisions. Use the five steps of decision-making to help you look at your options and make a decision.

Keep learning

We keep learning as long as we are alive. As children, we learned how to walk and talk. We learned to tie our shoes. As adults, we learned how to prepare food or drive a car. We learned to do the work we are now doing.

There are many reasons to learn. As we look at pursuing a new occupation, we will have to learn new skills. We may have to learn how to work differently. It's all part of lifelong learning.

Even if we aren't actively planning our careers, we are still learning. We are still making decisions and having experiences that enrich and enhance who we are.

1

Where am I right now?

When something happens and changes your life in some way, try to stop and think. Step back a bit and look at your situation.

2

What do I need to know?

Find out about the options that are open to you. Think about your needs, your wants and your abilities.

3

What are my best choices?

Go over each possibility and think about it. Choose the option that is best for you.

4

What do I need to do?

Plan how you will carry out your decision.

5

What action will I take?

Make up your mind, and then do it.

Resources

If you live in Alberta, check out the resources listed here for helpful information and services.

Alberta Career Information Hotline

Call the hotline for answers to your questions about

- career planning
- occupations
- education options
- ways to find jobs or work
- the workplace
- information and referrals
- links to services in your community

Phone

1-800-661-3753 toll-free in Canada

780-422-4266 in Edmonton

Hours

Monday to Friday 8:15 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Website alis.alberta.ca/hotline

Alberta Works Centres and Alberta Supports Centres

Alberta Works Centres and Alberta Supports Centres are located across Alberta. They have information on occupations, career options, educational programs and finding work. Call the Alberta Career Information Hotline for the centre nearest you or visit alis.alberta.ca/awc

Websites

Many websites have information on career development topics. If you can't use the Internet at home, you can use the one at your local Alberta Works Centre / Alberta Supports Centre. You can also use the Internet at your public library or an employment agency.

Here are some helpful websites.

alis.alberta.ca

Alis can help you plan for success no matter where you are in life. Are you wondering where to take your career or how to find a job? Is continuing education your next step? It is your path to plan. Start with alis.

alis.alberta.ca/occinfo

OCCinfo is your one-stop source for up-to-date information on Alberta's occupations, educational programs and schools. Planning your career has never been easier. You can also find information about various industries that make up Alberta's economy and influence its society.

- **Occupations (alis.alberta.ca/occinfo)**

Explore the typical duties, responsibilities, working conditions, educational needs, and salary ranges in for over 650 occupations in Alberta.

- **Wages and Salaries (alis.alberta.ca/wageinfo)**

Discover current information on wages and salaries for full-time employees for over 400 occupations in Alberta. This section includes information by geographic area and industry group. It also has information on skills shortages in Alberta.

- **Educational Programs (alis.alberta.ca/edinfo)**

Research post-secondary education and training programs in Alberta. This section also has information about distance-learning programs.

- **Certification Requirements (alis.alberta.ca/certinfo)**

Learn about occupations that are governed by law in Alberta. It answers common questions about the certification and registration process in Alberta and includes a list of regulated occupations.

myworkquest.alberta.ca

Getting that first job and launching your career can be intimidating. MyWorkQuest can help. It's a questions-and-answer website that will help you make the most of your work search and connect you to valuable career advice.

tradesecrets.alberta.ca

The Tradesecrets site has information about apprenticeship and industry training in Alberta.

Books

Here is a list of books and planners that you can order by calling the Alberta Career Information Hotline (see Alberta Career Information Hotline under Resources for phone numbers). You can also order these books through the Internet or download them free of charge. They are available online at **alis.alberta.ca/publications**.

If you live in Alberta, Nunavut or the Northwest Territories, these books are free. Alberta Community and Social Services publishes them all.

Adult Back-to-School Planner

This book helps you answer lots of questions about going back to school as an adult. It discusses topics such as child care and studying and suggests ways to cope with typical concerns of adult students.

Advanced Techniques for Work Search

This workbook is for adults who have work experience or post-secondary education and training to help them improve their work search strategies.

Change and Transitions: The Path From A to B

For people who are experiencing change, this workbook combines information, exercises, practical tips and strategies to help make the most of change.

Easy Reading Find a Job

This book will help you learn more about important topics such as: how to write a resumé and cover letter, where to look for a job, how to fill out application forms and how to have a good interview.

Education and Training Planner

This book will help the reader who already has a goal in mind. It talks about the education and training programs in Alberta and how to get more information.

It provides sample questions to ask counsellors and discusses budgeting and financial planning.

Money 101: Budgeting Basics for Further Education

This book talks about financing your education. It covers setting personal goals, figuring out how much your education will cost, suggestions on how to pay for it, student loans and budgeting.

My Choices, My Work, My Life

Whether you're considering planning your career, changing jobs or upgrading your skills, this book will help you see your options, make a decision and set goals that will lead you closer to your vision for your life.

Time to Choose... a Post-Secondary Education Program

This book has lots of information on education programs at Alberta colleges, technical institutes and universities.

Training for Work

This online book offers creative alternatives to full-time classroom learning. It looks at options such as mentoring, volunteering, self-study, short-term courses and on-the-job training that can improve your employability skills.

Work Search Basics

With step-by-step information on how to find work opportunities, this book is written for people who do not have much work experience.

Workability: What You Need to Get & Keep a Job

This workbook lists the skills and attitudes that a person needs to find and keep work. This workbook has space to write down which of these skills and attitudes you have used in the past and which ones you may want to learn. It also includes the steps to gain these skills and attitudes.

Feedback

We'd like your comments...

Career Planner: Choosing an Occupation

Date _____

Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements.

As a result of using this resource...



	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Doesn't Apply
I have a better understanding of					
how to plan my career	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
occupational options	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
how I can make a career change	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
how to look for work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
where to find job opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
what I can offer an employer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
how to help my family members plan their careers or look for work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
my interests, passions, skills or values	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
how I can adjust to change	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can help my clients or students better understand how to					
plan their careers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What other topics do you have a better understanding of as a result of using this resource?

What action were you able to take as a result of using this resource?

How can we improve this resource? What was not useful?

Please give feedback on this and other resources at alis.alberta.ca/feedback or return this form to:

Workplace and Career Planning Unit
Alberta Community and Social Services
12th Floor, 10030 - 107 Street, South Tower
Edmonton, AB T5J 3E4

Fax: 780-422-5319
Email: info@alis.gov.ab.ca



Need help finding work? Explore alis.

alis.alberta.ca

Alis can help you plan for success no matter where you are in life. Are you wondering where to take your career or how to find a job? Is continuing education your next step? It is your path to plan. Start with alis.

Plan
Your
Career

Explore
Education
& Training

Look
For
Work

Succeed
At
Work

Alberta
Government

alis

Career Planner

CHOOSING AN OCCUPATION

Five steps to choosing an occupation that's right for you!

With so many choices, how do you pick an occupation that fits?

- Explore where you are right now.
- Determine what you like to do and what's out there for you.
- Find out your best options.
- Plan to make your dream a reality.
- Then do it!

So get ready! Your first step can start today!