

# Making a Career Choice

**Unit:** Career Exploration

**Problem Area:** Decision-Making Strategies

**Lesson:** Making a Career Choice

■ **Student Learning Objectives.** Instruction in this lesson should result in students achieving the following objectives:

- 1 Define the term *career*.**
- 2 Develop a list of questions to assist in career decision making.**
- 3 Develop decision-making skills related to career identification and selection.**
- 4 Determine potential careers.**
- 5 Record career paths and programs of study.**

■ **Resources.** The following resources may be useful in teaching this lesson:

*American School Counselor Association.* Accessed May 13, 2011.

<<http://www.schoolcounselor.org>>.

*Big Picture Learning.* Accessed May 25, 2011. <<http://www.bigpicture.org/>>.

“Career and College Planning Resources,” *Vocational Information Center.*

Accessed May 13, 2011. <<http://www.khake.com/page51.html>>.

“Career Click,” *Illinois Department of Employment Security.* Accessed May

13, 2011. <<http://www.workforceinfo.state.il.us/>>.

“Career Guide to Industries (CGI), 2010–11 Edition,” *U.S. Bureau of Labor*

*Statistics.* Accessed May 13, 2011. <<http://www.bls.gov/oco/cg/>>.



CareerOneStop. Accessed May 13, 2011. <<http://www.acinet.org/acinet/>>.

Center for Applications of Psychological Type. Accessed May 13, 2011. <<http://www.capt.org>>.

“Counselor Resources,” *Illinois School Counselor Association*. Accessed May 13, 2011. <<http://www.ilschoolcounselor.org/usefullinks.cfm/>>.

“Curriculum Revitalization,” *Illinois Career & Technical Education*. Accessed May 13, 2011. <<http://www.ilcte.org>>.

Harvard Graduate School of Education. *Pathways to Prosperity: Meeting the Challenge of Preparing Young Americans for the 21st Century*. Accessed May 13, 2011. <[http://www.gse.harvard.edu/news\\_events/features/2011/Pathways\\_to\\_Prosperty\\_Feb2011.pdf](http://www.gse.harvard.edu/news_events/features/2011/Pathways_to_Prosperty_Feb2011.pdf)>.

“Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2018,” *Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce*. Accessed May 13, 2011. <<http://cew.georgetown.edu/jobs2018/>>.

Kalchik, Stephanie, and Kathleen Marie Oertle. “The Relationship of Individual Career Plans to Programs of Study and Career Pathways,” *Transition Highlights*, Issue 3, Jan. 2011. Office of Community College Research and Leadership (OCCRL). Accessed May 13, 2011. <[http://occrl.illinois.edu/files/Highlights/Highlight\\_01\\_2011.pdf](http://occrl.illinois.edu/files/Highlights/Highlight_01_2011.pdf)>.

O\*NET® OnLine. Accessed May 13, 2011. <<http://online.onetcenter.org/>>.

“National Sample Definitions,” *Career Clusters*. Accessed May 13, 2011. <<http://www.careerclusters.org/definitions.php>>.

“Programs of Study,” *Illinois Community College Board*. Accessed May 13, 2011. <<http://ilprogramsofstudy.org/CareerClusters.action>>.

“Related Websites,” *Career Clusters*. Accessed May 13, 2011. <<http://www.careerclusters.org/related.php>>.

“Senior Project Overview,” *Senior Project*. Accessed May 25, 2011. <[http://www.seniorproject.net/Senior\\_Project\\_Overview.html](http://www.seniorproject.net/Senior_Project_Overview.html)>.

“Sixteen Career Clusters and Their Pathways,” *Career Clusters*. Accessed May 13, 2011. <<http://www.careerclusters.org/list16clusters.php>>.

“Smaller Learning Communities Program,” *ED.gov*. Accessed May 25, 2011. <<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/slcp/index.html>>.

“State Level Analysis,” *Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce*. Accessed May 13, 2011. <<http://www9.georgetown.edu/grad/gppi/hpi/cew/pdfs/illinois.pdf>>.

“Twenty Questions to Ask Your School Counselor,” *College Board*. Accessed May 13, 2011. <<http://www.collegeboard.com/student/plan/starting-points/114.html>>.

## ■ **Equipment, Tools, Supplies, and Facilities**

- ✓ Overhead or PowerPoint projector
- ✓ Visual(s) from accompanying master(s)
- ✓ Copies of sample test, lab sheet(s), and/or other items designed for duplication
- ✓ Materials listed on duplicated items
- ✓ Computers with printers and Internet access
- ✓ Classroom resource and reference materials

## ■ **Key Terms.** The following terms are presented in this lesson (shown in bold italics):

- ▶ aptitude
- ▶ career
- ▶ cooperative education (co-op)
- ▶ field of study
- ▶ Individual Career Portfolio or Plan (ICP)
- ▶ industry
- ▶ interest
- ▶ internship
- ▶ job shadowing
- ▶ lifelong learning (LLL)
- ▶ lifestyle
- ▶ *Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH)*
- ▶ profession
- ▶ Senior Project
- ▶ skill
- ▶ vocation

## ■ **Interest Approach.** Use an interest approach that will prepare the students for the lesson. Counselors and teachers often develop approaches for their unique counseling and class situations. A possible approach is included here.

■ *Present the following scenario.* ■

*"You and your best friend are planning a road trip to California over spring vacation. You have heard from friends and relatives that Los Angeles is the place to be in March. There are at least 10 different TV shows that confirm California beaches are the best. So you pack your swimsuit, driving snacks, and drinks, grab your cell phone charger and flip flops, and head for the car. You pick up your friend, gas the car, and then start driving west. After about an hour, you say to your friend, 'So which highway is the best way? Have you checked the map?' Your friend responds, 'Who needs a map? We'll decide the next time we stop for gas.'"*

As a class, discuss the above scenario. List the pros and cons of using an “unprepared driving strategy.” Ask the class how doing the proper pre-work to ensure arrival at the destination would be advantageous. Record the results on the board.

Then transition the discussion to navigating the postsecondary waters of further education in order to arrive at a dream job. Compare the road to Los Angeles to the road to college and a desired vocation or profession. Compare the original driving results to this real-life scenario. The obvious point here is that the proper pre-work can save students from getting lost and discouraged and can better ensure that they arrive at the career and future of their dreams.

## CONTENT SUMMARY AND TEACHING OR COUNSELING STRATEGIES

**Objective 1:** Define the term *career*.

**Anticipated Problem:** What does the term *career* mean and not mean?

- I. What is a career, anyway?
  - A. A **career** is a profession or occupation that one chooses and for which one is prepared by education, training, and experience.
  - B. Course or progress through life
    1. A career reflects **lifelong learning (LLL)**, which is the continuous building of skills and knowledge throughout the life of an individual for personal and professional benefit.
    2. Learning becomes self-motivated, as opposed to education that required or mandated.
    3. A person’s individual, unique experiences and training build and evolve and stop growing only when he or she decides not to learn anymore.
    4. One’s career is always emerging.
  - C. What a career is not
    1. A career is not the first job out of high school or college.
    2. A career is not one course or program of study.
    3. A career is not a college major.

**Teaching or Counseling Strategies:** Many techniques can be used to help students master this objective. As an example, use VM–A as a projected image or as a discussion handout.

## **Objective 2:** Develop a list of questions to assist in career decision making.

**Anticipated Problem:** What are the vital questions that must be asked before key career decisions are made?

### II. Significant questions for student consideration related to career decision making

- A. “What are my interests, skills, and aptitudes?”
  - 1. An **interest** is something that draws the attention of an individual—something that may involve or concern the person.
    - a. “What are my hobbies?”
    - b. “How do I spend my time?”
  - 2. A **skill** is an ability stemming from knowledge or practice.
  - 3. An **aptitude** is a special fitness or talent, whether innate or acquired.
  - 4. Individual preferences (personal tastes) should also be considered.
  - 5. Individual values (ideals, customs, ethics) are also important.
- B. “What do I want for myself?”
  - 1. “What lifestyle would I like to have?” A **lifestyle** is a set of individual behaviors that are uniquely comfortable, including social entertainment, consumption, and dress.
    - a. “Where do I want to live?” “What is the cost?”
    - b. “What do I want to drive?” “What is the cost?”
    - c. “What do I want to afford?” “What is the cost?”
  - 2. “What salary will I need to maintain my chosen lifestyle?”
  - 3. Introduce students to the “Budget Calculator” (<http://www.mappingyourfuture.org/money/budgetcalculator.htm>) and the “Hourly Wage Calculator” (<http://us.thesalarycalculator.co.uk/hourly.php>).
- C. “What are the realities of my career interests?”
  - 1. “What are my career interests?”
  - 2. “To which clusters do my interests point?” Have students review or take the survey at <http://www.careerclusters.org>.
    - a. “What is the occupational outlook for my career interests?”
    - b. “What does the *Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH)* indicate?” The **Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH)** is a nationally recognized source of career information, including work, training, and education, designed to provide valuable assistance to individuals making decisions about their future work lives. It can be viewed online at <http://www.bls.gov/oco/>.
    - c. “How does the salary match up with my lifestyle needs?”
  - 3. “What do I like about this career?”
  - 4. “What are the educational requirements of my chosen career?”
    - a. “What does the *Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH)* show as the educational requirements?”

- b. “Can I commit to those academic requirements?”
  - c. “Am I on the right academic track?”
  - d. “What academic steps do I need to take now?”
- 5. “Is the career legal?”
- D. “Does the career fit me?”
  - 1. How do the “who” and “wants” of the student match up with the “realities” and “requirements” of his or her career interests?
  - 2. Finer points
    - a. It is critical to research both the field of study and the industry of interest, as both are components of the career pathway.
      - (1) The **field of study** is the academic discipline.
      - (2) The **industry** is the aggregate of enterprises producing a good (either a material or a service) within an economy (such as hospitality, farming, technology, automotive, chemical, etc.).
    - b. A **vocation** is the work in which a person is employed. A **profession** is work requiring specialized knowledge and intensive academic preparation.
    - c. Family planning issues and influences should be considered.

**Teaching or Counseling Strategies:** *Many techniques can be used to help students master this objective. Use VM–B as a projected image or as a discussion handout.*

**Objective 3:** Develop decision-making skills related to career identification and selection.

**Anticipated Problem:** How can decision-making skills related to career identification and selection be developed?

- III. Developing decision-making skills related to career identification and selection
  - A. Firsthand experiences within the field of study or career cluster
    - 1. Field trips
    - 2. **Job shadowing**—a career exploration activity that offers an opportunity to spend time with a professional currently working in a person’s career field of interest. It offers firsthand experience in a specific job. The student has an opportunity to ask questions and meet a potential mentor.
    - 3. **Internship**—a system of on-the-job training typically for a white-collar profession, similar to an apprenticeship for a blue-collar vocation. An internship provides an opportunity for the student to gain experience in the field, determine whether he or she has an interest in a particular career, do some networking, and in some cases meet a school graduation requirement. An internship may be either paid or unpaid.
    - 4. Volunteer opportunities

5. **Cooperative education (co-op)**—a structured method of combining classroom-based education with practical work experience. “Co-op” provides academic credit for job experience.
  6. Work experience (in or out of school)
- B. Additional research about the field
1. Libraries (school and public)
  2. The Internet
  3. Informational interviews (family, relatives, friends)
- C. Postsecondary educational research
1. College research
  2. College visitations
  3. Job and career fairs
  4. Alumni networks
  5. Industry leader visits

**Teaching or Counseling Strategies:** Many techniques can be used to help students master this objective. Use VM-C as a projected image or as a discussion handout.

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**Objective 4:** Determine potential careers.

**Anticipated Problem:** How can one determine potential careers?

- IV. Determine potential careers based on earlier assessments
- A. Reality checks and analysis of data
1. Putting the pieces together—locating a good place to start by reviewing career clusters and career pathway assessments and websites
  2. Reducing risks—realizing that college is too expensive to use as a career exploration tool
  3. Accepting the freedom to evolve—acknowledging that the first step is just the jumping-off point
  4. Getting feedback from those one knows best (counselors, teachers, and family)

**Teaching or Counseling Strategies:** Many techniques can be used to help students master this objective. Use VM-D as a projected image or as a discussion handout.

## **Objective 5:** Record career paths and programs of study.

**Anticipated Problem:** Where and how does one record career path and program decisions?

### V. Recording career path and program decisions

- A. The **Individual Career Portfolio or Plan (ICP)** is a device to help middle and high school students track their progress in academic performance and career planning. Its basis is the 16 career clusters identified by the U.S. Department of Education. It is usually a folder or file that holds important documents and provides a place to record relevant information. The ICP typically includes material related to career interests, assessment results, employability skills, extracurricular activities, honors and awards, postsecondary educational plans and research, and job and career research.
- B. The **Senior Project** is a culminating high school activity that hinges on a student's interests and future plans. The specific focus and parameters of the project are usually determined at the district and high school levels and often include four major components: research, process, product, and exhibition of the project results to a panel of experts. Smaller educational communities may opt to use the Senior Project in place of the ICP. Resources include <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/slcp/index.htm> and <http://www.bigpicture.org/>. Common elements of the Senior Project include:
  - 1. Essential question
  - 2. Research components
  - 3. Community focus and mentorship (often with a community benefit as one outcome)
  - 4. Collaboration (student, parents, teacher, counselor, expert panel)
  - 5. Academic rigor
  - 6. Exhibition and presentation to an expert panel

**Teaching or Counseling Strategies:** *Many techniques can be used to help students master this objective. Assign LS–A.*

- **Review/Summary.** Use the student learning objectives to summarize the lesson. Have students explain the content associated with each objective. Student responses can be used in determining which objectives need to be reviewed or taught from a different angle. Questions at the ends of chapters in the textbook may also be used in the Review/Summary.
- **Application.** Use the included visual master(s) and lab sheet(s) to apply the information presented in the lesson.

- **Evaluation.** Evaluation should focus on student achievement of the objectives for the lesson. Various techniques can be used, such as student performance on the application activities. A sample written test is provided.

## ■ **Answers to Sample Test:**

### **Part One: Matching**

1. e
2. f
3. c
4. a
5. b
6. d

### **Part Two: Short Answer**

1. Answers will vary but should include six of the following:
  - Who I am
  - What I want
  - Career realities
  - Career requirements
  - Firsthand experiences
  - Academic preparation
  - Trusted feedback
  - Research
  - Controlled risk
2. Answers may vary but should contain a variation of the following:
  - Field trips
  - Job shadowing
  - Internship
  - Volunteer opportunities
  - Cooperative education (co-op)
  - Work experience (in or out of school)

### **Part Three: True/False**

1. F
2. F
3. T
4. T
5. T
6. F

# Making a Career Choice

## ► Part One: Matching

**Instructions:** Match the term with the correct definition.

- |  |                            |
|--|----------------------------|
| a. Individual Career Portfolio or Plan (ICP) | d. interest                |
| b. aptitude                                  | e. internship              |
| c. lifestyle                                 | f. lifelong learning (LLL) |

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. A system of on-the-job training typically for a white-collar profession, similar to an apprenticeship for a blue-collar vocation
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The continuous building of skills and knowledge throughout the life of an individual for personal and professional benefit
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. A set of individual behaviors that are uniquely comfortable, including social entertainment, consumption, and dress
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. A device to help middle and high school students track their progress in academic performance and career planning
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. A special fitness or talent, whether innate or acquired
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Something that draws the attention of an individual—something that may involve or concern the person

## ► Part Two: Short Answer

**Instructions:** Answer the following.

1. List and describe six of the nine features of a career choice that must fit together for the career to be an acceptable choice.



2. What firsthand career experiences can you use to help confirm your career interests?

► **Part Three: True/False**

**Instructions:** Write *T* for true or *F* for false.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Once you graduate from high school, you are finally done with learning.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. A career is the job you will have forever.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. A career should fit who you are as a person.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Trusted feedback is important when making a career choice.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. A career is an always-evolving continuum.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. It is best to wait until you are in college to decide what career interests you.

# WHAT IS A CAREER, ANYWAY?

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## Career

**A career is a profession or occupation that one chooses and for which one is prepared by education, training, and experience.**

Your course or progress through life:

- ◆ A career reflects lifelong learning (LLL), which is the continuous building of skills and knowledge throughout the life of an individual for personal and professional benefit.
- ◆ Learning becomes self-motivated as opposed to required or mandated education.
- ◆ Your individual, unique experiences and training build and evolve and stop growing only when you decide not to learn anymore.
- ◆ Your career is always emerging.

What a “career” is not:

- ◆ A career is not the first job out of high school or college.
- ◆ A career is not one course or program of study.
- ◆ A career is not a college major.

# BEFORE MAKING KEY CAREER DECISIONS...

**Ask yourself, “What are my interests, skills, and aptitudes?”**

- ◆ An interest is something that draws the attention of an individual—something that may involve or concern the person (hobbies, free time).
- ◆ A skill is an ability stemming from knowledge or practice.
- ◆ An aptitude is a special fitness or talent, whether innate or acquired.
- ◆ Individual preferences (personal tastes) should also be considered.
- ◆ Individual values (ideals, customs, ethics) are also important.



## **Ask yourself, “What do I want for myself?”**

- ◆ “What lifestyle would I like to have?”
  - “Where do I want to live? What is the cost?”
  - “What do I want to drive? What is the cost?”
  - “What do I want to afford? What is the cost?”
- ◆ “What salary will I need to maintain my chosen lifestyle?”
- ◆ Use the “Budget Calculator” (<http://www.mappingyourfuture.org/money/budgetcalculator.htm>) and the “Hourly Wage Calculator” (<http://us.thesalarycalculator.co.uk/hourly.php>).

## Ask yourself, “What are the realities of my career interests?”

- ◆ “What are my career interests?”
- ◆ “To which clusters do my interests point?” Review or take the survey at <http://www.careerclusters.org>.
  - “What is the occupational outlook for my career interests?”
  - “What does the *Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH)* indicate?”
  - “How does the salary match up with my lifestyle needs?”
- ◆ “What do I like about this career?”
- ◆ “What are the educational requirements of my chosen career?”
  - “What does the *Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH)* show as the educational requirements?”
  - “Can I commit to those academic requirements?”
  - “Am I on the right academic track?”
  - “What academic steps do I need to take now?”
- ◆ “Is the career legal?”

## Ask yourself, “Does the career fit me?”

- ◆ “How do my ‘who’ and ‘wants’ from above match up with the ‘realities’ and ‘requirements’ of my career interests?”
- ◆ Finer points
  - It is critical to research both the field of study and the industry of interest, as both are components of the career pathway.
    - The **field of study** is the academic discipline.
    - The **industry** is the aggregate of enterprises producing a good (either a material or a service) within an economy (such as hospitality, farming, technology, automotive, chemical, etc.).
  - A **vocation** is the work in which a person is employed. A **profession** is work requiring specialized knowledge and intensive academic preparation.
  - Family planning issues and influences should be considered.



**This shoe does not fit.**



**This shoe fits.**

# DEVELOPING DECISION-MAKING SKILLS RELATED TO CAREER IDENTIFICATION AND SELECTION

## Firsthand experiences within the field of study or career cluster

- ◆ Field trips
- ◆ Job shadowing
- ◆ Internship
- ◆ Volunteer opportunities
- ◆ Cooperative education (co-op)
- ◆ Work experience (in or out of school)

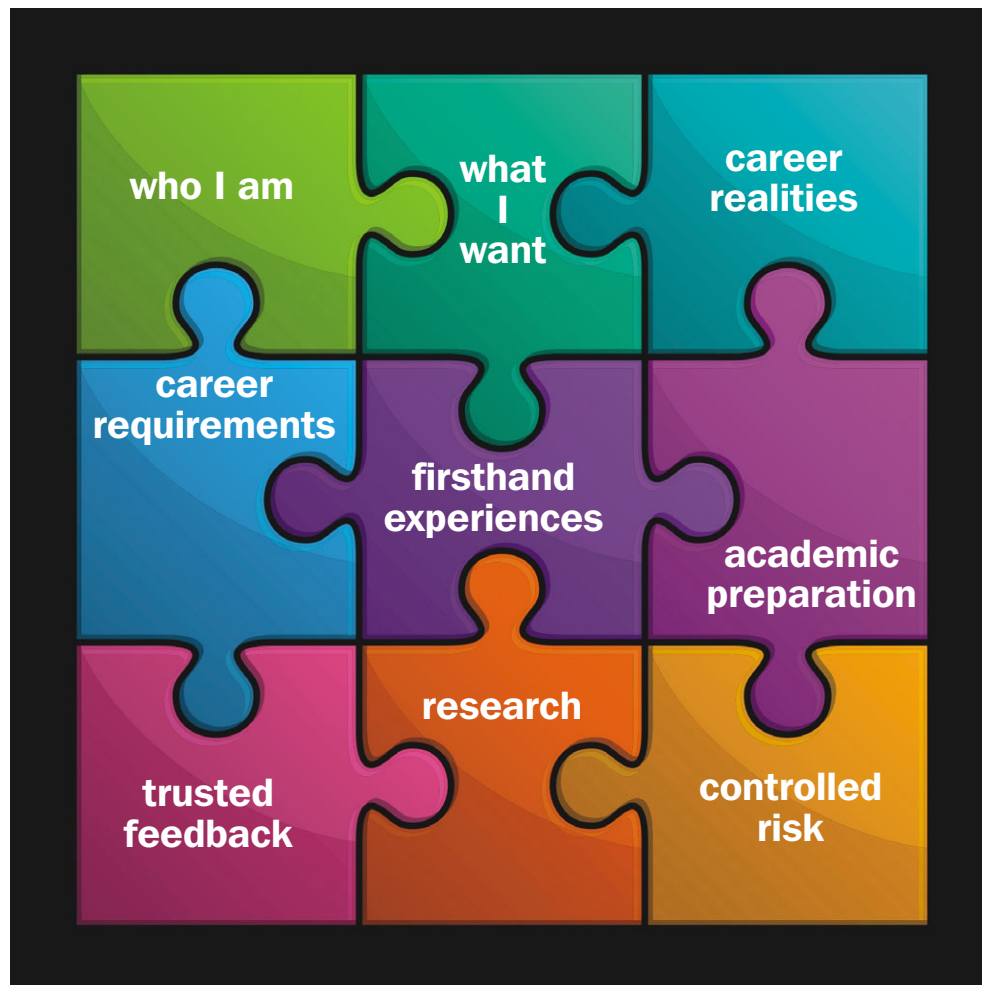
## Additional research about the field

- ◆ Libraries (school and public)
- ◆ The Internet
- ◆ Informational interviews (family, relatives, friends)

## Postsecondary educational research

- ◆ College research
- ◆ College visitations
- ◆ Job and career fairs
- ◆ Alumni networks
- ◆ Industry leader visits

# PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER



**Put all the pieces together, and check for a good fit.**

**If the fit is acceptable, take a step in the direction of that career.**

**Confirm your fit by trying that career on for size—try a firsthand career experience.**

# Making a Career Choice

## Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to document your work and progress regarding your career choice.

## Objectives

1. Determine your readiness to make a career choice.
2. Record your career choice progress to date.
3. Add to ICP (or Senior Project) progress.
4. Determine the next steps in the career choice continuum.

## Materials

- ◆ lab sheet
- ◆ writing utensil

## Procedure

1. Identify your interests, skills, and aptitudes.
2. Describe what you want for yourself in terms of lifestyle and the salary requirements to support that lifestyle.



3. Summarize what the *OOH* indicates about your preliminary career choice.
4. Describe the commitment you will need to make now and in the future in order to achieve the requirements of your career.
5. Describe how your career choice fits you.
6. List and describe the types of firsthand (in-the-field) experiences you have that confirm your interests.
7. Indicate what firsthand experiences you would like to structure in the near future.
8. Describe your plans to further research your career choice.
9. Describe how you can use postsecondary educational options as a way to confirm your career interests.
10. Describe the reality checks you have put in place to correct your visions of reality surrounding this career choice.