

PTA Goes to Work: A Guide for Students

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Your Career. Your Choice.

Thinking ahead to your future may be very exciting and it may also be very scary. You have a lot of choices. You might change your mind several times about the type of job you want to have. Changing your mind is not a problem – but not planning ahead is. Start exploring possible careers now and find out what kind of education you will need to pursue your career goals.

Whether you plan to go straight into the workforce or to college, it is important to have a plan. Start by taking these steps:

- Think about what you want to do and find out what kind of training, education and skills you will need to achieve your career goal.
- Assess your skills and interests. Think hard about what you enjoy, the skills and abilities you possess or want to develop, your personality and the values you hold.
- Research a variety of occupations. Find out about the nature of the jobs that interest you, such as educational requirements, salary, working conditions, future outlook, and anything else that can help narrow your focus.
- Compare your skills and interests with the careers in which you're interested. The career that matches your skills, interests, and personality best may be the career for you.
- Prepare your resume and practice interviewing techniques.
- Participate in summer work experiences, internships, or training programs. Try to match these experiences with your skills, interests, and career goals.
- Research and visit schools that offer training and/or academic programs that best meet your career goal and financial needs.
- Find out about financial aid available to help you meet your career goals. If you haven't already done so, begin saving for your transition from high school.
- Go to your career guidance center at your middle school or high school. Visit your local library for additional information and help with career planning.
- Don't go it alone! Work with your parents, older siblings, and other adults you trust.

In the past ...

People had 1-2 jobs and retired.

Good jobs were available with a high school degree or less.

Today ...

People will have 15-17 jobs in a lifetime.

90 percent of the fastest growing careers will need workers with education and training after high school.

Where do I get started?

By now, you probably have begun thinking about what you would like to do after high school graduation and about how to make money in the “real world.”

Understanding your interests is the first step in getting started with your career exploration. When you conduct a self-assessment, you start to explore what is important to you, what you enjoy, and what you really want to do, and your life’s ambitions and/or goals. Answering these questions will help you choose a career that is right for you.

Numerous assessment tools can help determine your interests, values, and aptitudes and assist you in making informed decisions about career options. One online tool is **O*NET™ OnLine** at www.online.onetcenter.org, which provides information on career planning and assessment tools. Once you have completed your assessment, you can start mapping your achievements, interests, and goals with the appropriate occupation suited for you.

For more information on finding a job, job training, preparing for employment, researching careers, preparing your resume, getting interview tips, building skills, and more, check out:

America’s Career InfoNet (www.careerinfonet.org) is an electronic resource for individuals of all ages in all stages of career development. Whether attending high school, college, or recently graduated, Career InfoNet contains information that can help users advance their careers. Research occupations, compare wages, build your resume, and search from thousands of other career resources, including scholarship and financial aid information.

The U.S Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics Kids’ Page (www.bls.gov/k12) is a web site that provides introductory career information for students.

Career OneStop Coach (www.careeronestop.org) identifies common problems and issues facing job seekers, workers, and employers and provides interactive step-by-step instructions to help users find answers and related information.

America’s Service Locator (www.servicelocator.org) connects people to local offices providing employment and training services. It provides maps and driving directions to each of the 3,500 One-Stop Career Centers.

How do I get there from here? What are the pathways?

A good education is key to any career and lays a foundation for increasing earning potential. In order to compete in the 21st century economy, post-secondary education is a critical element for successfully entering, navigating, and advancing in today's job market. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 90 percent of the fastest growing jobs require post-secondary education and training; in fact, by 2012, over 40 percent of factory jobs will require post-secondary education.

Education Counts!

Whether college is an immediate goal or not, many employers today expect their workers to have the same skills as those entering college. Make your high school educational experience work for you.

- Talk to your teacher or school guidance counselor about your plans and interests as soon as possible. They are your best resource as you plan for your future, and they can supply information about admission tests, college preparation, and career options.
- Make sure you understand ALL the requirements for graduation and requirements for being enrolled in post-secondary education or other career development programs.
- Take advantage of after-school or weekend learning activities. These can be community service or volunteer experiences; joining an academic or extra-curricular club; or becoming a member of organizations such as Junior Achievement, 4-H, Boys and Girls Clubs, Future Business Leaders, or SkillsUSA.
- Colleges and most employers not only look at grades, but also at which courses were taken and their degree of difficulty. Challenge yourself by taking an Advanced Placement (AP[®]) course for college credit or take additional advanced level courses such as a foreign language, science, and math. This will expose you to the higher level thinking expected in college and in many of the well-paying jobs.
- Participate in work experiences, internships, pre-apprenticeships, or training programs that will match skills, interests, and career goals with an on-the-job experience.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 90 percent of the fastest growing jobs require post-secondary education and training. Vocational training may be available through career academies and/or dual or concurrent enrollment arrangements with post-secondary educational institutions. This is a great way to prepare for work and college and often provides valuable links to employers.

Making Your Classes Count

In order to get the most out of your classes, consider the following tips:

- **Sit close** to the front of the classroom when possible.
- **Join in** class discussions.
- **Ask questions!** If you don't understand something, chances are others in the class don't understand either.
- **Keep up** with class assignments. Finish them before they're due.
- **Ask for help** in any class in which you find yourself falling behind. Remember, your teachers want to help you succeed!
- Look for ways to **sharpen your basic skills** in each class. You can practice your writing skills in history, your algebra skills in science, and your math and science skills in vocational education classes.
- **Learn keyboarding** skills so you can type your own schoolwork and use a computer.
- Lean to **take good class notes**. You'll be taking lots of notes for the rest of your life.
- Learn to **proofread, correct, and rewrite** your own work.
- **Develop good test-taking habits and skills**. Your counselor and teachers can show you how to get started.

Making What You Do Outside of School Count, Too!

- Develop good work habits now that will help you succeed in high school, in education after high school, and in the world of work.
- Find a quiet place to study where you won't be interrupted.
- Plan a daily homework schedule and stick to it. Do more than is required.
- Ask your family or friends to read your written work. Also ask them for help if you're having trouble at school.
- Use your local library. If you don't have a library card, get one. They're free.
- Look up words you don't know in the dictionary. Then use your new words in writing and while speaking.
- Talk with your family about career plans and what you want to do in the future.

Invest in Your Future. Start Today!

We hope this guide has helped sparked some interest in starting or continuing your career exploration. Please don't forget to use all of the resources available, including guidance counselors, the library, your parents, www.career-voyages.gov, and your local One Stop Center. They are all there to help you find a winning path!

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