

# CHAPTER 5

Choosing  
That Is Right



whole world of career options awaits you. Selecting a career that is right for you will not be easy, but you have already made a good start. You have learned more about yourself—your values, preferences, qualities, and strengths. You have learned about some of the important elements of the modern workplace, and about the many skills that are required. You have also gained a better understanding of how to solve problems and make good decisions. Now your task is to match your personal characteristics to an occupation that will help you reach your long-term goals.

# a Career for You

A whole world  
of career options  
awaits you.

## What You Now Know

- What employers expect from employees
- That you will have to eventually choose a career
- That the career you choose will affect your lifestyle

## What You Will Know

- The difference between a career and a job
- How to narrow your career choices
- How to use information gathered to decide on a career
- The education required for a successful career



# 1 Job vs. Career



y this point in your life, you probably have a good idea about the meanings of the words “job” and “career.” So far in this book, these words have been used many times. But, how are the meanings of these two words different? Generally speaking, a career is an occupation that you expect to have for an extended period of time, perhaps even for your entire working life. A job, on the other hand, is usually considered to be more short term. A job can also be thought of as the work you do in order to draw a paycheck. You may not intend to have the job very long or for it to lead to a career. However, it is also true that jobs can lead to careers and careers can include many related jobs. But when you are preparing for your future, you will want to focus on the career you want.

Not everyone decides on the career they are in.

Some people take a job when they are young because it is available. Years later they are still at that job, or a similar job. By default, they end up making that particular line of work their career. They may keep the job for the rest of their working life without really giving much thought as to whether it is the right career for them. Sometimes jobs can turn into rewarding careers. Often, however, they don’t. Those who plan their careers generally find more satisfying and better paying work than those who jump from job to job without a plan.



Sometimes jobs  
can turn into  
rewarding careers.

# Which career is right for you?

**The Power to Shape Your Life** Most children who wanted to become firefighters or nurses don't actually become firefighters or nurses when they grow up. Instead, they become teachers, sales people, doctors, lawyers, foresters, and carpenters, to name just a few of the thousands of careers available. Also, it is not uncommon for people to change careers several times during their lives. Even so, when people spend time in a career, it affects their personal identities. In other words, the career choices people make become part of the way they see themselves and even describe themselves to other people.

Over the course of your life, you are likely to spend about 100,000 hours working. That means you will devote more time to work than you will to most other activities. Since work is going to occupy such a large part of your life, it makes sense to take the time and care to decide on which career is right for you.

Obviously, your goal is to select a career that will enable you to achieve the life goals you have set for yourself. You will want to select a career that will be personally satisfying, and will add meaning to your life. You will want a career that you will take pride in and enjoy, at least most of the time. All these things can happen if you select a career that you are interested in and one that is well suited to who you are. But this will take some effort on your part.

...select a career that will be personally satisfying, and will add meaning to your life.



**Professional, Technical, and Managerial Occupations**



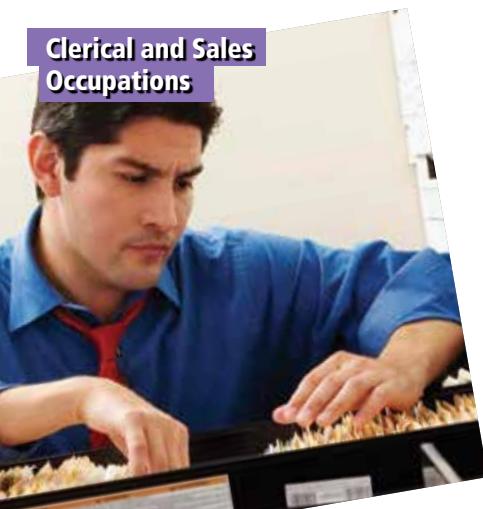
**There are thousands of potential careers to choose from, and some will interest you more than others.**

Some careers will fit well with your unique set of preferences, talents, and experiences, while others will not. To make career exploration easier, the Department of Labor has defined sixteen career categories, or clusters. These career clusters and the occupations within them are all listed in the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* (DOT). The list includes the following career clusters:

1. Professional, Technical, and Managerial Occupations
2. Clerical and Sales Occupations
3. Service Occupations
4. Agricultural, Fishery, Forestry, and Related Occupations
5. Processing Occupations
6. Machine Trades Occupations
7. Benchwork Occupations
8. Structural Work Occupations
9. Miscellaneous Occupations

This list and the DOT will come in handy as you consider what careers you might be interested in. The more time you spend thinking and learning about possible careers, the better your chances will be of finding a career that's just right for you. Once you find a career and then make the decision to pursue it, you will have the power to shape your own life.

**Clerical and Sales Occupations**



**Service Occupations**



**Processing Occupations**



**Agricultural, Fishery, Forestry, and Related Occupations**



**Machine Trades Occupations**



# 2

# Narrowing Your Career Choices



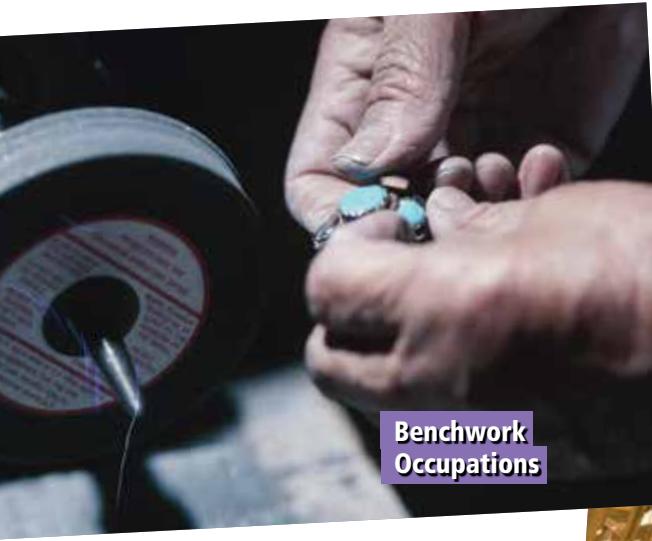
Considering all the possible career choices can be overwhelming. But don't let it worry you. Approaching this situation methodically will help you cover a lot of ground quickly. First, carefully consider each of the career clusters from the DOT listed above. Pick out one or two of the clusters that most interests you. Keep in mind that each cluster contains many different types of careers. Make a list of any careers that appeal to you. In addition, you may want to add to your career list by researching possible careers on the internet, or in books and other publications you may find at the library or even at the local employment office. Also, you may want to talk to your parents, teachers, and school advisor or counselor about possible career ideas, and then consider adding these ideas to your career list.

Once you have a list of potential career ideas, you can then start your evaluation. When you read the list, you will probably notice that some of the occupations on your list appeal to you more than others. Underline or make a separate list of the occupations that sound the most attractive to you. You may want to do some additional research on these careers.

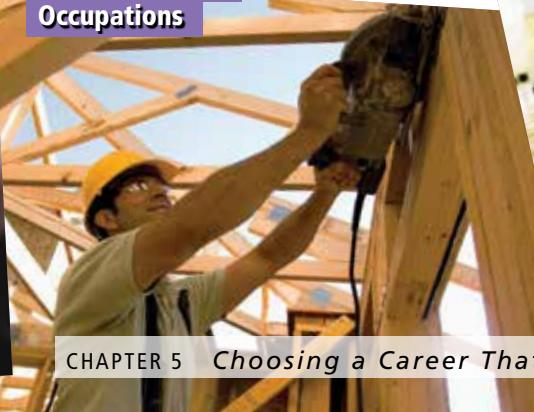
Once you have a list of potential career ideas, you can then start your evaluation.

**Questions to Consider** When you evaluate each of the careers on your list, you will want to answer the same questions about each one. That way you will have enough information to compare these careers thoroughly. You might like the working conditions of one career, but prefer the amount of pay for another career. Learning these kinds of facts about possible careers will help you narrow the field.

**Benchwork Occupations**



**Structural Work Occupations**



**Miscellaneous Occupations**



# ...questions you might want to answer about each career on your list

**What does it pay?** Some careers pay more than others. Some also have more potential for pay increases. But the amount of pay is only one factor out of many that may point to a good career fit. Also, you should think about how much money you need at first to support yourself, and then perhaps later to support a family. Take the time to understand the cost of housing in your area, whether rental or house purchase. You also need to take into account the cost of food, entertainment, transportation, and utilities. Only by knowing these approximate costs can you judge whether the paycheck will be too little, adequate, or generous.

## nailing it! 1

Did you know that only 4 out of 100 college graduates earn more than a skilled worker in the building trades? And that 7 out of every 10 jobs in the United States require trade skills, not college?

**How will you spend your time at work?** If you don't like working with people, you may not want to consider careers in social work or health care. If you like working with your hands and enjoy building things, you may want to consider careers in carpentry and other building trades. The point is to make sure you pick potential careers that fit how you like to work.

**What are the hours?** Some occupations have regular hours while others may require you to work on weekends or at night. Some careers may require frequent travel assignments that would extend your work week. These may be important considerations, especially if you want to spend time with friends and family.

**What are the working conditions?** If you don't want to work at a desk, you would probably be unhappy with a career that requires you to work in an office at a desk. On the other hand, if you don't like the idea of working outside, you may want to consider careers that will keep you indoors most of the day.

**Is the work physically demanding?** If you work out and enjoy lots of different kinds of physical activity, you might enjoy a career that requires hard, physical work. If you don't like strenuous physical activity, you should consider careers that don't require much muscle power. If you want a physical career, you may want to consider how challenging the work would be in 20 years. For example, many construction careers are strenuous. However, carpentry career paths also include less strenuous positions such as foreman, superintendent, and even teaching positions.

**What skills and talents are required?** Most careers require a specialized set of skills. In many cases these skills can be learned if you don't already have them. Keep in mind, however, that some occupations, such as those in the art, music, and acting fields, require both skills and special talents. You must have the required talents to be successful in these careers.

## How much education or training is required?

Nearly all occupations require some training beyond high school. You will want to find out what training is necessary and how long it would take. For some occupations, on-the-job training is provided to those who are hired into entry-level positions. Keep in mind that to advance within many careers often requires additional formal training.



*Does the career have a future?*

### **Is this career in demand?**

**You will want to determine how many people are presently employed in the careers that interest you.** You should also look for data that describes the outlook for those entering the field in the next few years. You will probably want to look for careers that will have lots of positions available for qualified workers. You are much more likely to get a job in a career that has a high demand.

### **Does the career have a future?**

**When you analyze your potential career choices, do you think any of them might become obsolete in the future? Do you think they might become more automated as technology improves and new machines are developed? Such advances sometimes replace people, reducing the demand for workers. Automation has affected many manufacturing careers. Also, the demand for certain workers has decreased when jobs are moved to other countries where the labor is cheaper. If any of these things were to happen to your job, you might be forced to change your job and possibly even your career.**

### **Are the skills you need transferable?**

**Skills that can be applied to more than one career are **transferable skills**.** Certainly most of the basic skills, thinking skills, and people skills that you have acquired so far are transferable skills. But when evaluating your career list, look for required skills that could be applied to other careers. These are the transferable skills that would make it easier to switch careers later on. So, if during your career you find that there is no demand for your services or you want to try something else, you will know what other careers you would be qualified for. Remember, just because you pick a certain career now, does not mean you will necessarily have this career the rest of your working life.

### **What are the opportunities for advancement?**

**Many occupations provide the opportunity for promotion and better pay while others do not.** Right now, you may not be interested in advancement. But, it is important to understand that better pay is usually tied to promotions, which almost always require increased responsibilities. Of course, another advancement option is to learn everything you need in order to become an independent consultant or start your own business. Not all careers offer the same opportunity for these options, but many do.

### **CRITICAL THINKING**

What instances do you know of where someone has changed careers because their former job is no longer in demand? What careers do you think are most in demand today? What careers do you think will increase in demand?

# research

**Researching Your Choices** In addition to all of the questions listed here, you probably have other questions you would like to answer about the occupations you are considering. In addition to your school advisors and local employment office, the following resources are available to answer most of the questions you might have:



## » Internet

The Internet is a very powerful tool in researching careers. Many websites are available that contain information on careers. Online search engines can help you reach them. Enter the name of the occupation along with the words "occupational information," and then hit Enter. For instance, type "carpenter occupational information" and then hit Enter. All kinds of web sites will pop up, which, in turn, may have even more links to other web sites of interest.

## » Library

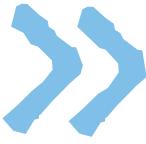
Local libraries offer a wealth of useful information on occupations. By visiting a library you might discover how helpful librarians are in finding reference books, magazines, and web sites that contain the information you are looking for. You may also discover **trade journals**, which are work-related magazines. These journals might give you an inside look at the occupations you are interested in.

## » Companies and Businesses

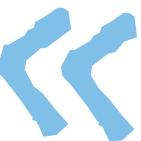
Most large companies and businesses publish information about the career opportunities they have available and the skills and education required. The Internet is the best place to find company materials. In addition to information about career opportunities, company web sites may also contain information about company history and the products or services they offer.

## » Government Agencies

The U.S. Department of Labor (USDL) and the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) provide many worthwhile resources for researching career options. For instance, the BLS publishes the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* which is updated every two years and provides information on hundreds of occupations. You can find the handbook in your school or local library, or in the guidance counselor's office. You can also find it on the Internet at [www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov), or you may even be able to have a copy sent to you through the mail. Most states have their own Department of Labor that provides useful information on the types of work people do in specific areas.



# talk to people who actually work in that occupation



**Talking with Workers** One of the best ways to get information about an occupation is to talk to people who actually work in that occupation. Most people like to talk about themselves and what they do for a living, and most would be more than willing to speak with you. Be sure to prepare your questions before you meet with anyone. Also, be sure to ask each person what they like and what they don't like about their career.

Finding people to talk to is a matter of asking around. Someone in your own family might know of someone to talk to. You could even make some calls to local companies to ask if there is someone there who would be willing to talk with you about his or her career. You might be surprised at how receptive people are when it comes to helping you get the information you need to select a career.

**Try the Job Yourself** The best way to learn about a career is to actually try the work yourself. This may not be possible, especially if you lack the necessary training and qualifications. However, there are plenty of opportunities to learn about occupations while working on the job.



# research

CHAPTER 5 Choosing a Career That Is Right for You 95

...best way to learn about a career is to actually try the work yourself.

Here are possibilities you may want to consider:



» **Apprenticeships** Some unions, companies, and trade schools offer apprenticeships to qualified applicants. Basically, an **apprenticeship** allows you to work as a paid assistant alongside a more experienced and well-qualified worker, called a **journey worker**. As an apprentice, you could learn about your chosen occupation directly from experienced workers who have mastered the skills it requires. Apprenticeships can last for several years, so you will not want to get one until you are fairly certain of your career choice.

» **Internship** An **internship** is similar to an apprenticeship except it typically lasts for a shorter period of time (usually 6 to 12 weeks) and it is not as skill intensive. However, internships are a good way to learn about a career by working alongside experienced career professionals. Also, some internships even pay.

» **Part-Time Jobs** You may be able to get an entry level job doing work similar to that of the occupation you are considering. Most entry level jobs are part time and require less training than you would need as a fulltime career worker.

» **Job Shadowing** Frequently as part of a career exploration class, students may spend a day or two working with and observing at a particular company or job site. This is called **job shadowing**, and it allows you to see first-hand what the work is like. Companies and businesses sometimes have a shadowing program that may last from one to several days for interested high school students.

» **Volunteer Work** If you are willing to work for free as a volunteer, you may be able to get experience in certain careers such as those in civic, nonprofit, or charitable agencies. Although you won't get paid for this work, you may receive a wealth of experience and information about the occupation.

» **Cooperative Education** Many schools offer **cooperative education** programs that allow you to work for a company for a specified number of hours per week while you are still attending high school. Cooperative education programs allow you to put your skills into action on the job. At the same time, the work experience adds to your knowledge about the world of work as well as a particular occupation. It is not unusual for a cooperative-education student who liked the work and who did a good job to be offered a permanent job with the company after graduation.

#### **Critical Thinking**

What methods do you intend to use to research your potential career options? What people or companies might you call to ask for some first-hand insights about the careers you are considering?



# 3 Deciding on a Career

**N**ow that you have narrowed your list of potential careers to just a few and you have researched them well, you are getting very close to making a decision about your initial career path. But, there is still some work to do to ensure that you make the best possible choice. First you will want to do a good job of evaluating your potential careers, and then you will want to use good decision-making skills.

**Evaluating Career Options** Complex tasks, such as choosing a career, can be aided by writing important information down in an organized way. Doing this will make it easier to remember and compare important pieces of information. To help you evaluate your career options, you may want to create a career evaluation table for each of the occupations that interest you. A sample portion of a career evaluation table is shown below. By using a table like this one, you can compare your career choice with your goals, values, personality traits, and education and training. Remember, the better the career matches who you are and what you want, the better fit it will be for you.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Career: Carpentry

Personal Characteristics	Career Characteristics	Match Yes or No
<b>Long-term Goals</b>		
Own a home	Pays well but pay varies from region to region	Yes
Be in a management position	Has a career path: journey worker to supervisor/foreman to superintendent	Yes
Want to work for myself one day	Can become independent contractor—own business	Yes
<b>Values</b>		
Contribute to the good of society	Build needed structures—homes, bridges, offices, etc.	Yes
Stay close to family geographically	May work on jobsites that are away from home sometimes	No
Need free time to pursue interests	Work is pretty constant and sometimes involves long hours	Unsure about work hours

continued on next page

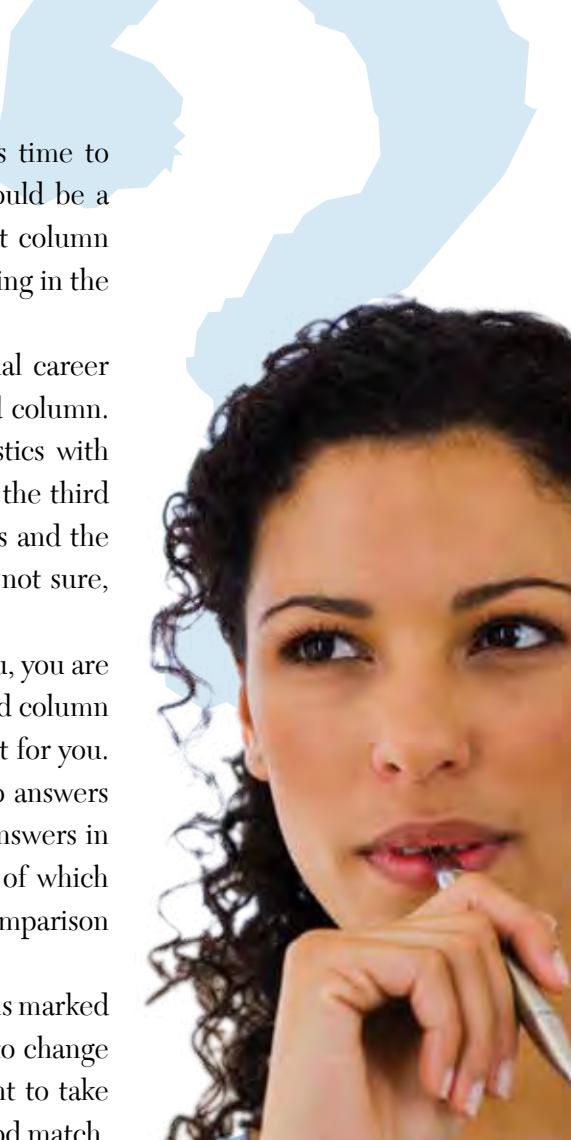
Personal Characteristics	Career Characteristics	Match Yes or No
<b>Personality/Personal Traits</b>		
Good with people	Must be able to work well with people in a team	Yes
Honest	Must be honest	Yes
High energy	Requires physical strength and endurance	Unsure about strength
Like working with my hands	Must have good hand-eye coordination	Yes
Like to do a good job	Requires attention to detail	Yes
Like to figure out how to fix things that are broken	Requires ability to solve problems	Yes
<b>Education/Training</b>		
Will graduate from high school	High School education preferred but not required	Yes
Not keen on four more years of school without pay	Offers 4-year apprenticeship, can earn while learning	Yes
Need to earn pay while training	Offers continuing education to upgrade skills	Yes
Not any good at math	Requires good math skills	No

Although this table may look complicated, it really isn't. First fill in your name and career and then fill in the first column with information about yourself. You can add anything about yourself that you think is important in selecting a career, but before you decide, consider using the categories listed below in your table.

before you  
decide...  
consider

- **Goals** Include at least your long-term goals, but you may also want to include short-term goals as well.
- **Values** Include any of your personal values that you think may affect your career choice.
- **Interests** Include any interests, activities, and hobbies you particularly enjoy like being outdoors, working on cars, painting pictures or working out.

- **Personality** Include important personality traits such as being shy, being quick to anger, having high energy, or being good with people.
- **Skills** Include your existing skills such as being good at working with your hands or being able to install and maintain software.
- **Training** Include any sort of career-related training you have had.
- **Education** Include the level of education you have had and how much time and energy you are willing to devote to continuing your education.



Once you have completed the first column of the table, it is time to complete the second column. However, before you do so, it would be a good idea to make several copies of the table with only the first column filled in. By doing this, you will not have to go to the trouble of filling in the first column for each career that you decide to evaluate.

Now, using one of the copies, fill in the name of the potential career that you have researched and list its characteristics in the second column. It will be very helpful if you can line up the career characteristics with the personal characteristics you put in the first column. Then, in the third column, identify the match between your personal characteristics and the career characteristics by writing either “Yes” or “No.” If you are not sure, write “Unsure” followed by a brief note.

Once you have created tables for as many careers as interest you, you are ready to look at the matches. Obviously, if it happens that the third column in any one of the tables is filled with “No’s,” then that career is not for you. However, most of your tables will probably have both yes and no answers in the third column. By simply comparing the number of “No” answers in the third column of each table, you will get a quick assessment of which career may be the best fit for you. However, be sure it is a fair comparison by carefully comparing the tables of close careers side by side.

At this time, you will also want to further explore any comparisons marked “Unsure.” You may even want to consider things you are willing to change about your personal characteristics. For example, you might want to take steps to improve your math skills. Also, if no careers provided a good match, this would be a perfect time to rethink your potential choices in careers.

### Critical Thinking

How do you think making career tables will help you to evaluate possible careers? How do you think your personal characteristics will match up with the characteristics required for the careers that interest you most?

...perfect time to rethink your potential choices in careers.

**Making Your Career Decision** The final step in your career selection process will be to make your decision. Even with all your preparation, this may not be an easy decision to make. Rarely is any career a perfect match. In the end, you should select the one career that continues to interest you, that seems suited to you, and that you are willing to work to achieve. It should also be a decision that you make carefully using a thoughtful decision-making style. But, even with every precaution, you may still make the wrong choice. Don’t worry, if the career you select doesn’t work out as well as you had hoped, you can always make a new career decision.

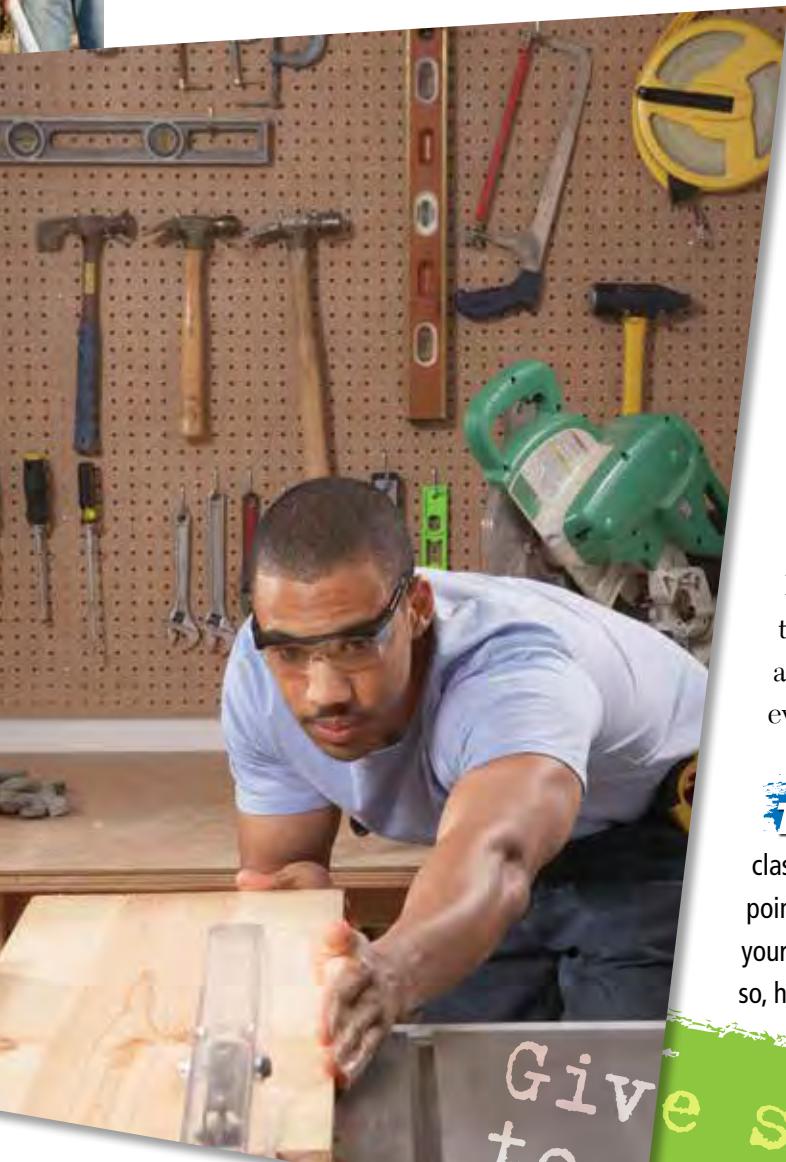


# 4 Preparing for a Successful Career



No matter what career you select, preparation will be the key to success. Today's global economy certainly requires skilled workers and anyone lacking the necessary training, education, and skills will be at a severe disadvantage when looking for a job.

Fortunately, there are a number of ways you can get the education and the training you need.



**High School** By giving serious effort to your studies in high school, you will be building a solid foundation for your career. Employers often reason that students who do well in school also perform well at work. This is why many employers prefer to hire workers with good high school records.

Some high schools offer occupational training courses as part of what may be called technical preparation or **tech-prep** programs. Tech-prep courses vary widely and may include carpentry, agriculture, applied science, business, and health science. Usually, these courses are taken during the last two years of high school and include a blend of classroom study and hands-on vocational training. High school tech-prep programs may also be linked to similar programs at local community colleges. This allows students to continue their tech-prep training even after they graduate from high school.

## CRITICAL THINKING

In what ways have you made an effort to match your high school classes to your career interests? In what ways are your classes pointing you in the career direction you intend to follow? Does your school offer specific courses to prepare you for a career? If so, have you considered taking advantage of them?

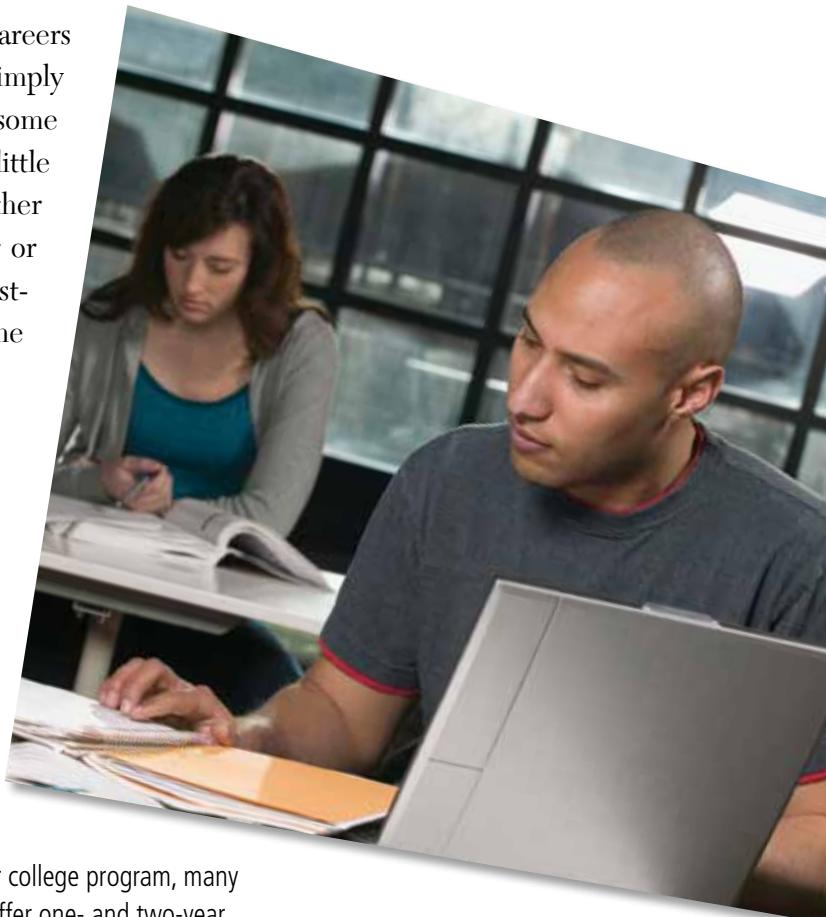
Give serious effort to your studies in high school.

**Postsecondary Education** There are many careers that require **postsecondary education**, which is simply education or training beyond high school. While some companies may offer entry-level jobs that require as little as a high school diploma or GED, advancing further along a career path might well require a two-year or four-year degree. If your career choice requires postsecondary education, you will want to consider the options listed below:

- **College or University** High school students are often asked, "Are you going to go to college?" Those who answer "yes" will probably enroll in a four-year degree program at a university or college that offers the education they want at a price that they can afford. A college degree provides an excellent platform for a successful career. However, there are a great many rewarding careers that do not require a four-year college degree. Your high school teachers or advisors can help you decide whether a four-year degree program is right for you.
- **Community College** As an alternative to a four-year college program, many people attend community colleges. Community colleges offer one- and two-year certificates in certain career fields as well as two-year associate degrees. One of the advantages of community colleges is that they are relatively inexpensive and are often close by. Another advantage is that they often hold classes at night or other convenient times so that students can hold part-time or full-time jobs and still attend classes. You may want to check with the admissions office of your local community college to see if there are any programs that would meet your needs.
- **Career Colleges** Career colleges go by a wide variety of names including business colleges, trade or technical colleges, and technical institutes. What all of these postsecondary schools have in common is that they are dedicated to specific career fields such as business, computer programming, electronics, criminal justice, and health science. These schools offer one- or two-year certificate programs, two-year associate degrees, and even four-year degrees in some cases. Like community colleges, career colleges generally hold classes at convenient times so that students can learn while holding either part-time or full-time jobs. Depending on your interests and career goals, a career college or technical school might meet your needs.

### CRITICAL THINKING

Are you interested in a career that requires postsecondary education? What type of postsecondary education do you think will best suit your career needs?



### building a better

If the career you're interested in requires education or training beyond high school, you might qualify for financial aid and scholarships to lower the cost. The U.S. Department of Education offers financial aid for all types of education, including technical and trade education. Check out the possibilities online at [www.studentaid.ed.gov](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov). To find out if you're eligible, or to apply online, go to Free Application for Federal Student Aid at [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov). Visit a school or career guidance counselor for more information and application procedures.

## shout out!

Helmets to Hardhats is an apprenticeship program that transitions veterans into careers in the building trades. A group of Illinois apprentice carpenters in the program, who had already served their country well in the military, reported to duty to aid a fallen Marine's mother. Lori Fraher lost her only son when 19-year-old Ray was killed in Iraq. When asked by Lt. Governor Pat Quinn if there was anything he could do to help Fraher, a single mom, she said her house needed its roof repaired. She had put the repair off, waiting for Ray, who wanted to become a member of the building trades, to return home and do the work. As it turned out, the house needed more than roof work—it was falling down. Plans were made to tear down the house and build a new one. The Helmets to Hardhats apprentices arrived in the summer, ready to learn and help. By autumn, they worked with other area tradespeople to reconstruct the new house as a tribute to Ray.

# On-the-Job Training

**On-The-Job Training** No matter what career you choose, some of your training will probably occur after you have been hired and are already on the job. For some workers, on-the-job training is the only type of training they will ever receive. On-the-job training has several advantages. It is usually free, and you can often earn pay while you learn. More importantly, on-the-job training is very specific and is perfectly suited to the job that you will be doing. However, even though on-the-job training provides excellent training, many of the better paying jobs require education or training before you even get hired.

**Internships** Some businesses offer internships to high school and postsecondary students on summer break or who are taking time off from school to gain work experience. Usually, interns agree to work on a low-paying or volunteer basis for a few weeks or months while they learn about an occupation. Many interns use their internship as a form of career research. Unlike other forms of on-the-job training, internships are usually short term and may or may not lead to long-term employment.

**Apprenticeship Programs** Apprenticeships allow an inexperienced worker to work as a paid assistant alongside one or more experienced and well-qualified workers. This is one of the oldest forms of on-the-job training. Centuries ago, highly skilled artisans and craftsmen, such as goldsmiths, furniture makers, and carpenters hired apprentices to help them with their work. The apprentices agreed to work for low wages in exchange for the opportunity to learn the skills of the craft from a master. After several years, capable apprentices became master craftsmen and were then able to take on apprentices of their own. In this way, skills and expertise were passed on from one generation to the next.





...hands-on  
experience at  
the worksites under  
the supervision  
of qualified  
journey  
workers.

In the classroom, apprentices are introduced to the tools, techniques, and procedures of the trade. They are also given hands-on experience at worksites under the supervision of qualified journey workers. From these journey workers, apprentices learn the art of the craft, respect for tools and materials, and pride in making a perfect product. But whether in a classroom or at the jobsite, there is always an emphasis on safety, including safety awareness, safety regulations, and safe practices.

A typical apprenticeship program in the carpenters union takes about four years to complete, although some may take longer and others are shorter. During this period, apprentices earn a percentage of the journey worker's wage for their work, and as their skills increase, they receive increases in their rate of pay. Of course, they will earn much more once they complete the program and become journey workers themselves. Their participation in the union ensures that they have representation with various employers, and that they also get health and medical benefits as well as a pension plan.

Apprenticeships in many skilled trades are still offered by certain schools, unions, trade associations, and employers. Today, however, most apprentices do not learn from just one master craftsman as in the past. Instead, they take part in specific programs that usually involves both classroom instruction and hands-on experience in the workplace.

while you learn

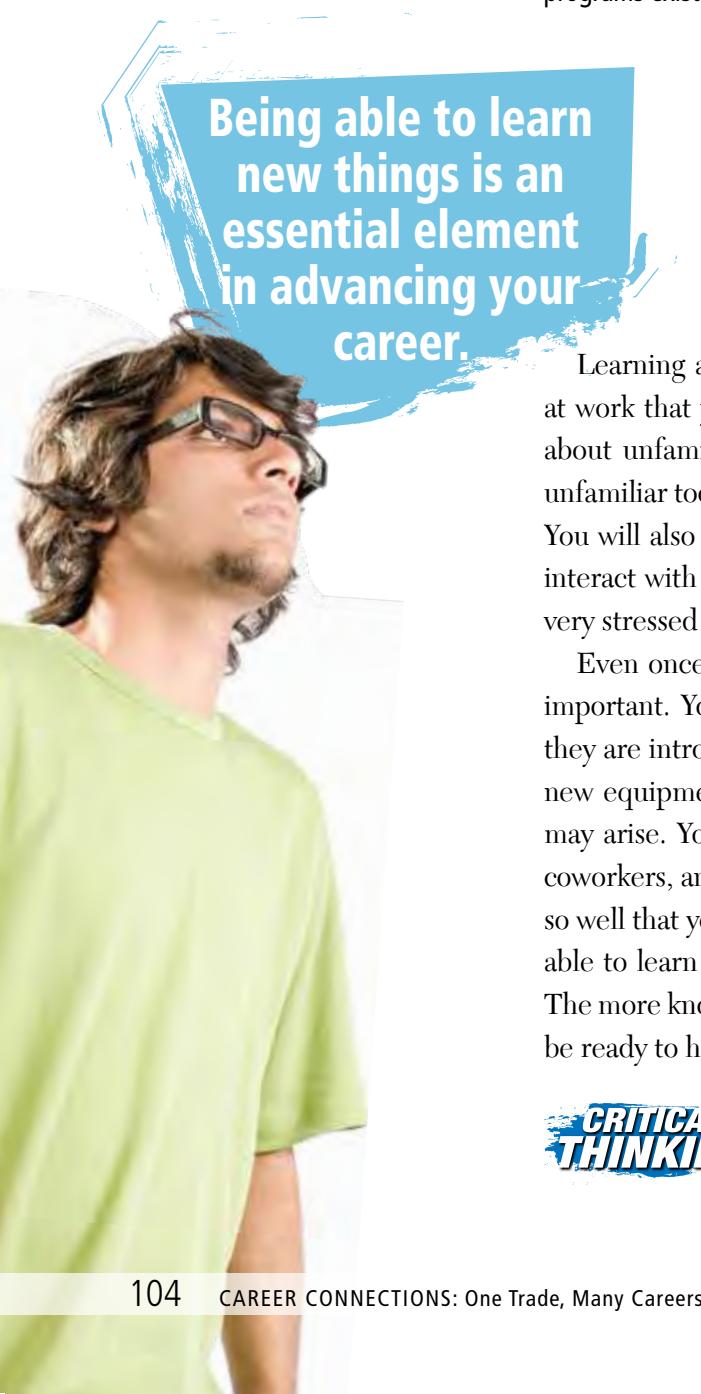
# framing your future

There are over 450,000 active apprentices in over 850 apprenticeship occupations in the United States. To find out more about these occupations and apprenticeship programs, go to the Apprenticeship website of the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment & Training Administration at [www.doleta.gov/oa](http://www.doleta.gov/oa).

Carpentry is just one of hundreds of technical careers that can begin with an apprenticeship. Most apprenticeship programs require applicants to have either a high school diploma or GED. Some apprenticeship programs may prefer applicants with junior college or college backgrounds. If you think you might be interested in an apprenticeship, it is not too early to find out about the requirements. If you are still going to school, you may want to take courses that will better prepare you for the apprenticeship program. For example, if you want a career and an apprenticeship in carpentry, you might want to take math courses, as well as courses such as computer aided design (CAD) and carpentry.

## CRITICAL THINKING

How do you think an apprenticeship program would fit into your career plans? Do you know if apprenticeship programs exist for your career choice? How might you find out?



**Being able to learn new things is an essential element in advancing your career.**

**Learning Is a Lifelong Process** You may think of your education as something you get in school or at college. Once you have earned a diploma or degree, your education is finished. Of course, this couldn't be further from the truth. You learned things long before you ever went to school and you will continue to learn things long after you are out of school. In other words, learning is a lifelong process.

Learning at work will be vitally important. You will have to learn tasks at work that you have probably never done before. You will have to learn about unfamiliar procedures and processes. You will have to learn about unfamiliar tools, equipment, and materials that you may be required to use. You will also have to learn about an unfamiliar worksite and about how to interact with your new coworkers and supervisors. No wonder people feel very stressed when they start a new job. There is so much to learn!

Even once you have become an old hand at work, learning will still be important. You will want to learn about new materials and techniques as they are introduced to improve efficiency. You will want to learn about any new equipment that is put into service and about any safety hazards that may arise. You may need to learn how to work with new team members, coworkers, and supervisors. You may even want to learn how to do your job so well that you would be considered for a promotion to a better job. Being able to learn new things is an essential element in advancing your career. The more knowledge and skills you acquire, the more responsibility you will be ready to handle.

## CRITICAL THINKING

Do you like to learn new things or do you do so reluctantly? How might your willingness to learn affect your chosen career path?



# 5 Planning Your Career



hen you think about it, you probably do quite a bit of planning already. For example, you probably make plans for something as simple as getting together at a restaurant with your friends.

Without a plan, your friends might not even show up at the right restaurant or at the right time to actually get together. As you can see, a plan is really important to the success of even simple activities. And since your career will be one of the most important activities of your life, it makes sense to plan it carefully.

...a decision about what career you would like to pursue is in itself a major milestone.

Making a decision about what career you would like to pursue is in itself a major milestone. This milestone is also a good starting point for a detailed career plan. Fortunately, a career plan can be fairly simple. It is really just a statement of your long-term career goal followed by the medium- and short-term goals that you must achieve to meet your career goal. Your career goals may include getting the kind of job you want and earning enough money to live a comfortable life. However, you are likely to have set for yourself many lesser but, nonetheless, important goals. For instance, your goals may include gaining the necessary certification to do certain types of highly skilled work or handle certain kinds of delicate or dangerous work-related materials. You may envision becoming a supervisor, manager, or independent business owner. You may want to build a solid reputation as being extremely skilled in your chosen craft, a goal that can only be achieved with years of training, practice, and hard work. Whatever your career goals may be, a career plan can help you work toward and achieve them.

# TIPS

## how to set worthwhile career goals and make them work for you

### **Understand your career goals**

Set clear career goals and make sure you understand what achieving them will mean for you and others. Achieving only some of your goals may not provide the benefits you expected.

### **Select realistic career goals**

Your career goals should fall within your abilities as well as your available time and money. For example, if you have picked a career that requires extensive math skills, make sure you have the ability and the time to acquire these skills. And, if the courses you need are not free, make sure you can afford the cost.

### **Consider costs and rewards**

Some career goals are well worth what they will cost you in time, money, and effort. Others are not.

### **Develop short-term career goals**

Most long-term career goals cannot be reached in a single leap forward. To reach them you must set and achieve short-term or medium-term goals that will move you along toward your intended objective.

### **Establish reasonable timelines**

Your career goals should be achievable within a set time period. Open-ended career goals, that is, goals without an established deadline, may be little more than dreams that will never become a reality.

### **Develop a written career plan**

Your long-term goals, medium-term goals, short-term goals, and timelines should be written down. Keep your written goals and timelines in a place where you can refer to them frequently. That way you can check on your progress and make sure you aren't neglecting any important short-term goals.

One page is usually as long as your career plan needs to be.

For example, if your career goal is to be a journey worker carpenter, your career plan might look something like the one shown here.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Career Goal

Journey worker carpenter- Acquire the skills and experience necessary to get full time employment as a journey worker carpenter

### Short-Term Goals

Take available carpentry classes in high school: 1-2 years

Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Gain experience working in a group or go out for a team sport: 1 year

Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Graduate from high school: 3-4 year

Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

### Medium-Term Goals

Take community college math courses: part-time over 2 years

Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Enter apprenticeship program: 4 years

Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Work during apprenticeship: 4 years

Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

### Long-Term Goals

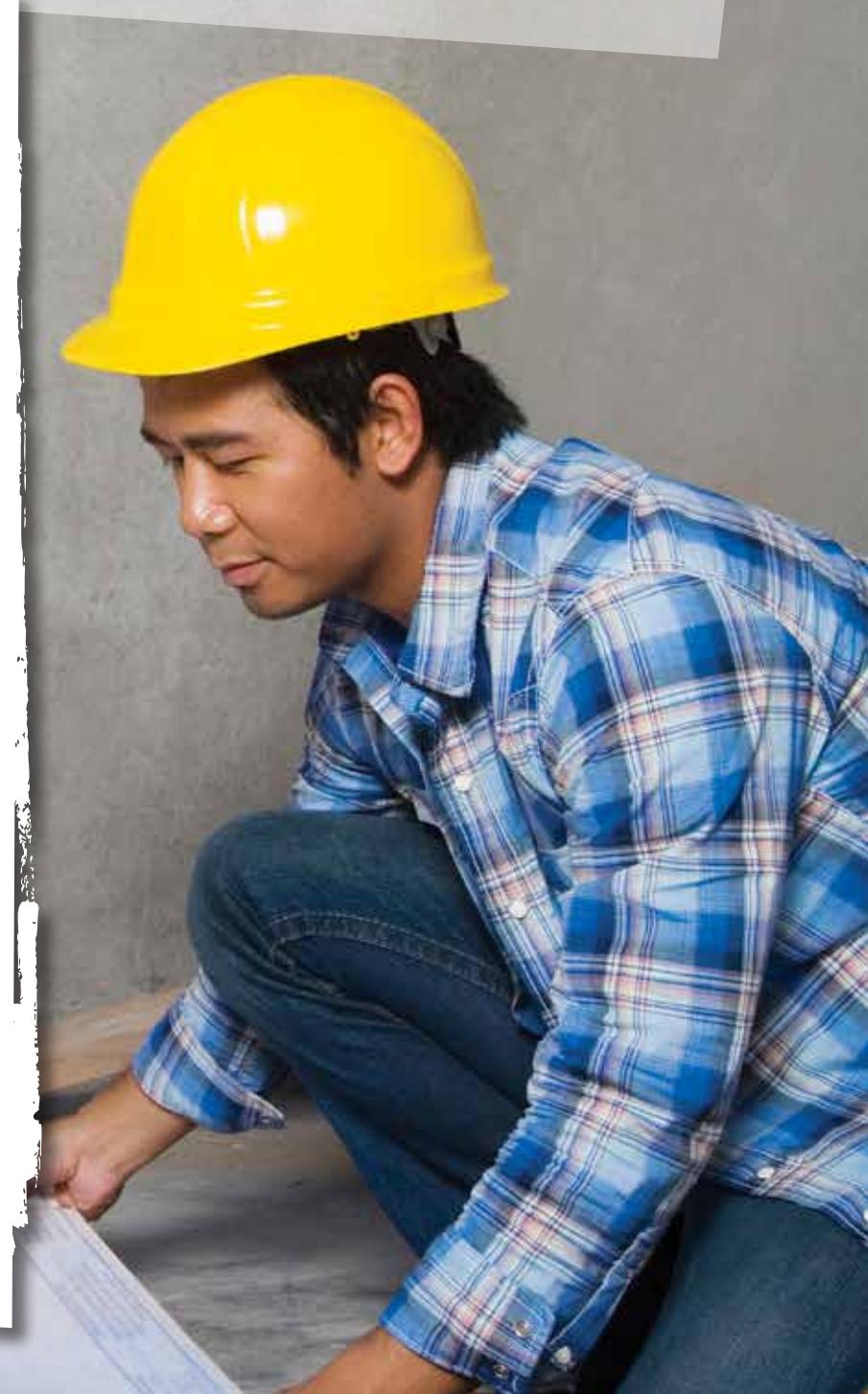
Complete apprenticeship program successfully: 2-5 years

Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Work fulltime as a carpenter and continue to take upgrade classes: 5 years

Successfully apply for a supervisor's position at the end of 5 years

Achieved: \_\_\_\_\_



# Chapter Check

On a separate piece of paper, write your answers to the following questions:

## Multiple Choice

1. Which of the following involves classroom instruction as well as hands-on experience?
  - a) job shadowing
  - b) internship
  - c) apprenticeship
  - d) volunteer work
2. Which of the following lasts for the shortest amount of time?
  - a) internship
  - b) apprenticeship
  - c) cooperative education
  - d) job shadowing
3. What is the minimum education requirement for most apprenticeship programs?
  - a) some community college
  - b) community college certificate
  - c) high school diploma
  - d) no minimum education but some work experience

## Fill in the Blank

4. The type of on-the-job training that requires the greatest commitment is a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ program.
5. When creating a career evaluation table, it's important to include \_\_\_\_\_ as a category if you want to evaluate how much family time a career would allow.
6. Skills learned from life experience or from a part-time job, which you can use in a career, are called \_\_\_\_\_ skills.

## True or False

7. By definition, a career is more short term than a job. *T* or *F*
8. You start a tech-prep program when you are in community college. *T* or *F*
9. An internship is usually done when taking time off from school. *T* or *F*
10. Apprentices who complete their program become journey workers. *T* or *F*

## Important Words

**Apprenticeship** Program that provides a way to learn an occupation by working as a paid assistant alongside experienced professionals for a period of years.

**Cooperative education** Program that provides work at a particular company for a specified number of hours per week while still attending school.

**Internship** Program that provides a way to learn an occupation by working, usually without pay, alongside experienced professionals for a period of weeks or months.

**Job shadowing** Program that provides a way to learn about a particular company or jobsite by observing it for a period of days.

**Journey worker** Experienced and skilled worker who has completed a specified training program as an apprentice.

**Postsecondary education** Education or training beyond high school.

**Tech-prep** Occupational training program offered in high school.

**Transferable skills** Skills that can be applied to more than one career.

**Trade journals** Magazines related to specific areas of work.

## On the Trail of ...

.com

Now that you know the difference between a job and a career, interview one person with a job, and another person with a career. What does each person get out of their work? Ask how they feel about their pay, hours, benefits, and working conditions. Find out their level of skill, education, and overall job satisfaction. Divide a sheet of paper in half. Use one side to profile the person with the job and the other side to profile the person with the career. What are the similarities and differences? How might their work choices influence your own?

Use the internet to locate the Occupational Outlook Handbook online. Find a job that interests you. For example, you'll find Carpenter under the category Construction. For the job you select, find out the education, training, and other qualifications required; the job outlook over the next ten years; the earning potential; and at least one website where you can find more information. Write a summary of your research.

## Being the First Choice

Being able to think creatively, visualize, use information, and communicate with others will help make you more valuable in the workplace. Team up with another student. Each of you will take turns "trying on" a career. With a desired career in mind, take on the identity of this worker. Describe yourself to your classmate: "I am a \_\_\_\_\_. Every day I do \_\_\_\_\_. I do this work because \_\_\_\_\_. This work suits my personality because \_\_\_\_\_. After five more years of this work, I'll look forward to \_\_\_\_\_. Doing this verbal role play might require some research, or you can use the job information you researched in the previous activity."