**What Is the Career Planning Process?**

**Definition & Examples of the Career Planning Process**

The career planning process is a series of steps to help you clarify and determine your short- and long-term career goals.

Learn more about the career planning process and how to put it to work for you.

**What Is a Career Planning Process?**

The career planning process involves taking the time to decide what your career goals are and how you'll get there. You might engage in this process on your own or with a guidance or help of a career counsellor.

You can also start the career planning process at any point in your career. Although it's often associated with high school and college students, it can also be helpful for those who are contemplating a career change or who aren't seeing the progress they'd like in their career field.

**How a Career Planning Process Works**

The career planning process includes several steps. Ideally, you'll revisit these steps from time to time to see the progress you've made and to reassess your goals.

**Conduct a Self-Assessment**

Evaluate your strengths, preferences, passions, work style, and financial needs. Consider your work, school, and volunteer experiences. What have you enjoyed? What drives you crazy? For example, if the idea of wearing a suit every day makes you want to scream, you may not want to pursue a career in finance. Or you might want to work for a start-up company that takes a non-traditional approach to finance.

Consider both who you are as a person and who you desire to become as a professional. Take a careful inventory of your career values, interests, skills, and personal qualities.

### Research Potential Careers

Next, brainstorm possible job options and investigate them. Look at the descriptions and qualifications for various positions, typical entry points, and advancement opportunities.

In addition to online research, interview people involved in your area of interest for information and advice about their work, asking about the realities of the field and the recommended preparation for it, including continuing education requirements or graduate study.

Internships and part-time jobs are an excellent way to sample a field of interest. They provide the opportunity to perform some of the job functions and evaluate the workplace environment.

You may also want to consider job shadowing. Also known as externships, these experiences last from one morning to several weeks and are an excellent way to get a feel for what your responsibilities would be in a given role.

If you're in school, consider applying for on-campus roles related to potential job interests. For example, if you're thinking about a journalism career, you might work for a campus magazine or newspaper. If you're interested in finance, you might volunteer for the student credit union.

Selecting project-oriented courses related to career options can also help you to decide what's right for you. For example, if you're considering product management as a career, you might select a marketing course where you formulate a branding campaign for a product as a project.

### Decide on One or More Career Paths

Consider the pros and cons of the career options you've been researching. Consider the current demand in the field, whether you're comfortable with relocation, and your potential income. Income isn't everything, of course, but it's something to consider in balance with other aspects of your career. For example, work as a professional actor can be erratic and low-paying initially, but if you can't imagine doing anything else, the risk might be worthwhile.

You may decide on one career path, or you may want to position yourself for a few options. It all depends on where you are in your life and what career options you're considering.

### Set Concrete Goals

Set specific goals for how you want to progress on your career path. For example, if you need to go to graduate school to enter your chosen field, set a date for when you want to decide on three graduate schools to apply to.

If you're looking for a job in your field, set a goal for how many applications you want to send each week or to attend one networking event per week.

Some of your goals may be short-term, while others may be long-term. You might set a goal of achieving an executive-level position in 10 years. Think about the small steps you'll need to take to achieve that goal and set timelines for those goals too.

Your goals and timeline will change along the way, but setting concrete goals in writing is an important starting point for your career.

### Key Takeaways

* The career planning process is a series of steps to help you decide on your short- and long-term career goals.
* You might engage in this process on your own or with a career counsellor.
* Start with a self-assessment of your strengths. Next, research potential careers and decide on a career path.
* Finally, set concrete short- and long-term career goals.