

Starting your Career

Are you yet to decide what work you would like to do once you leave school, college or university?

Do you just want a job that pays the bills or a role that will give you a fulfilling career and an opportunity to progress?

This section enables you to really think through what it is you want to do and how to come to that decision. It helps you explore all the options available to you as well as examining your personal values and work preferences. It can be easy to be influenced or pressurised by others to take a certain job or to follow a certain career, however, as you spend a lot of time at work, you should consider what is important to you, what interests you and what you will find rewarding.

This section helps you to determine your next steps.

So, let's start with where you are now. Take some time out now and answer the questions below.

Really think about each question and the answers. It may take you a while to come up with the answers but it will be worthwhile as it will help you focus on your next steps. You can complete this document as a questionnaire if you prefer. You will find it in the Appendices section.

1. What subject(s)/exams are you currently taking? Which elements do you particularly enjoy?
2. Do these subject(s)/exams lend themselves to specific roles that you can apply for?
3. Are these subject(s)/exams the next step to further education or a job?
4. What subjects are you not enjoying? What does this tell you?
5. Do you want to take time out before you go into further education or a job? If so, what type of time out: voluntary work; travelling; time with friends and family; or some work experience?
6. Are you unsure of what you wish to do? If so, think about people you admire and their roles - do their careers interest you?
7. What is it about these people that you admire? What is it about their career that particularly interests you?
8. Are there any hobbies or areas of interest that you have that you may wish to explore as a potential career?
9. What do you enjoy doing?
10. When do you feel most energised in life? What is it about this activity that makes you feel this way?
11. What do you find boring and would hate to do?
12. Think back to your childhood – when people asked you what you wanted to be when you grew up – what was your response?
13. What jobs or careers have you heard about that you thought sounded interesting or exciting?
14. Have you carried out any work experience to date? Did you enjoy this? If so, write down what elements you found interesting. If not, why did you not find the experience rewarding? Again write down the elements that you didn't enjoy.

what's next for me?

15. If you woke up tomorrow and you could be in any job of your choice and you already have the appropriate skills, qualifications and experience to do it, what job would you choose?
16. What is it about this job that appeals to you?
17. What would be your ideal job? Do you know what qualifications, skills and experience are required?

Personal values and work preferences

Personal values

It is important to consider your own personal values and how they might impact upon current and future career choices. You may be wondering why this is linked to a decision about your career. If, for example, one of your values is being independent, then you may feel a disconnect if you go to work in a tightly managed and controlled environment. Or say creativity is really important to you, then working in a highly systemised environment with the inability to use your creative skills could lead to frustrations. When there is a match between your values and the values operating in the organisation that you are working for, there is less likelihood of conflict arising.

There may well have been times when you have felt great about the work you were doing and getting the job done seems completely effortless. There may have been other times and situations when you felt particularly angry or frustrated by a situation. If you recall these situations, both the high points and the low points, and examine how these link to your personal values, you may well find that in relation to the high point there was a synchronicity between what you were doing and your values. And of course the opposite when you reached a low point. Your values were disconnected from what you were doing or you felt they were violated in some way.

When there is a match between your values and the values of the organisation you are working for, you are far more likely to enjoy your work and feel content and comfortable in the working environment. It is less likely that there will be conflict and disappointment, so have a look at what may be important for you personally. Think of times and situations when you felt great about work or a project – perhaps this was at school or university or something you were involved in during your spare time. Also think about the times and situations when you felt frustrated. What was it that made you feel let down or frustrated. Think about the types of things that trigger these feelings for you as they may be things you want to avoid in the workplace. If you want some help in identifying your values, complete the Personal Values Table which you will find in the Appendices section.

When you have made your choices, identify the five which are the most important to you. Write down your top five somewhere that you can easily access them or use our Template to record them which you will find in the Appendices section. When applying for jobs, you can then consider whether your personal values are likely to be met.

Personal work preferences

Now let's look at what possible work preferences you may have. You spend a lot of time at work, so it's a good idea to identify what's really important to you. For example, you may wish to work close to home or it may be fine for you to travel some distance to work. You may prefer to work somewhere that offers flexible hours or you may be content to work 9-5 every day. It may be that you wish to work in an organisation that has social and fun activities to get involved in outside of work. You may wish to work for a stable business that has a good reputation or has clear ethical policies. Why not take some time to complete the Work Preference Table available in the Appendices section and tick those items you consider essential and those that are desirable when applying for roles. You may wish to use the results from this table to ask questions at your interviews or to help you make a decision as to whether to accept a job offer.

what's next for me?

Career options

You have had the opportunity to think about career possibilities and which direction you may take, what your personal values are and also what's important to you in the workplace.

Now it's time to think about the career options open to you in some detail. You can do this by completing the Career Options Table from the Appendices section.

When you are completing the table, list all the possible jobs you would like to do. The list doesn't need to be in any particular order and do not discount any option at this stage. Also have a think about what you really enjoy doing.

When you have all the jobs listed, put in a rating between 0 and 5 (0 being low and 5 being high) to determine how qualified you believe you are, if you have the skills and experience for the job, rate whether it interests you and finally rate potential prospects in this career. The rating should give you some indication of what might be the top 3-4 roles to focus on.

You may well find that you are qualified for a role or that you have particular skills and experience to do a job, but do not discount your interest or passion for a role as doing a job that you love can override some other factors. But remember that you need to factor in considerations such as location of the role, your financial situation and the reality of getting into such a career if you go with that decision. You may wish to have a look at the Career Options example below that Joe, a recent graduate, completed before carrying out the exercise yourself.

what's next for me?

Career options for Joe

In the example outlined below, Joe had just finished his Marketing and Media Studies degree at university. He was awarded a 2:1. He wanted some time out before deciding which career direction to take, as he found the exams and dissertation in his final year all consuming. He continued with his part time job as a sales assistant at a local sports retail shop and has returned home to live with his parents. Joe is a keen sports person. He enjoys playing football and likes to keep fit. He has also gained lots of experience working in retail including dealing with the public, heightening his selling, customer service, interpersonal skills and confidence. Joe is also a keen 'gamer' and plays his X Box regularly. He spends time socialising with his friends and family too. Joe is very keen on designer wear, especially high-end brands which don't come cheap, however, with his retail job; he can get a discount on these types of clothes which is good. Joe sat down and thought about all the careers he is interested in. He then considered whether he was qualified, skilled and experienced in these areas. Finally he considered his levels of interest in each career and what the potential career prospects are.

Options	Qualification	Skills	Experience	Interest/Passion	Career Prospects	Total
Fitness Trainer	0	2	2	4	2	10
Physiotherapist	0	0	0	3	4	7
Footballer	0	3	2	5	1	11
Teacher	3	3	1	2	3	12
Sales Assistant	2	4	4	1	2	13
Graduate Trainee	4	2	1	3	4	14
Computer Games Designer	2	2	2	5	3	14
Racing Driver	0	1	1	4	0	6
Advertising	4	2	2	3	4	15
Journalist	4	2	1	3	2	12
TV/Radio	4	3	2	3	3	15
Computing	2	2	1	4	4	13

Joe's top 3 results produced a joint first highest ranking in Advertising and TV/Radio; followed by joint second selection as Graduate Trainee or Games Designer. These choices were based largely on his learning from his degree. He felt that he had some skills in these choices, for example he had made a film at university that had won an award. The film he designed and produced from start to finish; from generating the idea, designing its content, scripting it, choosing the cast and scene setting, to recording and editing it into its final production. Joe discovered that by looking at this option, it gave him various graduate options within broadcasting and could lead him to an exciting career ahead.

what's next for me?

His other top option, Advertising, was also studied as part of his degree. In addition he had developed an advertising and promotional campaign for a new sports clothing range which was introduced into the Sports Shop where he works. This had sold well last year and generated £5,000.00 of sales in the first three months of launch. Joe had enjoyed developing the ideas for the campaign, preparing the art work and writing the sales script for the staff and preparing leaflets for the public. Joe had recently put forward another idea for a new footwear range coming shortly which was currently being considered by management.

However, Joe's greatest interest and passion was for his third ranked choice as a Computer Games Designer even though he had limited qualifications, skills and experience in this. He uses a computer all the time and is able to write code as well as use the regular programmes. He loves playing computer games and the thought of being able to write new games for users really excited him. However, he recognised that if he really wanted to go into this he was going to have to undertake further study and get qualifications in computing which he just didn't want to do. He had done enough studying for a while.

Joe's other joint third ranked choice was being a Graduate Trainee although he had not specified what type of company and in what particular field of expertise. Joe felt that this was a good option, particularly if he could get on a scheme in the Advertising or TV or Radio industry. Having completed the work preferences table, he is also interested in joining a large reputable organisation where there might be the opportunity to progress and receive a good salary.

In his analysis of the options he listed, he discounted the Footballer and Racing Driver. Although he enjoys playing at his local club and driving go-karts, he recognised that he wasn't going to make it to the Premier or Championship or Formula 1 level at his age with his ability. He considered Fitness Trainer and Physiotherapist but these required further study which he didn't want to undertake and in addition, he was of the belief that these roles would not pay as well as his other choices.

Joe felt that the journalism option, although covered in his degree, was his weakest area and whilst he thought it may be a way to cover an area that he was very interested in such as Sports Writer, he discovered when exploring it further that it was a difficult industry to break into and it was not as well paid as he thought. Joe did consider becoming a teacher and this was something that interested him, but again he discovered that he would need to carry out further qualifications and training.

Joe found the book, The Times A-Z of Careers & Jobs very helpful in considering his choices. The book gave him succinct information on different roles, qualifications, qualities and skills required, salary ranges and associated organisations to each specific role. He also read How To Get A Job You'll Love by John Lees. This helped him come to his decision.

In reviewing the options, Joe determined that a career in either Advertising or the TV or Radio industry would be where he'd like to focus his job search and career. From going through the analysis, it had also determined for him that he really enjoyed being creative, so he was keen to find something that would give him the opportunity to use his creative skills. Joe started to carry out an on-line search to review what opportunities there were for graduate positions in these two areas. There were many job websites with lots of vacancies advertised. The sites were very informative about what types of skills and qualities employers required and the sort of salary he might expect. Joe was reassured that there would be opportunities to progress in this career. Some of the websites are listed below, but please refer to the Your Job Search section for further details. In addition, Joe's father was able to put him in touch with a local advertising company and Joe was able to meet with one of the Directors to talk about his career aspirations and find out more about the different roles in such a Company.

what's next for me?

To find out more about networking, please refer to the Your Job Search section. To see Joe's CV, refer to the Your CV section.

<http://www.graduate-jobs.com/>

<http://www.thebigchoice.com/>

<http://www.gradjobs.co.uk/#>

<http://www.milkround.com/>

<http://targetjobs.co.uk/>

If you wish to explore your own career options now, go to the Appendices section and complete the Career Options Table.

SWOT Analysis

In addition to completing the Career Options table, you may also wish to carry out a SWOT Analysis. Outlined below is a guide to SWOT and an example of using this format when considering your career.

Once you have read the guide and example, you can complete your own personal analysis by filling in the SWOT Analysis Template in the Appendices section.

SWOT analysis guide and example

SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. A SWOT Analysis is usually undertaken in businesses to identify whether an organisation is able to handle an objective which it wants to achieve. The analysis is based on identification of internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats faced by the business.

However, this can be used in a personal context when reviewing your career options. We all have strengths and weaknesses and it is important to understand what you are good at and where you may require some development. In addition, when looking for a job, it can be helpful to identify what opportunities may be available and also what factors may negatively impact upon you getting that next job, i.e. the threats. Undertaking a SWOT Analysis helps you to gain the full picture. It might help you identify positive factors that you had not thought about and also identify the negatives so that you can take actions to overcome these factors.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Consider what you are good at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What qualifications do you have?• What skills do you possess and which of these are transferable?• What work experience do you have?• What do you believe are your key competencies in the workplace?• What personal positive characteristics do you bring to the workplace?• What do you believe are your key contributions in the workplace?• What have you been praised for at work?• What areas have been identified as your strengths either by yourself or others?• What are the benefits of employing you?• Do you have a strong network?	<p>Consider those areas where you feel less strong or where you know you need development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are you lacking any qualifications or training in your chosen career?• Where do you lack experience?• What gaps are there in your experience or knowledge?• Which skills don't you have, that you would like to have?• Where would you like to feel more competent?• What has held you back at work?• Which areas have been identified as a development need for you either by yourself or by others?• When have you struggled with a task or project?• What personal characteristics might have a detrimental effect on your career?• Is your network weak?

what's next for me?

Opportunities

Consider the opportunities that are available to you:

- What opportunities are available to someone with your skills and experience?
- What external changes are taking place which could lead to opportunities for you?
- What developments are taking place in your chosen industry?
- Where have you **not** considered a role, which might be open to you?
- Who can help you achieve your career goals?
- What external support is available to help someone in your position?

Threats

Consider those aspects which might get in the way of your career success:

- Is there a reduced requirement for someone with your skills and experience?
- Are the Companies you wish to work for making reductions in headcount?
- What competition are you up against?
- What barriers stand in the way of you reaching your career goals?
- What changes have occurred in the way that Companies recruit that could impact upon you detrimentally?
- What changes are occurring in the market which could make things more difficult for you?

Example SWOT analysis for Joe

Strengths

2:1 degree in Marketing and Media Studies and three years' work experience in the retail industry.

Skills:

- Customer Service
- Sales (Employee of the Month 4 times)
- Promotions/Campaign Work
- Film Making (won Award)
- Stock Control
- Finances/Reconciliation
- Theoretical knowledge of Marketing and Media applications/methods

Key competencies:

- Creativity
- Interpersonal Skills
- Meeting Project Deadlines
- Adaptable to Situations
- Computer Skills including programming

Characteristics

- Enthusiasm
- Hard working
- Outgoing/Confident
- Personable
- Good Teamworker
- Quick Learner

Weaknesses

Gaps:

- No actual experience working in TV or Advertising industries

Areas of concern:

- Avoids confrontation if possible
- Not confident presenting to large groups

Characteristics

- Easily bored
- Doesn't promote achievements enough

what's next for me?

Opportunities	Threats
<p>Check if current employer has any openings in their Marketing department.</p> <p>Ask to meet the Marketing Director at current employer to gain advice and review opportunities.</p> <p>Contact TV, Film and Advertising companies to enquire about job opportunities and graduate schemes.</p> <p>Search job websites to review current existing job opportunities within this field.</p> <p>Look at other organisations to see what graduate schemes may be suitable if there are no jobs available in mainstream TV, Film or Advertising Industries.</p> <p>Talk to friends and family who may know someone in the industry that they could put me in touch with to find out more.</p> <p>Volunteer or offer to do free work experience in TV, Film or Advertising Company on days off with a view to getting a job eventually.</p> <p>Practice presentation and interview skills.</p>	<p>Graduate openings are limited due to current economic climate.</p> <p>Lots of competition from other graduates for placements on schemes and particularly in the industries of interest.</p> <p>Competition from experienced people who have lost their jobs.</p> <p>Not familiar with assessment centre process.</p> <p>Lack of experience in TV, Film or Advertising may hinder getting a job in this field.</p>

If having read this section and having completed the exercises, you feel clearer about your career path and options, move onto the other sections for help and advice about creating your CV, embarking upon your job search and guidance on the Interviewing and Selection process.

What's important - starting your career

1. Introduction

- There is lots to think about when starting your career
- Ensure that you take time to fully consider your options and choices
- Research the roles you are interested in and talk to others about their careers

2. Personal values and work preferences

- Your personal values are important when making a career choice
- If your values are being met in the workplace, you are more likely to feel connected and in tune with the Company
- If your values are not being met in the workplace, this can lead to a disconnected feeling and potential discord
- You spend a lot of time at work. It is important to consider factors that are significant to you and if possible to find a job that is satisfying, enjoyable and rewarding

what's next for me?

3. Career options

- Ensure that you take some time to consider the options available
- Think not only about what you are qualified, skilled and experienced to do, but also what you love to do
- Find out more about the jobs you are interested in. Talk and listen to others about their careers and what's involved
- Carry out a SWOT Analysis to identify your own strengths and weaknesses and to consider opportunities available and potential hindrances to your career

Your Career Questionnaire (Students and Graduates)

<p>1. What subject(s)/exams are you currently taking? Which elements do you particularly enjoy?</p>
<p>2. Do these subject(s)/exams lend themselves to specific roles that you can apply for?</p>
<p>3. Are these subject(s)/exams the next step to further education or a job? If so what?</p>
<p>4. What subjects are you not enjoying? What does this tell you?</p>
<p>5. Do you want to take time out before you go into further education or a job? If so what type of time out: voluntary work; travelling; time with friends and family; or some work experience?</p>

6. Are you unsure of what you wish to do? If so, think about people you admire and their roles – do their careers interest you? What is it about these people that you admire? What is it about their career that particularly interests you?

7. What hobbies or areas of interest do you have that you may wish to explore as a potential career?

8. What do you enjoy doing?

9. What do you find most boring and would hate to do?

10. Think back to your childhood. What did you always want to do once you were grown up? Does this still interest you?

11. What jobs or careers have you heard about that you thought sounded interesting or exciting?

12. Have you carried out any work experience to date? Did you enjoy this? If so write down what elements you found interesting. If not, why did you not find the experience rewarding? Again write down the elements that you didn't enjoy?

13. What personal values would you like to be met through your work? List them here

14. What would be your ideal job? Do you know what qualifications, skills and experience you would require to do this?

Personal Values Table

When considering your career it is important to consider your own personal values – the things that are important to you and that you care about. Use the table below to help you determine those that resonate. The list is not exhaustive and there are some spaces for you to add any values that are important to you which are not on the list. When you have made your choices, review your list again and identify the five which are the most important to you. Write your top five down somewhere that you can easily access them. When applying for jobs, you can then consider whether your personal values are likely to be met.

Accuracy	Ecological Awareness	Impact	Reason
Accomplishment	Effectiveness	Independence	Recognition
Achievement	Efficiency	Influencing	Reputation
Adventure	Eloquence	Innovation	Respect
Aggressiveness	Empathy	Inspiration	Responsibility
Ambition	Enjoyment	Integrity	Satisfaction
Authenticity	Enthusiasm	Involvement	Security
Authoritative	Ethical	Impact	Service
Beauty	Expertise	Justice	Significance
Belonging	Fairness	Kindness	Skillful
Boldness	Family	Leadership	Spiritual
Capability	Flexibility	Learning	Stability
Care	Freedom	Making a difference	Structure
Challenge	Friendliness	Meaningful work	Success
Collaboration	Fun	Openness	Support
Compassion	Generosity	Optimism	Teamwork
Competition	Growth	Partnership	Traditional
Confidence	Guidance	Perfection	Trust
Connection	Happiness	Performance	Truth
Contribution	Health	Personal Development	Uniqueness
Co-operation	Helping Others	Persuasiveness	Variety
Determination	Helping Society	Playfulness	Vision
Direct	Honesty	Power	Vitality
Diversity	Humour	Professionalism	Wealth
Drive	Imagination	Quality Relationships	Winning

My top five personal values

My top five values are:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

These are important to me because:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Career Options Table: (students/graduates)

List a wide range of possible jobs or interests that you have, from the sensible safe options to your dream job. Once you have listed them, try this short evaluation exercise, ranking each of the options' sections from 0-5 (0 - being no relevant qualifications, skills, experience, etc. and 5 being the highest relevance). It is important to understand your career strengths and skills and where you might be able to utilise these in a different career. Remember to review your scoring on what options you have in the interest/passion section as well as what you are skilled and experienced in, after all, you spend a lot of time at work and so it should be enjoyable and rewarding to you. Finding a job you love and are passionate about which is meaningful to you, is a winning combination for both you and your employer.

If you are unsure, look at the example table that Joe completed for this exercise. Once you have completed this exercise, it should help you identify possible future career options to focus on.

Options	Qualifications	Skills	Experience	Interest/Passion	Career Prospects	Total

SWOT Analysis Template

<p>Strengths Consider what you are good at:</p>	<p>Weaknesses Consider those areas where you feel less strong or where you know you need development:</p>
<p>Opportunities Consider the opportunities that are available to you:</p>	<p>Threats Consider those aspects which might get in the way of your career success:</p>