

Finding the Right Career Path

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WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about choosing the right career path for you, pursuing it by aligning your studies with your future career, and filling in the gaps in your education when needed. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Aligning Your Studies with a Career in a Related Field

Education is an incredibly valuable thing to have just on its own—learning about a variety of subjects from qualified experts is an experience that, if you're paying attention, will broaden and enrich the perspective from which you see the world.

But while learning for the sake of learning is an admirable endeavor, most students in higher education have another goal in mind—namely, to prepare for the career they will pursue after graduation. Aligning your studies with a career you plan to pursue doesn't just help you to learn about the subjects related to that career, but your degree in a certain subject may be a preferred or necessary qualification for securing a job. In some cases, specific courses or specific assignments within those courses can even count as relevant job experience.



BIG IDEA

Your ability to align your studies with a career will depend on whether you come to college with a specific job or at least a general field in mind. If you plan on being, for instance, an accountant or a social worker, you can do some basic research or talk to an advisor about what kinds of courses best suit your goals.

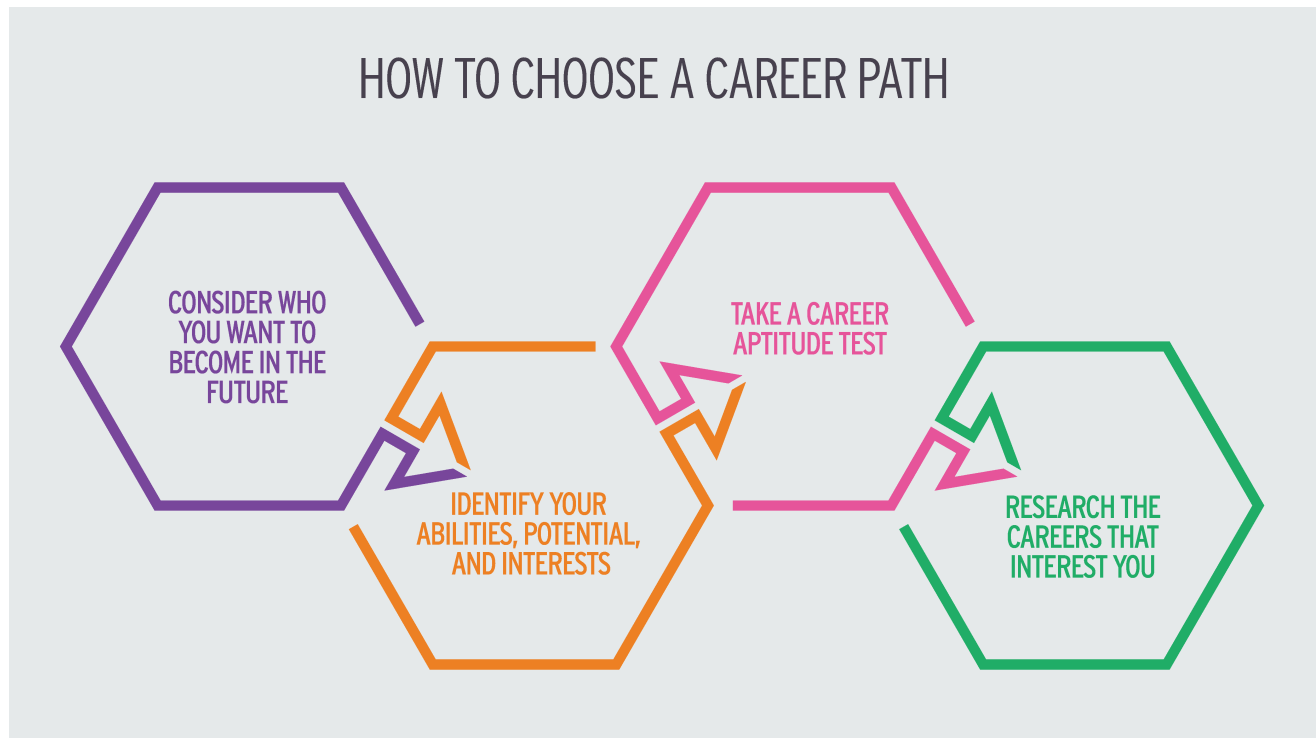
➔ **EXAMPLE** If you know you are interested in business but you are not sure what specific career is right for you, sampling a range of business courses can help you to make that decision.

The courses you take can help you both to choose a career path and to qualify you for a job along that career path.

2. Best Practices for Choosing a Career Path

Before you can align your studies with your career path, you need to know what that career path is. Many

students enter college without a clear idea of what they want to do for a living, and a number of those who start school with one idea regarding their future leave school with a different one. So how do you determine which career path is the right one for you?



- **Consider who you want to become in the future** The first thing you might do is reflect and assess certain aspects of who you are now and who you want to become in the future. For instance, what is your particular skill set? Once you have given this some consideration, you can explore which careers match that skill set.
- **Identify your abilities, potential, and interests:** In addition to what you can do, you should spend some time thinking about what you want to do—ideally, your professional life will keep you engaged, fulfilled, and happy. Even if you don’t currently possess the skills required for the field you want, try to honestly assess whether you could reasonably develop those skills with the right education and training.
- **Take a career aptitude test** If you need help narrowing down potential career paths, there are career aptitude tests you can take for free on the internet that will recommend options to you based on your answers to pointed questions.
- **Research the careers that interest you:** Once you have selected a potential career path, there is further research you can conduct to learn what you’ll need to do to take steps down that path and to confirm that it’s the right choice for you. For instance, look into entry-level job postings and internships in the field—the kinds of positions you will be seeking after graduation—and examine the requirements in terms of education, skills, and experience. You also might seek out and speak to people who work in the field you are considering or even observe them as they do their jobs.

Choosing a career path is one of the most significant decisions you will make in your life, so it is crucial to make that decision carefully and with as much information as possible.

IN CONTEXT

When you were a kid, people would ask you “what do you want to be when you grow up”? When you approach that same question—“What do you want to be?”—after you have grown up, you bring

to it the wisdom of experience and probably a more realistic sense of what's possible. You might have to let go of the dream of becoming a professional basketball player, an astronaut, or a movie star, but you should hang on to the notion of doing something you want to do for a living. From a more mature perspective, you want a career in which you can be useful and succeed, so there is a sort of natural compromise between idealism and realism.

There are tests you can take to help you choose a career focused on both what you like to do and what you are good at. Some tests focus on your personality type; people may be better suited to certain careers because of their temperament or style of communication. Others focus on your skills, asking you to assess your ability with writing or mechanical reasoning. Here are a few tests if you want to try and see if they are useful to you:

Personality Tests

- [Keirsey Temperament Sorter](#)
- [Big Five](#)
- [Enneagram of Personality](#)
- [16personalities](#)
- [PI Behavioral Assessment](#)

Career Tests

- [MyPlan.com](#)
- [iSeek "Clusters"](#)
- [MyNextMove](#)
- [MAPP Test](#)
- [Holland Code Career Test](#)



SUMMARY

Choosing a career path is a major life decision that most students make while they are in higher education. To choose the right career path for you, consider what you are good at, where you have the potential for growth, and what is interesting to you. Talking to people who work in the careers that interest you can be extremely useful in helping you make a decision and **align your studies with a career in a related field**.