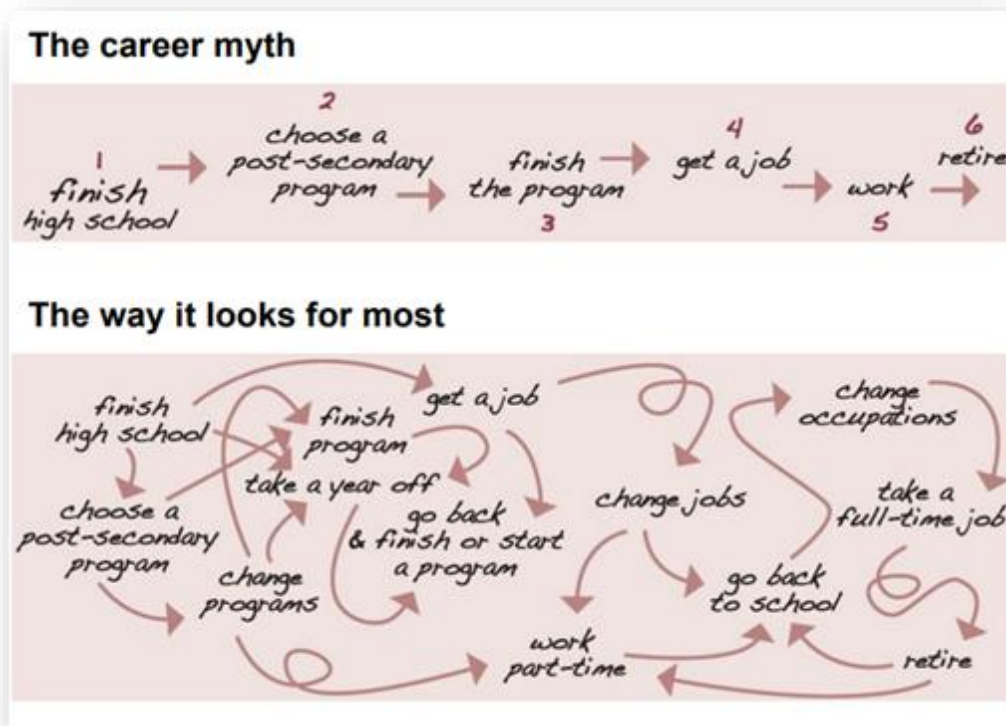


# Choosing a career that is right for you

Career exploration for youth thinking about post-secondary education

## What is career exploration?

- **Career exploration is a journey with many twists and turns.** It is a myth that career planning is a straight line where we pick one career, go to school, get a job, and then work until retirement.
- **Planning with a pencil.** Career exploration is about trying different employment paths, exploring various interests, learning something new about yourself, then changing your mind and starting again.
- **Keeping a record can help you be mindful and reflective** at each stage of your journey and lead you to a fulfilling and rewarding career! Start by creating a “shopping list” of possible career options.



Visual image and key points above taken from: Cathy Campbell and Peggy Dutton, *Career Crafting the Decade After High School: Professional's Guide* (Toronto, Ontario: Canadian Education and Research Institution for Counselling, 2015).

Check out these **additional resources** to help you and your family get started:

- **Download** this free eBook: [Career Crafting the Decade after High School](#)
- **Take a look** at this easy-to-read guide: [Guiding Principles of Career Development](#)

*(In some of the resources linked from this document, career exploration is referred to as career development or career planning.)*

## Why does career exploration matter?

- **It takes time, energy, and money to learn the skills you need for a career.** It will be in your best interest to focus on careers that reflect your interests, abilities, and talents.
- **There are more choices for careers out there than youth realize.** You will want to ensure that you have done a thorough search of potential careers.
- **Most adults spend the majority of their time at work.** Your career becomes a part of who you are, the people you associate with, and how you contribute to society. Choosing something that suits your unique strengths and interests will be essential for your overall health and happiness.

Still wondering why career exploration matters? Click [here](#) to listen to career counsellors explain their reasons why career exploration matters.

## Steps for successful career exploration

### Step 1: Know yourself

**First things first.** Let's assess where you are right now. There are three potential paths where career explorers might find themselves:

Path	Pro	Con
<b>Navigating:</b> Career goals are clear and there is a set plan to achieve those goals.	This path feels clear and there is a sense of confidence from knowing what the future holds.	This path can lead to career dissatisfaction because there was not enough exploration before setting goals and plans.
<b>Exploring:</b> Unsure of career goals, but proactively experimenting and researching.	This path feels generally positive because there is a sense that it will lead to an informed choice.	This path can take time and feel less clear, with periods of frustration and uncertainty.
<b>Drifting:</b> Unsure, but not actively seeking. Drifting means, "going with the flow," and choosing whichever options come up.	Sometimes desirable options come up that suit the explorer's interests and skills.	This path can go on for too long and can lead to feeling unsatisfied with the possible options.

## Reflect and be mindful at each stage of your journey.

- **Ask yourself:**
  - Which career path am I on right now? Am I Navigating, Exploring or Drifting?
  - Is this the path I want be on? If not, how can I change paths?
- **Think about who you are and what you like to do:**
  - What are my best subjects at school? Which ones do I find more challenging?
  - What am I good at, and what is harder for me to do?
  - What am I interested in trying?
  - What is my dream career?

**Try an online career aptitude test** that assesses career possibilities based on your personality, skills, and interests:

- The Government of Canada has websites with various tests that assess your:
  - [Skills for success](#)
  - [Interests, abilities, and more](#)

## Step 2: Explore options

### Start early and be active!

- Adolescence and high school are a great time to explore your interests, values, skills, traits, and ambitions in a supportive environment.
- For youth with disabilities, a team approach between you, the guidance counsellor, and your resource teacher is ideal.
- You can add your career exploration goals into your Individual Education Plan to help you and your team remember the avenues you want to pursue.

### The following is a list of career exploration options offered in high schools in Ontario:

- [Civics and Career Studies](#) course offered in Grade 10.
- [Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program](#) offers co-operative education credit opportunities in a skilled trade for students who are at least 15 years old and enrolled in Grade 11 or 12 (or an equivalent).
- [The Specialist High Skills Major](#) are bundled courses, combined with specialist training (e.g. CPR and first aid), and co-op credits for 19 specific well-paying skilled trade careers.
- [Dual credit programs](#) are courses that allow youth to explore post-secondary school interests while still in high school. They earn high school credits and post-secondary credits in a certificate, diploma, degree or a Certificate of Apprenticeship. Dual credit programs are also a way to make the transition from high school to post-secondary school smoother.

### Do your research!

- Talk to people and get more than one opinion. Talk to family, friends, teachers, and guidance counsellors.

- Information interviews or shadowing opportunities with people in a career that interests you can be helpful. See the outline for an information interview below.

**Outline for an information interview / job shadow**

1. Say hi and introduce yourself. Say "Thank you for meeting with me today".
2. Before you start, check what time the person needs to finish. Make sure you watch the time so that you finish on time.
3. Give a short introduction
  - About yourself
  - Why you asked for this information interview / Generally what you'd like to learn about
4. Ask open-ended questions that you think will help you gather the information you want
  - Ask some from your list
  - Listen as your contact talks. You can ask questions to follow-up on information they shared.
5. Wrap-up
  - Say a sincere thank you – include: 1 thing you learned or that will be helpful to you

- Find out the current occupational and industry trends. What are the new, hot careers? What are the careers that are likely going to be hired when you are finished school?
- Investigate the various college and university programs offered for careers that interest you.
- Seek out information online (but make sure this is not the only research you do).

**Below is a list of recommended career information and exploration websites:**

- [Career Cruising](#) is an online tool to help youth explore possible career choices.
- [My Blueprint](#) is an online tool used by most Ontario schools that helps students map out their goals and plans for school and beyond.
- [Youth in Canada](#) is a website created by the Government of Canada to help guide youth in their career exploration journey.
- [Alis](#) is a website created by the Government of Alberta that offers career exploration depending on where you are in your journey, with a specific guide for youth with disabilities.
- [GPS for Your Career](#) is an online career exploration tool that can help you get started no matter where you are in your journey. You can add skills, explore career paths, and get help with action planning.

**Gain experience!**

- Look for volunteer opportunities at your school or in your community that align with your interests.
- Paid part time and summer jobs can help you discover what you like and do not like in a possible career.
- Doing household chores is a great way to start figuring out your skills and abilities

### Step 3: Reflect, learn and reassess

As you gain experience, knowledge, and skills, you can reassess and change your plans for the future. You can keep a reflection journal or use a plan outlining the various options that you have tried. Reflect on the same questions from above after each new experience.

#### **Don't get discouraged!**

Career planning takes time. The journey is supposed to be long, and most people do not get it right the first time. Remember to celebrate all your hard work and the progress you are making toward your career planning goals.