

Parent Guide to Careers:
10 Steps to Help Your
Child Prepare for a Career

Preparing Your Child for a Career: *10 Steps You Can Take*

Introduction: The Importance of Making Good Career Choices

A Mini-Course on Career Development. Take Stock in Children's Parent Guide to Careers is a mini-course on career development designed for parents of Take Stock in Children students. Young people need assistance in order to explore career possibilities and make important career decisions, but the world of work is more complex today than ever. They need far more guidance and information than did past generations, primarily because the high-tech, global market economy is growing and changing so rapidly. **This course will show you how to direct your child to some great Internet resources that can enable him to identify careers that match his talents, interests, values, and personality.** You might wonder why career exploration and research is so important for middle and high school students. Read the following paragraph and you'll find out!

“Mom, Dad, I’ve Changed My Mind.” Imagine that your child is a junior in college. He is studying to be a pharmacist. He has taken all sorts of tough classes and has done pretty well. As a parent, you are thrilled. Your son is on the verge of entering a profession and getting a good job. But you get a late-night call from him. He tells you that *he doesn't really want to be a pharmacist*. He has taken an accounting course and really liked it. **He now wants to be an accountant!**

You are stunned. You put down the phone in disbelief. What about all the chemistry and other courses he took? Of what use are they now? How will he pay for another three or four years of college to achieve his goal of getting an accounting degree? Will he later find he doesn't like accounting too? You don't know whether to be glad that he has found the career that is right for him or sad that he is making the wrong choice.

Career Confusion. Obviously, you don't want this to happen to your child, but if you believe that this is a rare case, you are mistaken. Many, many college students change their majors late in the game. Many more students enter careers that they later learn are not suited to their personalities or abilities. *The fact is that far too many students enter college with vague notions or are simply clueless about themselves or the types of careers that match their interests.*

Career dissatisfaction is inevitable if students don't attempt to understand themselves and what they want out of life before making important career decisions.

With the proper guidance, young people can prepare themselves to make good career decisions, including selecting a college major and a college.

Career development is a process of preparing children to make good decisions.

How You Can Help. In the other courses, you learned how to help your child do better in school and prepare for college. Now it's time to take another step and talk about your child's career. **Your goal here is not just to help prepare your child for a career, but rather for the right career.** You might think that you won't be of much help in this area since you are not a career counselor or expert. *Don't worry. You can do it.* This course will be your guide.

You don't have to be an expert in career development to help your child prepare for a career.

Career preparation is a step-by-step process that any parent can learn and follow. All you need is the desire to help. And the information in this course!

Start with a Dream. Preparing your child for a career is all about transforming your child's dream into a practical career plan that makes the dream possible. This course will show you the steps to take, advise you on the decisions to make, and direct you to the resources to enable your child to move from dreaming to planning. But try not to put the cart before the horse by skipping any of these ten steps or rushing through them. **Young people should prepare themselves to make important career decisions. Hasty career decisions can lead to major problems down the line.**

Important Choices. We are asking a lot of our children. We expect a high school student to make choices that will affect the rest of his life, based on very little knowledge or experience. Very few teenagers are ready to make important career decisions. *But these decisions are best made before they attend college!* **Your job as a parent is to make sure your child has help in making the right decisions at the right times.**

Important Benefits. Talking about careers with your child will also have a big impact on his attitude and performance.

Preparing your child for a career will focus him on education as a career pathway.
Talking about career dreams will motivate him to work harder in school.
Having a practical career plan will keep him on track.

Ten Steps. This course describes ten steps you can take to prepare your child to make good career decisions. These steps cover all the phases of career development, from dreaming to concrete planning. Here is preview of the ten steps of career development that you and your child can take:

STAGE ONE: SELF-DISCOVERY. The first three steps you can take to prepare your child for a career are self-discovery activities. Before young people choose a career they should first try to understand themselves better. These activities are designed to get them to discover who they are, identify what they like to do, and decide the kind of lifestyle they want to have. Look over these descriptions and then begin to work through the detailed information in each of the steps.

Step One: TEACH YOUR CHILD TO DREAM. The first step of career development is dreaming. Children should dream about what they want to be and do as adults. They may want to be a detective, doctor, or secret agent. It doesn't matter what these dreams are; they are all important. As parents, we need to know about these dreams and encourage our children to hold onto them. **Dreams are children's guiding stars.** We must get our children to dream high, not low! **This step will show you how to get your child not to settle for the bronze, but rather to go for the gold!**

Step Two: AWAKEN YOUR CHILD'S INTERESTS. Career satisfaction is not always determined by how much money you make. To be truly happy in a career, you must like what you do. This step will help you awaken and identify your child's interests and connect them to appropriate careers. Many times we dream about things that would not really make us happy! **Your child's interests can bring his dreams down to earth.**

Step Three: ASSESS YOUR CHILD'S PERSONALITY. This step links you to several fun personality tests that your child will enjoy taking. These are really not "tests" since there are no right or wrong answers. But they will enable him to discover his attitudes about the world, people, and work. **Your child's personality can serve as a lens by which to explore the world of careers.**

STAGE TWO: EXPLORING THE WORLD OF WORK. The second stage of career development is career exploration. Self-discovery and career exploration go hand in hand. As your child learns more about himself, he will want to learn about careers that match his interests, personality, and values.

Step Four: EXPLORE CAREERS. Career exploration is a great activity for parents and children. By using the tools in this step, you can get detailed information about any occupation. This includes salaries, educational requirements, and the current trends in employment. Your child should use all the things he has learned about himself to interpret this career information. **As your child explores careers, he will begin to learn about all the factors that he should consider before choosing an occupation.** How hard will it be to get a job? Is the salary adequate? What things will I have to do on the job? **Extensive career exploration will give your child a much better understanding of the world of work.**

Step Five: EXPLORING CAREER PATHS. After your child begins to narrow his career search, he should learn about career paths. A career path outlines all the things necessary—education, experience, skills—he must acquire to be qualified for a particular career. The knowledge of career paths should play a major role in choosing a career, **for by choosing a career you also choose a career path you will have to follow.** Choosing a career path will determine what type of college education your child will pursue. You want to make sure that your child understands all about the career path he chooses when he chooses his career!

STAGE THREE: MAKING IMPORTANT DECISIONS. The third stage of career development is decision-making. When should young people begin to make the “big” career decisions in their lives? The answer is: when they are ready to make them. How does a person know when he’s ready? There are no certainties regarding the future. Not every decision we make will be the right one. But it is a lot safer to make informed decisions than impulsive ones. It is also best to know when decisions have to be made. Why make important decisions unless you are ready or you have to make them? These steps have been developed to help you guide your child through the decision-making process.

Step Six: SET YOUR PRIORITIES. Once your child has explored career options, he needs to be able to evaluate them, that is, rank them in terms of their importance to him. Is money the main motivation behind a career choice? A high salary doesn’t always translate into job satisfaction, but a low salary can be a real disappointment! **This step will help your child evaluate his career choices based on his own personal criteria.**

Step Seven: CHOOSING A CAREER. To make good career choices, your child should understand what is important to him about a career. Specifically, how does it meet his needs? This step will show you and your child how to match the career information you have gathered (from **Florida eChoices** and other sources) with your child’s personal needs, personality, and expectations.

STAGE FOUR: PREPARING FOR A CAREER. The fourth stage of career development is career preparation. There are two ways that young people can prepare themselves to be successful in their chosen careers. The first is to learn about the workplace environment, the values and attitudes that make employees successful in any occupation. The second is to develop the career tools they will need to find a job in their career field.

Step Eight: DEVELOP A STRONG WORK ETHIC. There are specific traits, attitudes, and values that your child should acquire in order to be successful in the world of work. These work values are not dissimilar to the values that help students succeed in school. **This step will show you ways to help your child learn about and acquire these values.**

Step Nine: BUILD CAREER TOOLS. It would be nice if all a student required for employment was a college transcript, but getting a good job is not so easy. Resumes, portfolios, cover letters, interviewing, and all the other phases of “tool building” will be covered here. **This step tells you how your child can build the career tools he will need to get a job right after college.**

STAGE FIVE: PLANNING. The last stage of career development is career planning. Once your child has made the more important career decisions, he can begin to create a career plan that will serve as a blueprint to make his dreams possible. We have to

remember, however, that young people mature and change their minds. A career plan should therefore be as flexible as possible to keep your child's options open.

Step Ten: Construct a Career Plan. This step shows you how to construct a career plan that is both flexible and practical. A flexible career plan is one that keeps your child's options open. For example, a student who wants to be a doctor may also want to keep the nursing or medical technology options open as well. *We want our children to shoot for the moon, but also alternate plans they decide that their first choice is not right for them.*

These are the ten steps of career development that you can take to help your child prepare for a career. We hope you and your child use them to make good career decisions and a realistic career plan. The best way to get started is to start talking with your child about his dreams for the future. Go to **TEACHING YOUR CHILD TO DREAM** to begin to develop your child's career.

Step 1: Teach Your Child to Dream

Careers Are Born from Dreams. Whether your child is a sixth-grader or a senior, he has at one time or another dreamed about his future. As adults, we too often do not take these dreams seriously. *But imagining the future is the first step in making it come true.* As parents, our job is to encourage our children to dream and express these dreams. *Dreams open children's minds to the adult world; they are their first pictures of happiness and success.* Many successful people can trace their career choices all the way back to dreams they had in elementary school. But there's no telling when a young person will suddenly have a dream of their future. We must encourage our children to think about the future all the way through school.

Talking with Your Children. Young people may not like to discuss their private wishes and desires with anyone, especially their parents! They may feel that parents will think their dreams are stupid or unrealistic. The first rule here is: **every dream is important and special.** *Don't evaluate your child's dreams.* When children give up on their dreams, they may give up on themselves. When you talk about your child's dreams of the future, don't worry if they are unrealistic or impractical. Who's to say that any dream is impossible? *Dreams are your child's first career choices; use them as a starting-point to talk about the future.*

Dreams Are Symbolic Desires. Children typically dream of the "perfect" career. For instance, your child may dream of becoming president. This dream may not come true, but your child may still become a senator or a leader in business. Telling your child he probably will never become president (which is true), may cause him to give up his desire to be a leader. And then he will never be a senator or business leader! **Never say "no" to a dream!** Dreams express desires in symbolic ways. A child who wants to be president may really just want to own a business or be independent. *Keep that dream alive until he realizes what it really means to him!*

How to Get Your Child to Dream. The first thing to do is talk with your children often about the future. Ask them questions. Make them feel that it is alright to want to be anything they want to be. Wanting to be president is a great dream. This means a child also wants to get a college degree and be successful. *Dreaming is all about imagining possibilities; this is the first step in career development.* Talk about role models and heroes. *Dreaming is also about imagining the "impossible."* If your daughter wants to be president, tell her that she can be. There was a first female judge, doctor, and astronaut. There will be a female president too. Children who pursue their dream careers will be highly focused and driven to succeed. *Every child with an impossible dream just might be able to make it come true some day.*

Here are some good questions to help you get your child to start thinking about the future:

What kind of house would you like to live in?

If you could be any person in the world, who would you be?

- Who is your hero?
- If you could live anywhere in the country, where would it be?
- If you could retire when you are forty, what would you do then?
- If you could create a dream job, what would it be?
- How much money do you want to make when you get older?
- Where would you like to go for a vacation?
- Would you like to work for yourself?
- What things would you like to buy and own when you get older?
- Is there anything that might keep your dreams from coming true?
- What do you have to do to make your dreams come true?

Self-Discovery. After getting your child to talk about his dreams, the next goal is to get him to focus on why his dreams are important. Most dreams are pretty general. “I would like to make a lot of money. I would like to travel.” What is important to discover is his reasons for wanting to travel or to make money. The desire to travel expresses something important about a young person. Your next step is to ask follow-up questions to learn about these reasons, such as: “Why would you like to travel? What would you do with all that money? How would you make all that money?” Getting your child to imagine the future is a gradual process of self-discovery and self-reflection that is essential for career planning. It is essential because it is the beginning of goal-setting. **Your child’s personal goals, desires, and wishes are the things that motivate him to succeed.**

Picturing Dreams. By talking about and visualizing their dreams, young people are able to express their vision of success and happiness. *As a parent, you want to transform this vision into a mission!* Here is a good list of things that your child can use to visualize his dreams. Ask him to visualize his dreams about each of these things and you will both learn some valuable things:

High School: _____

College: _____

House: _____

Car: _____

Money: _____

Clothes: _____

Job: _____

Family: _____

Keep Talking with Your Child. Never stop talking to your child about his dreams. Write down what he tells you. Many people think that these dreams are not important

because children forget them as they mature. Sometimes this is true, but they are nonetheless important indicators of your child's values. *These dreams of the "perfect" house, job, or family are your child's innermost feelings about the world that he wants to live in as an adult.* As you continue to talk with your child about dreams you will become closer and communicate better if you follow a few simple rules:

1. **Honor Your Child's Dreams.** Show him that you value his dreams. This above all will demonstrate to him how much you care about his future. Never deny a child his dreams! Talking together about the future should be a special, private time between you and your child. By honoring your child's dreams, you make him feel special, appreciated, and accepted. Show that you value his dreams and that you value him.
2. **Help Him Visualize These Dreams.** Get him a scrapbook to put pictures of the house, car, or other things he dreams about. If he wants to be a doctor or senator, bring him information about these jobs. Ask him what doctors do, what types of medicine there are, and why he wants to be a doctor. As you discover his reasons for choosing a career, you will get a much better idea of how he views his mission in life.
3. **Write Down These Dreams.** Ask him to write down his dreams. The better he can describe his dreams, the better he will understand them. If he wants to be a doctor, ask him to write down what it means to be a doctor and why it is important to him. Have him describe all the good things doctors do.
4. **Use Dreams for Self-Discovery.** Dreams tell a great deal about a person. Over the years, you will begin to see how your child has developed by understanding how his dreams have developed. Dreams are symbolic. The dream of becoming a doctor may express the desire to help people. Your child may change his career choice, but he may still want to help people. The key is to understand why your child dreams about an occupation; this dream is the first indication of what he values about being an adult.
5. **You Can Get There from Here.** The talks you have with your child are special times. They give you the chance to encourage him. *Most young people give up their dreams because of lack of encouragement.* You can also use this time to get your child focused on the ways to make his dreams come true.

Summary: Teaching Your Child to Dream. Teaching your child to dream is easy and fun.

First, talk with him often. Talk about your own dreams for him—how you would like his life to turn out. Discuss how you agree and how you differ about his future.

Second, get him to visualize his dreams of the future. Always relate his desires to an occupation that makes them possible.

Third, relate his dreams back to himself—his own qualities and things he thinks he will have to do to make his dreams come true. If he says he "wants to be happy," ask him what makes him happy and why.

Fourth, point out that education can make dreams come true. The whole point of dreaming is to decide what kind of job makes dreams possible and what type of education is necessary to get that job!

Finally, celebrate the moments you share with your child. This should be something you both enjoy. *Tell him that you will do all you can to help his dreams come true.*

The next step of career development is another self-discovery activity: **AWAKEN YOUR CHILD'S INTERESTS**. This step will give you tips for helping your child make his career dreams more concrete

Step 2: Awaken Your Child's Interests

Dreams Are Wishes. In the previous step, we discussed your child's dreams, his imaginary vision of the future; they are important because they express his wish for happiness. Dreams leap from the present into the future in one movement. They open your child to new possibilities, but, in fact, dreams are often merely symbols of what your child really values, desires, and likes.

Interests Are Practical Career Guides. The next step in career development is to move your child from dreaming toward the discovery of activities that he actually likes to do. Hobbies, personal interests, and recreational activities are also symbolic expressions of your child's hidden career interests. *Your child's interests are a good indicator of his work preferences—the types of work he would enjoy.* If your child loves to work with model airplanes, he also may want to have a career in design or working with his hands in a mechanical field.

Awaken Your Child's Interests. The next phase of career development is awakening your child's interests, for these too are symbolic of his career interests. What sorts of games, hobbies, or activities would he like to try? Think of ways to expose your child to things that might get him interested in a career. Does he like drawing on a computer? If so, he might want to think about graphic design. If your child does not show interest in many things, try to find something new each week to get him to do. Here's a simple exercise to do with your child to awaken his interests:

1. Ask him to make a list of his interests.
2. Add any other interests he may have overlooked.
3. Think of new things he might be interested in.
4. Try to think of jobs that fit each of his interests.
5. Talk about these jobs with your child.

Match Your Child's Interests to Careers. You can use the career interest surveys in this section to help your child discover his areas of interest and use them to identify possible career choices. These exercises are fun and can be very productive.

1. **Florida eChoices:** www.florida.echoices.com This is one of the best resources available on the Internet! You can use Florida eChoices for just about every phase of career development with your child. Here's how to use it to find out about your child's interests:

Click the address listed above.

Log in by entering your Zip Code and Area Code. Hit "Continue."

Click "Jump In." (You can also create an account for your child by following the directions on this page.)

Under "Assessments" on the left-hand column, you will see: "Work Importance Locator," "Interest Profiler," and "Transferable Skills Checklist."

These are three excellent tools you can use to identify your child's interests and match them with possible careers.

2. Interest Assessment :

<http://www.uhs.berkeley.edu/Students/CareerLibrary/Links/ASSESS.HTM>. Visit this address and you'll see a quick and fun tool that uses your child's interests to identify careers he might like and college courses appropriate for these careers. Every student should spend a little time looking over this site.

3. The Career Key: <http://www.careerkey.org/english/you/>. This is another easy-to-use assessment tool that will help your child learn about his interests and values. This site also has a lot of great career links.

Matching Interests to Careers. These tools can link your child's interests to careers that he might like. Using interests to explore careers is fun and beneficial at the same time. These tools can help you and your child create a long list of career possibilities. The larger the list, the better. There will be plenty of time later to narrow down this list. Your main goals here are to assist your child in discovering his interests and to show him how to match his interests to appropriate career options. Florida eChoices will make this easy for you.

The last step of self-discovery focuses upon your child's personality. Does he understand himself? How can he identify his personal traits, values, and needs? **Personal self-assessment is very, very important for proper career development. Young people who do not truly understand themselves—their values, personal preferences, traits, and skills—are unlikely to make good career decisions.**

This next step will show him how to learn more about himself: **ASSESS YOUR CHILD'S PERSONALITY**

Step 3: Assess Your Child's Personality

Personality is Important. Interest surveys are easy and fun ways to identify possible career options. Interests are not the only career guides, however; personality plays a big role in determining the types of jobs a person enjoys and even their ultimate success on the job. Young people should choose careers that “fit” their personalities—their values, preferences, traits, and attitudes. Personality tests are more complex than interest surveys because there are many factors that come into play. For example, your child may love to work on computers. He may choose to become a computer repairperson. But when he gets a job fixing computers, he finds he hates it because he also enjoys working with other people. *If he had assessed his personality more thoroughly, he may have realized that becoming a computer salesperson, rather than a repairperson, was the perfect job for him!*

Personality Tests are Fun. After your child has identified his interests, he should start to learn more about himself by taking as many personality tests as possible. These are not really “tests” because there are no right or wrong answers. They are merely self-discovery activities. What values do I hold? How do I react to situations and people? Children will love to take these tests because they get to learn more about themselves. *Personality tests help us discover new things about ourselves; they help us understand how we look at the world.* For example, is your child an extrovert (likes dealing with people) or an introvert (likes working alone)? Young people who are extroverts are far more likely to do well in sales and other jobs that involve frequent contact with people. Those individuals who are introverts will enjoy jobs working by themselves. *Understanding your child's personality is a great way to help him focus on career choices that match his values and personal traits—and getting him to plan an education that makes this possible.*

Personality and Career Choices. How can a personality test help your son choose a career? These tests can match your child's personal values and traits to general career areas that are compatible with them. Once again, children shouldn't feel that they have to choose careers that match their personalities. Interest surveys and personality tests are simply tools that allow them to look at various career options. Their purpose is to get students to learn about themselves and to start thinking about their personal needs, values, and preferences.

Personality Tests are Self-Esteem Boosters. Personality tests can have another benefit for children: they can make them feel special. These tests help your child think about who he really is. This is very important for young people. As parents, we spend a lot of time with our children telling them what to do and teaching them right from wrong. Children can get the feeling that they are constantly being told who they are as well. *These tests allow them to say for themselves who they are and what they want. **This helps them feel more confident and competent.***

Here are several personality tests that your child can take. To make things more interesting, you can take them too and then talk over the results with your child. This

will be fun for both of you. Just about everyone who has ever taken these personality tests has enjoyed doing so.

1. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator:

<http://www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/JTypes2.asp>. The Myers-Briggs test is the most widely used personality assessment tool. This is a smaller version of the test—72 questions that your child can answer about himself. This will give him a four-letter code describing his personality type.

To learn more about the meaning of this code, go to: <http://www.personalitypage.com/portraits.html>. Here you can look over the 16 possible personality types and see if your child's personality actually fits his "type." You can also talk with your child's guidance counselor about the results of this test to learn about careers that match your child's profile. (The full version of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator test is available for a fee. Ask your child's counselor for more information.) Florida eChoices, mentioned earlier in this course, uses the Myers-Briggs codes as well.

2. Self-Assessment: <http://www.csp.msu.edu/cdc/webport/selfassessment.html>. This site has some good tools that you can download and use with your child. Here you'll find one-page worksheets to help identify his work values, personality, and skills.

3. Practical Career Assessment: <http://www.iccweb.com/careerfocus/index.asp>. This is a very practical test that, in ten minutes, will help your child identify possible career fields.

4. Holland Code: <http://career.missouri.edu/article.php?sid=146>. Schools and other institutions use variations of a personal assessment test developed by John Holland. This site contains a test based on Holland's method. This takes only a few minutes; you can use the results to identify careers that match your child's personality profile. (Ask your child's guidance counselor about taking the Holland test at school.)

The Value of Personality Tests. Personality tests are valuable self-discovery tools. They help children learn more about themselves and what they want to do in life. Is your child an extrovert or introvert? Does he like working with his hands? Does he like working indoors or outdoors? Personality tests help young people make better career decisions because it enables them to understand how a career can fulfill them personally. Being able to make good career decisions in turn makes their educational planning easier.

From Self-Discovery to Career Exploration. Dreaming, interest surveys, and personality tests are self-discovery activities. They are easy and fun ways for young people to learn more about themselves and to search for careers that match their values, interests, and personalities. But self-discovery is only one side of the coin. Your child realizes that he loves to work with his hands. Does this mean he should be a doctor or a mechanic? Self-discovery is only the first stage of career development. It can target general areas of interest, *but it doesn't provide children with the concrete, practical information they need to practical career decisions.* To make well-informed career

decisions, young people should enter the second stage of career development: **CAREER EXPLORATION**

Step 4: Career Exploration

Learning About Careers. Self-discovery and career exploration go hand in hand. Learning about himself helps your son better understand his career possibilities; learning about careers can enable him to better understand his own needs and goals. Exploring careers with your child can be rewarding and very enjoyable. As you talk about specific occupations, you can share your own personal views of these jobs. In this step you will learn how to focus your child's career search on the specific aspects of a job—work activities, work environment, pay—in order to help him make more informed choices. Your input will also be very important here. Be sure to talk about your job and all the things that go on in the world of work that your child should learn about.

How to Conduct a Career Search. Once your child has completed some of the self-discovery activities, he should be able to narrow his career search a bit. But you don't want his focus to be too narrow. Here's an example of why career searching should be flexible. Your son is a straight A student. He has no trouble with science courses. You would be thrilled if he became a doctor, but medicine just doesn't appeal to him right now. That's okay. *Tell him not to rule out any career until he learns more about it.* Don't let your child put blinders on and see only one direction! Career exploration is just that—exploring—learning new things. *Career exploration should continue as long as possible until your child is ready to make key decisions, such as:*

- Do I want to go to college or vocational school?
- Do I know the career path (science, math, business, etc.) that is right for me?
- Do I know the career field that is right for me?

Career Exploration Must Address Personal Needs. Here's another example that illustrates the importance of considering all your child's personal needs. Your son's personality test shows that he is an extrovert and enjoys helping people. He says he wants to become a social worker, but he has also told you that he wants to make as much money as possible. A sales job might be his best choice. Salespersons help customers and can make a lot of money. Your son will therefore have to consider all his personal requirements before choosing those that are most important to him. That's why it is so important to learn as much as possible about the differences among careers.

Key Factors in Career Assessment. In this step, you will find three great career search tools that are easy to use. They will provide you with just about everything you need to know about specific careers and occupations. Here's where guidance is all-important for your child. *To prepare to use these tools, he needs to know what to look for in a job and how to evaluate this information.* Here are some of the key things to know about an occupation:

Salary. Students should understand what sort of salary they can expect to make and if it supports the lifestyle they desire—before they make their final career choices. Salary is usually the first thing that your child wants to discover. How much will the job pay? Choosing a career based solely on salary

considerations is not advisable because it is very important that workers enjoy their work as well as the pay. The key issue here is: will my job support the lifestyle that I want?

Work Activities. Students should gain a thorough understanding of the things they will have to do on the job before they decide on their careers. Students may want to become managers. They take and do well in their management courses, but this does not mean that they understand the personal impact of management decisions—on themselves and their employees. Many times young people choose an occupation that interests them only to learn later that they are doing things that they don't like to do. For example, managers sometimes have to lay off, discipline, or fire employees. This is part of their job. These decisions can be difficult decisions because employees have families that depend on them. **It is therefore very important that young people understand the types of work activities they will have to perform, if and when they enter a particular occupation.**

Working Conditions. Students should have a clear picture of the actual work environment of a job before they choose their careers. Some jobs require that workers get dirty, work on roofs, or out in the heat. Your child may love to work with tools, building things, but he may not like construction work when it gets 100 degrees in the summer! There are specific working conditions for every job. Your son may love the actual work, but hate the conditions. It is therefore a good idea for him to learn all he can about job environments. Will he work in an air-conditioned office or out in the heat? Will he work regular hours or be on call 24/7?

Job Outlook. Students should understand their prospects for getting a job before deciding to enter that career field. Your son has decided to become a history teacher. He is comfortable with the salary, loves the subject of history, and likes the fact that he has his summers off. (He likes to fish.) He graduates and looks for a job. Oops! There are no teaching jobs in history in his county. Well, he can always go to the next county. Nope! He begins to realize that it is very difficult to find a job in his field anywhere in Florida. He could have discovered this fact five years before by looking at the job outlook for history teachers.

Training and Qualifications. Students should have detailed knowledge of all the necessary qualifications and requirements—before they choose to enter a career field. How much education and training will your child need to qualify for a job? Career exploration is never complete unless your child can answer this question.

Your Career Exploration Tools. Here are some things you can do to begin your child's career search.

- 1) You and your child can explore careers using the websites listed below.
- 2) *The goal of career exploration is to gather as much information about careers as possible.*

- 3) As you and your child talk about different jobs, make sure you focus on the five items listed above. If just one of these items is not to his liking, your son may not want to choose that career.
- 4) Try to find a computer that has a printer so that you can download important information.
- 5) If not, you can write it down.
- 6) It's a good idea to put all this information in a file folder so that you can go back to it.
- 7) *The main thing you should try to do here is to start making a long list of occupations that appeal to your child.*

Good Tools to Use. Here are a few great tools that you and your child can use to explore careers:

1. Occupational Handbook: <http://www.bls.gov/ocohome.htm>. **This is a great career browser and research tool.** You and your child can use it to gather information about jobs and much, much more. The Occupational Handbook is the definitive guide to job-related information. Go to the home page and you'll find three ways to search for careers. You can use the occupational clusters in the right column; this works well if you know your child is interested in a general field such as management or construction. You can also type in the name of an occupation in the search box or search for occupations by the letters of the alphabet. Using this tool is a great way to get started exploring careers because it provides you with current and comprehensive information about nearly every occupational field.

2. Florida eChoices: www.florida.echoices.com. This is a one-stop career development resource. To explore careers matched to your child's interests, you can use the three assessment tools on the left column of the Home Page. Under the "Databases" section, you can also use the "Occupations" tool to explore careers and gather information. Under "Occupation Search," you will find 22 search topics, from Aptitudes to Work Values. These are great tools to get a full picture of individual occupations. Spend as much time using this tool as you need. You can use all three of the assessment tools (Interest Profiler, Transferable Skills Checklist, and Work Importance Locator) to find very specific, detailed occupational information. *Florida eChoices is the best all-around career exploration tool on the Internet because it allows you to target your searches using your own personal criteria!*

3. Career InfoNet: <http://www.acinet.org/acinet/>. This is a great resource for you as a parent. This site has very sophisticated tools and detailed information about the world of work. It is a good place for you to learn about the trends in the job market and the types of skills and training young people will need to compete for jobs. You should probably preview this site before working on it with your child to save time.

4. O*Net: <http://online.onetcenter.org/>. You can streamline your career exploration with this tool. It has a number of shortcuts you and your child can use to identify appropriate career choices.

Try to use all of these career exploration tools because each has unique and valuable features. Each one will give you and your child more information about specific careers.

Talking with Others. After narrowing your child's career search, another good way to explore careers is by talking with adults who work in these career areas. If your son wants to know what it's like to work as a heavy equipment operator, an accountant, or a pharmacist, tell him to talk to people who already have these jobs. Try to direct him to these individuals. But don't just let him talk with one accountant to get a view of accounting; have him talk to as many as possible. *Most adults will be happy to talk with your son about their careers. They will give him honest answers to his questions.*

The next step in career exploration is to **explore career paths**. This is very important because a career path includes all the things your child will have to do to enter his career field.

Go to **STEP FIVE: EXPLORING CAREER PATHS**

Step 5: Exploring Career Paths

The Importance of Career Paths. Exploring career paths is a crucial part of career exploration because it gives students a realistic understanding of all the things they will have to do to qualify for their chosen career. At this point, you and your child may have made a list of possible career options. The next step is to make certain he understands all the academic or vocational requirements for entering the careers that most interest him. Does he know the right courses to take? What should be his college major? What experience will he need? The information provided here will help him answer these questions and more.

A Career Path Points Students in the Right Direction. A career path is simply a general educational direction that your child must follow in order to be qualified for a career: the courses he must take, the requirements he must meet, and the degrees or certifications he must earn. These paths can be broadly defined, e.g., “business” or “teaching” and narrowly defined e.g., “pediatrician” or “physical trainer.” Students who are not certain about what type of occupation they want can still choose a career path based on their interests and aptitudes. For example, a student who is interested in science can follow a career path in that direction without having to commit to a specific career in science until later in college. He might want to go into medicine, be a pharmacist, or a biologist. **Students who are not certain of their career fields should follow career paths that give them the most desirable options.**

Flexibility: A Good Way to Evaluate Career Paths. If your son wants to go into business, he will follow a career path in business. Business is a career path that prepares students for many career options. Business career paths are far more flexible than others. *It is important to remember that, by choosing a career path, your child is already making a choice that closes off other options. This is the time to take an objective look at your son’s talents, skills, and motivation. When you talk to your child, you have to be honest and candid about his ability to follow his chosen career path.*

Evaluating Career Paths. As your child explores careers, he should also think about the career paths required for employment in each career field. Here are a few things to think about:

- How long will I have to go to school to be qualified for a job?
- What sorts of courses will I have to take in high school and college?
- Will I need more training after college?
- Will I have to go to graduate school?
- What major should I select in college?

Personal Assessment. When your child has compiled a list of careers and occupations, he can use the tools listed below to identify possible career paths. Write these requirements down and talk with him about his choices. Will he be able to pass the courses he must take? Is he motivated to take the courses necessary to prepare him for a career? If he is not highly motivated, he may not be sure that his career choice is right for

him. *Evaluating a career path is different from evaluating a career choice. Career choices target what we want; career paths state what we have to do to get what we want.* Young people may wish to become doctors, lawyers, or engineers. These are demanding professions. Before they commit themselves to these careers, they should have a thorough understanding of what is required of them.

How to Explore Career Paths. Here's an easy way to learn about career paths:

Go to Florida eChoices: www.florida.echoices.com .

Click "Occupations"

Click "Occupation Search"

You will see 22 possible search topics. Click "Career Areas," "Career Pathways," "School Subjects," and "Post-Secondary Programs"

Identify items from each of these sections and corresponding occupations will appear

For even more information, use the **Career Pathways** tool offered by Marion County Public Schools: http://www.marioncareerpathways.org/career_pathways.htm.

Career Paths are the Means to an End. To understand a career path means to understand how to get there from here: courses to take and skills to acquire. The stages of self-discovery and career exploration shouldn't come to an end when your child begins to make important career decisions; **they merely become more focused.** For example, if your son loves to work with his hands, he can use this criterion to pick out interesting jobs. But how will he choose among such jobs? The answer is to establish a list of priorities for his choice of a career. As your child moves from middle school to and through high school, he should start to narrow down his search and begin to **set his own priorities** and requirements for choosing a career. The next step of career development is to learn how to establish these priorities.

Go to **Step Six: [Set Your Priorities](#)**

Step 6: Set Your Priorities

What's Important to You? Establishing priorities is a key step in career development. *This means that your child can now decide what's really important to him about a career.* If salary and work activities are the most important factors, then these are the criteria he will probably use to rank his career choices. **Your job is to get your child to look at all the aspects of a career, not just one or two.**

How to Guide Your Child. By now your child should have a number of pages listing all the these career options in order to make a "short list" of possible career choices. Here's how you can help. Have him list the things about a career that are important to him on the first worksheet. These are items such as salary and security, as listed in the first row.

Rank	Things that are Most Important to Me about a Career
	Salary, Job Outlook, Work Environment, Qualifications, Education, Skills, Work Activities, Benefits, Job Security, Chance for Advancement
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

This top ten list will serve as a good starting-point for evaluating his career options. He can also add other things to his list, if he feels they are important to him. Several of these items are important to everyone. If your child does not like the salary or activities associated with a career, why would he choose to pursue it? He may like the salary and the work, but will he meet all the qualifications? **This list can help to get your child to realize that high-paying jobs and careers usually require students to follow more challenging career paths.**

Asking the Right Questions. We can't make career choices for our children, but we can make certain that they have as much information as possible before making these decisions. For example, your child may ask you: "Is the salary for this occupation enough to raise a family?" Here are some questions to think about before your child starts to rank his career choices:

- Will the salary be enough for me to have the lifestyle I want?
- Is the job outlook good or poor?
- I want to live in South Florida; will I be able to get a job there?
- What is the cost of living in South Florida?
- Do I have the skills required by this occupation?

Do I like this type of work?
What are the pros and cons connected with this occupation?

Choosing a Career. After your child has completed the self-discovery and career exploration activities, he should have enough information to be able to rank his career choices according to his own personal goals, expectations, values, and needs. He should know what's important to him about a job and if the type of job he has chosen meets his expectations. *It's time now to create a short list of career choices.* Your child can use this worksheet to list his top five or ten career choices:

Career Choice	Rank	Why I Chose this Career
	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
	4.	
	5.	
	6.	
	7.	
	8.	
	9.	
	10.	

Making the Right Decisions. Is there a magic formula for making the right career choices? No. But there is one for making informed decisions: **knowing yourself + career exploration = Awareness of Appropriate Options.** It is advisable to take lots of time to work with your child through the self-discovery and exploration activities to help him understand himself—what he wants, what he likes to do—as well as the world of careers. As a parent, you can play a pivotal role in your child's career development by continually talking with him about all this information.

The key is to ask questions of your child! Encourage him do extra research and explore on his own. Urge him to find out more information on his own. Ask him to talk to people in his career field. See what they have to say. Get information from many sources. If you can't answer his questions, direct him to people who can. But there comes a point when he has to start making decisions about his career and career path.

The Next Step. We've now taken seven steps just to create a short list of career choices. Young people can bypass all these steps and just write down their top five career choices. But, after going through these exercises, do you think their choices are informed ones? If your child has worked through each step, he should be able to make choices based on who he is, what he can do, and what he wants in life. The next step is **CHOOSING A CAREER**

Step 7: Choosing a Career

When to Choose a Career. Ultimately, every student will have to choose a career. Juniors and seniors in high school should have a fairly good idea of what they want to be in life and be able to plan their education accordingly. As parents, we must remember that choosing a career at such a young age can be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it is good to know what you want to do in life before entering college so that you can effectively plan your education. On the other, you don't want to get locked into a career choice that you might regret later.

How to Prepare to Make Career Decisions. Up to now, your child has been compiling a big file containing his personal and career information. He can now use the career worksheet below to sort out the information that is important to him.

- 1) In the left-hand column he can make a list of all his personal criteria (everything that is important to him about a job).
- 2) By "everything," we mean everything. This includes salary, working conditions, and any other possible need and expectation he may have.
- 3) The goal here is to be complete. Don't leave anything out.
- 4) In the right-hand column he can put in the specific information about his career choices corresponding to each of his criteria.
- 5) Here's a sample sheet that was created using only the information in Florida eChoices:

Career Choice #1: Dietician/Nutritionist	
Things That Are Important to Me	Information about My Career

Work Activities: I want to plan meals and supervise food service at a hospital. I want activities that are part administrative, part supervisory, and part planning.	I understand the 8 "Typical Tasks" of a Dietician/Nutritionist listed. They meet my expectations.
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Career Field: I want to be part of the general "healthcare" field.	A Dietician/Nutritionist falls under the heading of "Healthcare Practitioners" and "Technical Occupations"
---	--

Specialties and Similar Occupations: I want to work in a hospital.	Of the six specialties for a Dietician, I like the Clinical Dietician best.
---	---

Associations: I need much more detailed information about the field.	I need to contact the American Dietetic Association and the American Society for Nutritional Sciences for more information.
---	---

Web Site	www.eatright.org
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Education:	I need a Bachelor's degree with focus in
-------------------	--

I prefer to go to college, but I'm not sure about graduate school.

dietetics, foods and nutrition, food service systems management, and other areas.

Transferable Skills: I am a good planner and administrator. I can see myself as a restaurant manager too.

Here are the specific skills I need:
Counseling and advising
Health care instruction
Planning staff work tasks
Lodging and facilities management
Planning and administering budgets
Planning and giving information and help

Basic Skills: I am good at writing down instructions and plans. I like to plan things and make decisions ahead of time.

Here are the basic skills I need:
Reading comprehension
Active listening
Writing (high level)
Speaking
Mathematics
Science (high level)
Critical thinking
Active learning
Learning strategies
Monitoring

Physical Demands: No manual labor for me.

Light

Interests:

Thinker
Persuader
Helper

The job fits my Holland Code:
Investigative: I like to analyze situations and come up with creative solutions. I prefer to work on my own and persuade others to accept my ideas.
Enterprising. I like having power, prestige, and high status as well as the language skills to influence others.
Social. I like to help other people.

Myers-Briggs Type: I am an ESFP.

I want a job that fits my type.

The types suited for this job are:
INFJ
ESFP

ENFP
ENFJ

Employment Outlook: I want to be sure I will get a job after college.

Big Problem! There are only 2,127 annual job openings expected between 1998 and 2008! This is a small occupation; only 53,000 people in the whole country work in this area. The national average for all occupations is 269,699!

Salary: I would like to make about \$50,000 a year.

Another Problem! The average salary for dieticians in Florida is \$37,003! For an entry-level job in Fort Walton Beach, the salary is only \$21,133! That's where I want to live!

Working Conditions: I want a safe, cordial working environment.

Working conditions are comfortable and safe.

This report was compiled in less than ten minutes using Florida eChoices. This student thought that her career choice was a perfect match for her. But she was not very happy with the job outlook or pay. What should she do? Your child should prepare a worksheet like this one for every possible career choice that interests him. **Using Florida eChoices to complete worksheets like this one may be the best practical career development exercise for young people because it matches their requirements to concrete job information.**

Building Career Tools. It is now time to take your child's career development into a new direction: building his career tools. These tools are the information, documents, habits, attitudes, and skills that he will need to acquire and apply to be ready to get and keep a job after college. You might wonder why students can't wait until after college to learn about career tools. **Students are well advised to learn how to create their career tools early because they will also learn all the ways to make them more effective.** For example, students who understand what skills and accomplishments make their resumes more powerful will have time to start building their skills and focusing on accomplishments at the same time as they pursue their education.

In the next step of career development, you will learn how help your child **DEVELOP A STRONG WORK ETHIC**

Step 8: Develop a Strong Work Ethic

Success is No Accident. The next stage of career development is career preparation. Many young people understand about career paths, education, and all the other qualifications for entering a career field. But they have no idea about work and what it takes **to be successful on the job**. There are certain values and traits that your child will have to acquire if he is to succeed in the world of work. Success does not just happen to people; they have to make it happen by means of their attitude and work habits.

A Good Work Ethic. The first step in career preparation is to develop a good work ethic. Talent, brains, and education are great assets, but a strong work ethic is just as important to employers. We have created a worksheet to help you evaluate and improve your child's work ethic. The first column lists the values and traits required for success on the job. The second column asks you to evaluate your child's work ethic in terms of each of these values and traits. The third column offers recommendations for helping your child improve. Get a piece of paper and divide it into three columns; then write down the Success Traits in the left column, your responses to the questions in the center column, and what you intend to do to help your child in the third column (using the suggestions listed below). You can also include your own ideas as well.

Success Trait	My Child's Work Ethic	How to Improve
Dependability	Does he do what he says he'll do? Can you rely on him? Does he forget things? Does he think following through is important? Will he follow through even though things get tough?	Set up a schedule Help with time management skills Use discipline to help him follow through with things Reward him for complying
Initiative	Will he do more than he's asked to do? Does he like to take charge? Does he always wait to be told what to do? Is he a follower? Is he afraid of responsibility?	Urge him to do more than he has to Reward him for going the extra mile Show him how important it is to exceed people's expectations
Punctuality	Does he have a problem with tardiness at school? Does he have trouble getting up in the morning? Does he lose track of time? Does he forget times?	Stress the importance of being on time Reward him for coming home on time Praise him every time he is punctual

Integrity	Can he be trusted with responsibility? Does he lie to cover up things?	Reward honesty Praise him for telling the truth
Cooperation	Does he get along with others? Does he understand teamwork? Will he compromise?	Teach him how to listen to others Praise him for cooperating at home
Taking Instruction	Does he listen well? Does he respect or fight authority? Is he obedient or rebellious?	Encourage him to follow rules at home and at school Reinforce the importance of listening to employers
Hard Work	Does he like to work? Is he a couch potato or a self-starter? Will he work hard on his own?	Encourage him to become active Give him work activities on a regular basis Praise him for working hard on tasks

The Importance of Work Values. Teaching young people about the value of work seems to be the least important of the ten steps of career development. But this is not the case. Not only is it a high priority for parents; it is also the most difficult of the ten steps because it requires much patience and persistence on the part of the parent to be effective. All the career development activities and tools in the world will be useless to your child if he is not motivated to work and self-disciplined enough to be dependable. *Meeting employer's expectations requires hard work and the right attitude.*

The Intrinsic Value of Work. It is often hard to convince young people that hard work is valuable in itself, regardless of the pay or benefits. They see celebrities and rich people on tv and begin to believe that the best jobs are those that are fun and glamorous. They have no idea how hard an actor or athlete has had to work to get where he or she is today. Acting looks easy, but it isn't. Michael Jordan makes basketball look easy, but we don't see all the years of hard work it took for him to make basketball so "easy." *The main point you want to emphasize to your son is that he will have to develop a strong work ethic, no matter what type of career he chooses.* It's also a lot easier to work hard if you love what you do! **That's why career development is so important; it helps you discover what you love to do!**

The Next Step of Preparation. Helping your child acquire a strong work ethic is the most difficult of the ten steps of career development; it takes time and a lot of patience on your part. This course can show him how to design a resume, how to plan for a career, or

how to assess his interests. It cannot tell you an easy way to teach your child the value of work. *Successful people take pride in their work, regardless of the type of job or the level of pay.* This pride stems from personal satisfaction and fulfillment. We can praise our children for their effort; we can encourage them to work hard. Ultimately, though, they have to learn the value of work for themselves.

On the Job Training. One of the best ways to help your child develop a work ethic is to work on jobs with him. Then you have the chance to set the proper example. Your child will see how hard you work at something, how much pride you take in doing it well, and the fact that you don't quit until the job is done; he will come to admire your work ethic and value it because he loves and respects you. **The best way to teach your child about the value of work is to show him, not tell him.**

The next step of career preparation is a practical one: building your child's career tools. These career tools are the things he will need to get and keep a job. High school students should know all about the skills, attitudes, and personal accomplishments that employers value so that they can properly prepare for work while they are in school. Go to **BUILD CAREER TOOLS** to learn more.

Step 9: Build Career Tools

Preparing Your Child's Career Tools. The last step of career preparation has to do with constructing the tools your child will need to enter and be successful in the world of work. *Whether your child is in middle school or high school, he needs to know how to build the tools he will need to find jobs in his career field.*

The Student Resume. You might be thinking: "My child is too young to need a resume." That may be true. But does he know how to build one? *Building a resume means doing the things necessary to be able to have a strong resume later.* The first step in building a resume is to learn about its structure and components. If you visit the sites listed below, you will find a lot of practical information about constructing a resume:

1. www.1.umn.edu/ohr/ecep/resume. This is a great, interactive resume builder. You and your child can work through all the exercises to learn how to create a resume in a very short time.
2. http://www.jobweb.com/Resumes_Interviews/resume_guide/restips.html. This is another good "resume tutorial" that will teach your child all about resume writing.

The Basic Structure of a Resume. Here are some things you should know about the structure of a student resume:

1. **The Objective.** This is a short statement that explains the purpose of the resume: "An entry-level position in medical technology." Your child's objective statement is like a mission statement and a goal rolled into one.
2. **Education.** Future employers will want to know about your child's educational background and achievements. This will emphasize to students how important good grades can be.
3. **Skills.** Employers will want to know the specific things you are able to do and do well. Are you a leader? What things can you do? Do they transfer to the job?
4. **Experience.** Young people constantly complain about this "Catch 22" situation: "They want people with experience, but how can I ever get experience without first getting a job?" There are ways to get around this obstacle. Volunteer work in high school and college will look very good to employers and will show that you have work experience. How can you plan to get the experience you'll need? **Students can list a great deal of work experience if they volunteer for community projects or other worthwhile programs.**

You can see that the self-discovery activities your child has completed will be of great help in constructing his resume. They will eventually serve as the material for certain parts of your child's resume.

The Secrets of a Good Resume. Here are a few tips you can share with your child about a resume:

1. **Easy to Read.** Employers don't have time to read a book. They want resumes they can read very quickly and that are professional in appearance.
2. **Simplicity.** Don't put stuff on the resume that is unnecessary or irrelevant. Clarity and an attractive format are better than a long list of things. Remember that employers may look at many resumes; so, they spend very little time on each one. A good resume is one that stands out at first glance.
3. **Power Words.** Make sure the resume has power words that highlight your skills and accomplishments. Power words are action words that show what your child did and how well they did it: "successfully handled customer complaints."
4. **Honesty.** Many people hype themselves on a resume. But there's a big difference between exaggeration and lying. Make sure you understand this difference. Never lie on a resume. It will come back to haunt you later.
5. **Good Match.** Your resume should be a good match for the employer's requirements and needs. Make sure that your objective statement, skills, and accomplishments conform to the needs of the employer.
6. **No Typos.** Your resume should not have any mistakes in spelling or of any other kind. Mistakes on a resume usually mean that it will get tossed.

Create a Career Portfolio. A resume is the traditional career tool. However, employers today are asking for more from candidates. They want more documentation of their skills and achievements; they want samples of work to prove that a candidate can do what he says he can. Here is a good resource that will tell you how to construct a career portfolio: www.glencoe.com/ps/peak/careerdev/portfolio/index.html. Click "Developing Your Career Portfolio." This page will describe how to build a career portfolio. If you want to use a portfolio builder go to: www.glencoe.com/ps/peak/careerdev/portfolio/guide.html. This is another good resource: www.nde.state.nv.us/we/smp/edplan.html.

Elements of a Career Portfolio. Career portfolios give employers very detailed information and documentation of candidates' abilities and achievements. They also allow young people the chance to express themselves creatively. Art students, for example, get the chance to include samples of their work. Work samples are very good career tools because they conclusively demonstrate what kind of work you can do. Here are the basic elements of a complete career portfolio:

1. Cover
2. Cover Letter (to a specific employer)
3. Title Page
4. Table of Contents
5. Introduction
6. List of Significant Life Experiences
7. Analysis of Achievements
8. Inventory of Interests, Aptitudes, and Values
9. Inventory of Skills
10. Personal Qualities
11. Documentation (transcripts)
12. Work Philosophy and Goals

13. Resume
14. Interview Planning
15. Work Samples

How Far Do You Want to Go? The higher up the ladder your child wants to go, the more likely it is that he will need a portfolio. Resumes are sufficient for many jobs, but employers are now setting the bar higher for prospective candidates. *The great thing about this career development course is that it shows you how to gather all the information to construct a good portfolio.*

Searching for Jobs. Resumes and portfolios are the most important career tools. But your child will also have to learn how to write an effective cover letter and be able to do well in a job interview. Here are some good resources that can help your child in these areas:

1. **The Cover Letter:** www.myfuture.com/career/before.html. Your child can use the information here to learn how to construct a good cover letter.
2. **The Job Interview:** www.myfuture.com/career/step1.html. This site gives you the ten steps of the job interview.
3. **More About the Job Interview:** www.careerbuilder.com/gh_int_htg.html. This site has additional information about job interviews.

Building Tools is a Continuous Process. Your child can learn a great deal about these career tools on his own or working with you. But the point is to think about the ways to build effective tools. Any student can build a resume, but not every one can create an effective one. Effective resumes have a pleasing, functional format, but there has to be something of value to the employer on the resume if it is to accomplish its purpose. This is where **planning** comes into the picture. Now that you and your child have completed the first four stages of career development it is time to determine just how to put all this information together to create an effective career plan.

Take the Final Step. The last phase of career development is career planning. If you and your child have worked through these nine steps, you will find that planning is not difficult because you have already collected the information you will need to create a good career plan.

Go to **STEP TEN: [CREATE A CAREER PLAN](#)**

Step 10: Create a Career Plan

Staying on Course. We are now almost at the end of the journey. It's now time to put all the pieces together--to sort out what we don't need and keep what we do need. The last step of career development is career planning. Self-discovery, career exploration, career decision-making, and career preparation all converge in the planning stage. **A career plan is a roadmap that marks the distance and route from where your child is now to where he wants to be in the future. A career plan is the best way to keep your child on course to achieve his career goals.**

Advantages of a Career Plan. What are the advantages of a career plan? First of all, a good career plan can help your child stay on course to achieve his goals. Without a plan, young people run the risk of **drifting off course**—not taking the right courses, not having concrete goals, and not taking care of business. Second, a good career plan is literally a **blueprint for success**. If you want to build a house, you need a blueprint to tell you how to do it. Finally, a good career plan gives your child confidence; each step he takes will bring him closer to his goals. A career plan helps him take control of his life.

Good Career Plans. A good career plan should be flexible, practical, and realistic. Flexible plans are those that allow your child to have a **Plan A, B, C, and D**, rather than merely **Plan A**. A specific, detailed career plan is great, but what if your child decides to change his career goals or fails to satisfy important requirements? Career plans should be **flexible**. *A child who wants to be a doctor should also have a Plan B to fall back on in case he doesn't wish to attend medical school.* Career plans should also be **practical** enough to make certain that your child stays on track. *If a plan doesn't spell out the steps necessary to achieve goals, then it isn't practical.* Finally, a plan should be **realistic**. This means that it describe all the requirements that have to be met; these requirements should also be within the range of a student's abilities. For example, not every student can meet the challenging standards necessary to become a surgeon.

What's in the Plan? Your child should already have gathered enough information to create a practical, realistic, and flexible career plan. The objective now is to put this information into a simple format to make it useful as a **roadmap**. Creating a career plan is actually just a process of answering a few basic questions:

- 1) What are my career goals?
- 2) What are my career choices?
- 3) Why have I chosen these careers?
- 4) Do these choices involve different career paths?
- 5) Have I mapped my courses for high school and college?
- 6) Do I have a plan to pay for college?
- 7) Do I know what skills I need for my career?
- 8) Have I gathered enough career information?
- 9) Do I know what I want out of a career?
- 10) Do I know what is required of me?

A career plan should include an action plan (things your child has to do), a calendar (deadlines for doing these things), and mission statement (why I am doing all this stuff). Here are some things to include in a career plan:

1. **Career Choices:** How do they satisfy your child's needs?
2. **Career Path:** Does he have an educational plan that fits his career choice?
3. **Career Skills:** What skills and aptitudes will he need to get a job?
4. **Career Tools:** Does he know how to build a resume and portfolio?
5. **Task List:** Does he understand what he has to do and when he has to do it?

If you want to look at a longer set of questions, go to the site listed below. It provides fifty questions that your child can ask himself in order to construct a career plan.
<http://www.careercoach2000.com/proactive.htm>.

Career Planners. Career planners are just sheets or forms that you have to fill out. The key is to have the proper information to fill them out! *By now your child should have all the information he needs to use a career planner.* Here are two career planners he can use.

1. General Format for a Career Plan:

<http://www.marioncareerpathways.org/html/portfolio/page1.htm>. This is an excellent career planner provided by the Marion County Public School system. Just download it and fill it out.

2. Interactive Planner:

<http://jobsearchtech.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?site=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.adm.uwaterloo.ca%2Finfocecs%2FCRC%2Fmanual-home.html> This is an interactive career planner that will take you and your child through all the steps in a short time. Most of the information you will need, you will already have—if you have completed the first nine steps of career planning. This planner focuses more on the world of work than the one listed above.

Conclusion of the Course: Preparing your child's career plan is the culmination of all the steps of career development. A career plan is the blueprint, the roadmap for your child's success. If he has worked through these steps, his career planning will be much easier for him. *All the time and effort you and your child spend preparing will pay off when he creates a practical, realistic, and flexible career plan.* We hope that you use the information and tools included in this course with your child. Try to use this along with the **Parent Guide to College**. Remember, educational planning and career development go hand in hand. Good luck!