

CAREER CHANGERS GUIDE

With the way the economy is these days, it is completely understandable if you decide to change careers after doing the same thing for several years. The latest research shows that each person will change careers at least three times in their lives before they retire. With an increasing number of different career choices to choose from, about 1/3 of the total workforce will now change jobs every 12 months. By the age of 35 you've probably already had at least ten jobs. Whether you are attending school for the first time in many years or you are a graduate student; once you realize that you want to make a change, we can help you learn how to bridge the gap and make the transition. However, before you begin your journey, we encourage you to take a look at several assessments and research tools which will lead to your decision and help jump start your transition.

To begin, think about where you would want to be in five years and work backwards. Assess the type of work experience, and education you currently have and what you need in order to make a career change. Use the Career Success Center's Career Changers Timeline Checklist as a guide to help keep you on track and understand that this process is all about exploring choices and refining needs.

In this section, you will find these topics to help guide you:



- Evaluate and **DISCOVER** your current situation
- Research and **EXPERIENCE** possibilities
- **CREATE** an action plan
- **ACTIVATE** your plan into motion

Whether you are a current undergraduate student, or alum, looking to make a career transition, **DISCOVER, EXPERIENCE, CREATE** and **ACTIVATE** are the cornerstones of our Career Success process and this process is a never-ending cycle.

EVALUATE AND DISCOVER YOUR CURRENT SITUATION

Thoughtful examination and careful planning is paramount if you are at a career crossroads and have considered changing career fields. Before you begin, you need to prepare intellectually. By accessing your values, skills, interests, knowledge and goals; along with why you want to make a change and where you see yourself after your transition, you can alter your transition from confusing to exhilarating. Remember, you need to know **who you are** and **where you want to go** for any change to be rewarding.

The basic questions you need to ask yourself are:

1. Why do you want to make a change?
2. What would you rather be doing?
3. What are you good at doing?
4. What did you like and dislike about past careers?
5. Is it worth making a career transition and what is the outlook of this career in 10, 15, 20, years?

Make a list of what you liked and did not like about past positions. Consider all factors including salary, possibility for growth, working environment, job duties, etc. From this beginning evaluation, you can begin to create a list of characteristics you want, or do not want, in your next career.

It is also important to understand how your transferable skills can be applied to a new position. We each have a set of “transferable skills” but one of the hardest things about changing careers is understanding what those skills are, and how they will relate to your new career. By definition, transferable skills and experience are what employers seek and we call these the “8 Competencies.” A skill is defined as the ability to use one's knowledge effectively and readily in execution or performance, a learned power of doing something competently, a developed aptitude or ability.

Over the years, you have developed many skills from coursework, extracurricular activities, internships, jobs and your total life experiences. If you have researched, written, edited and presented papers for classes, you have used skills that are not limited to any one academic discipline or knowledge area but are transferable to many occupations. These are things you have learned to do well that can be used and taken with you from job to job, competencies that can be used in multiple situations. A prospective employer expects you to apply the skills you have learned through your studies, work, and life experiences to the work environment. Therefore, transferable skills can be especially important to college students and career changers.

The skills, or “8 Competencies” employers seek are:

1. Critical Thinking/Problem Solving
2. Leadership
3. Oral/Written Communication
4. Professionalism/Work Ethic
5. Teamwork/Collaboration
6. Career Management
7. Digital Technology
8. Global/Intercultural Fluency

Determine what you can offer potential employers in your new field, what you may need to accomplish before entering the field, and what actions you can take to best prepare yourself for the job search. In researching your field, you hopefully identified the skills, training, and education needed in order to be a well-qualified candidate.

Examples of transferable skills are:

- Analyzing
- Creating
- Training
- Research
- Leading
- Planning
- Listening
- Organizing
- Creating

Take a look at these links which offer resources for additional transferable skills and/or transferable skills assessments and examples:

- <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/transferable-skills-list-525490>
- <https://www.forbes.com/sites/nextavenue/2018/02/09/the-7-transferable-skills-to-help-you-change-careers/#536738c04c04>

RESEARCH AND EXPERIENCE POSSIBILITIES

The next step in your career change is to research and identify the industries, or fields, you wish to pursue and read career profiles, or watch career related videos to learn what types of positions may interest you. There are multiple resources in which to research career options including career development sites, professional organizations, industry-specific sites, and company websites. For industry related information, please review the [Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Outlook Handbook](#). Another helpful resource is the [O*Net Online](#), and [Candid Careers](#). It's also helpful to make a list of companies, or professions, you might want to work with and begin to develop a list of networking contacts that can answer questions and provide guidance. Your networking contacts can be valuable in that they may allow you to job shadow or conduct informational interviews with them, or other contacts they could connect they could introduce you to. Finally, please look at the Western Connecticut State University's Career Success Center's website. There, you will find information broken down for all campus majors. Each major has a dedicated resource page including job search engines, along with research links and associations one may consider joining in order to jump start a new career.

Other questions that are important to ponder are salary requirements, what types of skills or education would be required if you made a change and any other prerequisites that might be involved with another career field. If you do find that you need to attend school, ask yourself how long will it take? Can you attend part-time or full-time, online or must you attend on-campus? Finally, would your career change require you to relocate and how would you finance your change during the transition? These questions are pertinent in identifying feasible possibilities in regards to how long your change can be expected.

CREATE AN ACTION PLAN

Preparation and developing an action plan is the final step before beginning your formal job search. At this point, you should have a basic timeframe in mind and understand what steps you need to take in order to accomplish your goal.

This is where you should also begin building your experience, whether it is completing classes to achieve a new degree, acquire certification or professional experience while participating in an internship or volunteer work. Experience and exposure, regardless of the venue, should be part of your preparation process. Not only will experience provide insight into your career choice, it will provide you a building block on which to conduct your job search.

Here are some ideas on how you can get related experience:

- Complete an internship in your field

- Volunteer your time and services to open the door to opportunities
- Select courses, projects, and research that relate to your field of study
- Attend conferences, seminars, and career fairs
- Join, participate and network in professional organizations - take on leadership roles within those organizations
- Conduct informational interviews, job visits, and industry tours
- Receive training and certifications
- Find a mentor within the industry

At this stage, you should begin to prepare your résumé, cover letters, elevator pitch, sections of your portfolio (if they apply), and names and numbers of references you know who would put in a good word for you professionally. Make sure you always speak with your reference before you use them. You would not want a potential employer to contact one of your references and that reference say something negative about you.

ACTIVATE PUT YOUR PLAN INTO MOTION

After you have spent considerable time **DISCOVERING, EXPERIENCING** and **CREATING** yourself, it is now time to make that transition and **ACTIVATE** your plan into motion. This can be a scary time but it does not need to be if you have taken the time to understand your skills and your plan of action for a change.

At this time, you should feel confident applying to new positions. Working towards creating a robust online persona while utilizing social media avenues like Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest Facebook, etc., can help you showcase your professionalism and knowledge in your field. These avenues will help you develop contacts within the industry, conduct research, and search for opportunities.

Networking with like-minded professionals in your desired industry can also be beneficial. Opportunities can be found in most any situation, but you should first focus on peers, professors, family/friends, industry representatives, members of professional organizations, and anyone that may be able to provide you solid information about the industry for which you want to work. Finally, LinkedIn can be a valuable resource to help keep you updated on the latest industry trends and it also allows you to connect with people who are already working in companies that you may be interested in learning more about. Anyone who means anything to your career will be on LinkedIn and employers always Google job candidates and will expect applicants to have a LinkedIn account.

In the end, personal growth, and change, comes from constantly re-evaluating yourself and the progress you have made, along with avenues to consider while you embark on a new journey. Making a change is not easy but with some understanding, patience and persistence, it can happen and lead you to a more fulfilling career and lifestyle. Good luck and never give up!

CAREER CHANGERS – RESOURCES

PERSONALITY & CAREER ASSESSMENTS/PLANNING TOOLS

These sites can be helpful in that they provide free personality and career assessments. They are also valuable in terms of answering many unanswered questions about where you begin once you decide that you want to make a career change. The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step and these sites may just spark an idea you never know you had.

- [Focus 2 personality assessment](#) can help you understand the areas of your life that are the most important your happiness and what careers satisfy those needs. You will receive a detailed list of

many careers that you would be best suited for, along with majors you could pursue if going back to school is in the plan. To utilize this assessment please use code: **colonials**

- [My Next Move](#) is an interactive tool for job seekers and students to learn more about their career options. My Next Move has tasks, skills, salary information, and more for over 900 different careers. Users can find careers through keyword search; by browsing industries that employ different types of workers; or through the O*NET Interest Profiler, a tool that offers personalized career suggestions based on a person's interests and level of work experience.
- [My Plan](#) helps students and professionals plan more fulfilling lives by making well-informed decisions about their education and careers. Whether you're deciding on what college to go to, choosing a major, planning ahead for your first career, or thinking about making a career change, MyPlan.com can help you explore options and bring clarity and insight into figuring out what's right for you.

RESEARCH RESOURCES

- Once you have a list of careers you would be best suited for, based off of your personality, values, topics you enjoyed in school and what your career aspirations may be, you can use [O*Net Online](#) to research more. This tool was created by the Bureau of Labor and has detailed descriptions of the world of work for job seekers, students, researchers, and more!
- [Candid Career](#) has provided over 7,000 career related videos to help people understand what it is they may need to do to transition into a career. Ever wonder how the people who are doing what it is you want to do got their first break? Ever wonder what it is like to work in a particular field? You can find the answers to these questions, and many more, while using Candid Career video library.
- [Vault](#) provides in-depth intelligence on what it is really like to work within an industry, company, or profession—and how to position yourself to launch and build the career you want. Vault is best known for its influential rankings, ratings, and reviews on thousands of top employers and hundreds of internship programs.
- [Payscale – Cost of Living Calculator](#) Whether you are planning for an upcoming move or just curious about the cost of living in other cities, the PayScale Cost of Living Calculator is the place to begin your research (or daydreaming). Just enter your salary and job title as well as your current location and the city where you are considering a move. Not only will we show you the cost of living difference, but we will let you know how much you need to make in the new location to maintain your current standard of living.
- [My Skills, My Future \(American Job Centers\)](#) helps laid-off workers and other career changers find new occupations to explore. Users can identify occupations that require skills and knowledge similar to their current, or previous job, learn more about the suggested matches, locate local training to help build the skills employers seek and also apply online for jobs.
- [Career Thoughts](#) provides seasoned professionals and students with the tools to help identify careers that match the skills, interests, and abilities one may already have. This is a site for people who may have a strong passion or interest, but are not sure exactly how to turn that passion into a career.



Evaluate and **DISCOVER** your present situation and yourself:

- Evaluate and understand your current situation?
- What would you rather be doing?
- What are you good at?
- Why do you want to make a change?
- Identify your skills and strengths
 - What skills overlap with what you have already done?
 - Identify past positions; what you liked and did not like

Research and **EXPERIENCE** possibilities:

- Search the [Occupational Outlook Handbook](#) to learn what interests you
 - Make a list of professions that interest you
 - Make a list of companies that interest you
 - Research those companies
 - Make a list of useful networking contacts
 - Conduct informational interviews
- Research salaries
- Identify...
 - Do you need more schooling?
 - How long will the change take?
 - Can you continue working your current job?
 - Would you take campus or online classes; part-time or full-time?
 - Would you need to do an internship or practicum?
 - Relocate for new position/for school?
 - How would you finance your change?

CREATE an action plan:

- Prepare a timeframe
- Prepare a résumé
- Prepare a cover letter
- Prepare a portfolio (if it applies)
- Prepare references: names or letters
- Begin classes
- Consider volunteering
- Join associations and network
- Seek out mentors

ACTIVATE your plan into motion:

- Build your online brand with social media
- Apply to positions
- Continue networking
- Interview
- Begin your new career!!!