



Hands-on Career Exploration

There are many ways for your child to "try on" careers during the middle and high school years:

- Have your child volunteer for organizations that hire people in his or her career interest area.
- Let your child take part time or summer jobs that relate to his or her career interest area.
- Find someone who works in your child's career interest area and arrange for your child to watch that worker for a day.
- Help your child find an internship or work based learning experience related to his or her career interest area. Your child may be able to get high school credit for this type of work experience.
- Find out if your child's high school offers career and technical classes in a field in which he or she is interested.



Where Can My Child Find Quality Career Information for Exploration?

There are many resources for career exploration. The career center or library in your child's school may be the first place to start. Your child's school or local library may also have a computerized career information delivery system (CIDS) to provide career information to your child.

Every state has a local office of America's Career Resource Network (ACRN). ACRN is a nationwide network dedicated to helping young people and adults identify and provide the academic and career skills they need to become productive citizens, workers, and community members. You can find the contact information for the ACRN office in your state by going to: <http://www.acrnetwork.org> and clicking on Network.

For more information:

Occupational Outlook Handbook online at: <http://stats.bls.gov/oco/>

America's Career InfoNet at: <http://www.acinet.org>

O*Net: <http://online.onetcenter.org>

Alabama Career and Technical Education at: <http://www.alcareertech.org>

Free Application For Federal Student Aid: <http://www.FAFSA.gov>

Alabama Tech Prep at: <http://www.alabamatechprep.org>

WOIS Portfolio, WOIS/The Career Information System at: <http://www.wois.org>

Career Decision-Making, Georgia Career Information System at: <http://www.cdr.state.tx.us/Parents/StartingConvo/StartingConversationParent.html>

Career Decision-Making, Georgia Career Information System at: <http://www.gcic.peachnet.edu/CRN/careerMAIN.htm>

Your Child's Career, A Website for Parents at: http://www.yourchildscareer.org/careerplanning/careerplan_no_plan.htm

Minnesota Career Guide 2004, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development at: <http://www.mncareers.org>

Alabama Career Information Network at: <http://www.alcareerinfo.org>



Alabama State Department of Education
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America's Career Resource Network

Why Should My Child Explore Careers?

A Parent's Guide to Career Exploration





Why Should My Child Explore Careers?

For your child to make good career decisions, he or she must explore and investigate many careers. Active participation in career exploration activities will help your child become aware of the many career opportunities available and the steps that need to be taken to reach his or her career goals. Some advantages of career exploration include:

- Understanding the work environments of interesting careers.
- Exposing your child to careers he or she may have never considered.
- Discovering the various types of post high school education and training, as well as their costs, so your child does not waste time and money getting training unrelated to his or her chosen career.

Start Career Exploration Early

Career exploration should begin in middle school. It should be a continual process throughout your child's middle and high school years.

Career development is a lifelong process and your child's plans will probably change as he or she gathers more information. Exploring careers does not mean that decisions have to be made and set in stone. It does mean that as your child makes decisions about his or her career direction, those decisions will be based on concrete realistic information.

The number one reason students drop out of college is a lack of career focus. Also, the more undecided a college student is, the more likely he or she will need to spend extra money and years in college earning a degree.



What Should Career Exploration Look Like?

Career exploration begins with the awareness that different occupations exist. It continues with research and "trying out" several occupations. There are two ways to explore careers: one is to investigate, and the other is to experience. Your child should engage in both.

Investigating Careers: Your child should collect as much information as possible about several career options. Your child may be interested in careers that are similar, such as an animal scientist, veterinarian, and dolphin trainer; or your child may have widespread interests and want to explore careers in a variety of fields, such as firefighter, mental health counselor, and electrician. Whether your child's interests are focused or general, he or she will be able to create a more realistic educational and career plan by participating in career exploration activities.

Information about careers that should be investigated include:

- What education does this career require?
- Where is the education/training available?
- Am I able to access the education/training needed to enter this career?
- What is the future outlook for this career?
- What is the path for advancement in the career?
- What other careers are closely related to this career?
- What are the everyday tasks performed in this career?
- What are the normal work hours?
- Does this career require travel?
- What health and retirement benefits are generally found in this line of work?
- What are the typical wages for this career?
- Do I need to relocate to find a job?
- Do the tasks match my interests and values?



Help Your Child Create a Career Portfolio

A career portfolio is a collection of your child's academic and work experiences, career interest assessments, and personal achievements. A career portfolio can encourage your child to keep a record of important academic and career information that he or she may need in the future.

Make a Career Portfolio Teachable Moment.

Help your child make a career portfolio using a file, envelope, journal, scrapbook, or other storage device. As your child investigates careers, encourage him or her to put copies of the information gathered into the career portfolio. The portfolio may also be a place for your child to:

- Record and save dates, places, and duties performed in volunteer work, paid jobs, internships, or work-based learning experiences. This information can be later transferred to a resume or job application.
- Record classes taken in middle and high school and grades received in those classes.
- Store information about education and training research and the colleges or other training locations explored by your child.
- Record results from interest and personality assessments.
- Store records of awards, achievements, or honors.
- Record information about extracurricular activities.

When your child keeps all of his or her career and educational exploration information in one place, it will be easily accessible when he or she is ready to apply to college, apply for a job, or create a resume. It will also help your child compare the information he or she gathers in the career exploration process.