

College, Career & Life Planning



Factors to Consider When Choosing a Career

One of the biggest decisions in life is “what you want to do when you grow up”. This decision has major implications for your financial future (i.e., housing, vacations, ability to fund college for children, timing/comfort of retirement). It also impacts where you’ll live, whether you’ll move, level of job security, level of personal satisfaction and your personal growth/development opportunities. The table below lists factors you may want to consider when making this decision. By rating the relative importance of each factor (your personal rating) and considering how each career option performs against these criteria, you can start to determine which careers might be the best fit for you.

Table Instructions

1. Insert possible career choices at the top of each column
2. Rate the relative importance of each decision criteria factor **for you**: 1 – Little/No importance, 2 – Some importance, 3 – Very important
3. Rate how each career option performs against each criteria to be considered: 1 – Very Unfavorable, 2 – Unfavorable, 3 – Neutral, 4 – Favorable, 5 – Very Favorable
4. Eliminate career choices with **few** "4 or 5" ratings and those with **many** "1 or 2" ratings, especially if the ratings were for very important factors.
5. Explore the remaining careers.

<u>Decision Criteria</u>	<u>Importance</u>	_____	_____	_____	_____
<i>Earnings & Security</i>					
- Starting Salary/Bonus					
- Benefits					
- Promotion Opportunities					
- Job Security					
<i>Occupation Attributes</i>					
- Relocation & Travel					
- Work environment					
- Level of responsibility					
- Education requirements					
<i>Personal Fit with You</i>					
- Skills/knowledge					
- Aptitude/Interest					
- Values					
<i>Job Satisfaction Factors</i>					
- Autonomy/Variety					
- Intellectually Challenging					
- Helping Others					
- Personal Growth/Development					
- Status					
<i>Other Considerations</i>					
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Starting Salary/Bonus: What will be your base salary? Expected Bonus? Will it meet your living expense needs?

Benefits: Vacation, Health Insurance, Disability Insurance, Continuing Education, Child Care, etc.

Promotion Opportunities: How frequently and by what criteria are people promoted? Rapidly growing industries generally provide more opportunities for advancement. Does salary rise rapidly or slowly with advancement?

Job Security: Are people in this career being aggressively hired or laid off? Is demand for this position increasing? Are the industries with these occupations expanding or shrinking? Out-sourcing jobs overseas? Can the job be eliminated with automation (i.e., bank tellers vs. ATM) or become obsolete (i.e., switchboard operators)?

Relocation and Travel: A Dentist or Doctor may stay in the same city their entire career. Young business managers with large corporations may move every 12-24 months as they move up the corporate ladder. International assignments are more common. How much time are you willing to spend "on the road"? Extensive travel may limit your time with family. Living out of a suitcase can get old unless you find travel exciting.

Work Environment: Office vs. Field job. Data vs. People-oriented. Comfortable vs. harsh (noisy, hot, humid, dirty) environment. Long hours? Sitting, standing or repetitive motion for long periods? Lifting/carrying? Stress level? Rigid vs. flexible time schedules. Complexity of problems and tasks. Required decision and reaction time.

Levels of Responsibility: Accountability for the management of financial resources, employees, customer relations and physical assets? How serious are the consequences when you make an error in judgment or a mistake? Do people die, are millions of \$\$ lost or are the consequences relatively minor?

Education/Training Required: Bachelors Degree? Graduate Degree? Based on your high school progress to date (i.e., grades, standardized tests, extracurricular), will you qualify for admission for the required education?

Skills/Knowledge: Do your skills match the job's requirements? The more likely you are to be successful and happy in your job. For example, if you lack math skills, you probably should not pursue engineering or architecture.

Aptitude/Interest: If you are good at and enjoy performing an activity, you are likely to be more successful and happy in your job. For example, if you are a "people person" who thrives in a group or team environment, you'll be bored and frustrated in a job dominated by data analysis in an isolated cubicle.

Values: Does this occupation require you to perform activities that are inconsistent with your values. For example, you may not want to be a criminal defense lawyer, if you are uncomfortable providing the best defense possible for a client you know to be guilty of the crime.

Autonomy/Variety: Do you like lots of supervision with very specific instructions on how to perform each task or do you prefer to be given a goal with the necessary resources and to be empowered to decide how to achieve it? Do you like change and variety or would you prefer to perform the same tasks in the same environment every day?

Intellectually Challenging: Do you need to be intellectually challenged and enjoy solving complicated problems or would you prefer to perform routine, predictable activities that require little thought?

Helping Others: How important is "helping other" to your level of job satisfaction and happiness? Do you need to see immediate positive results?

Personal Growth/Development: Opportunities for additional training/learning, promotions, additional responsibility, new challenges, etc.

Status: Is this occupation one that is admired by family, friends and society? Do you care?