

How to decide on a career path: 6 tips

Find a job you love. Here's how to work out what that is...

The overwhelming number of possible careers can make deciding on a career path seem daunting. To simplify the process, we've come up with 6 tips for choosing a career that suits you.

1. Start early

Planning life after school is not a simple process; it can involve months or even years of research. The earlier you start thinking about your future, the more time there will be to properly consider the options.

You can start early on Unifrog! For example, if you search for opportunities like university programs and apprenticeships even in the years before you apply, you'll be more aware of things like what qualifications are needed for particular degrees, and how many years of study different routes will take.

2. Think broadly

It's pretty unlikely that you will figure out your perfect job at this early stage, but you may be able to identify the type of work that will suit you and a field or sector you find interesting.

Try to think in broad terms about potential career paths in order to keep your options open. Avoid focusing on a specific profession (such as 'Radiotherapist') and instead explore an entire field (such as 'Medicine and healthcare').

3. Reflect on yourself

Before diving into research, it's helpful to develop an idea of your strengths, weaknesses, passions and preferences in working environment. This way, when you come to choose your career path, you will have a good understanding of yourself, and you'll be able to narrow your research to job sectors that fit with your interests and skills.

Questions to consider:

- What are my skills? Am I good at manual tasks / talking to people / creative thinking etc?
- What are my weaknesses?
- What do I enjoy doing? What skills am I using when I do this?

- Who do I look up to? Do I want to emulate them?
- Where do I want to work? In an office / at home / outside / in a different location each day?
- What are my priorities? Helping people / following my passion / earning a large salary?
- How much extra training am I prepared to do?
- What kind of lifestyle do I want? Will I want a family / lots of holiday in the future?

Unifrog's [Personality](#) and [Interests](#) Tools are a great way to start exploring all of this. You can also think about school subjects, part time jobs, hobbies, interests, and work experience that you've done, how they went and how you felt about them. Use the Unifrog [Activities](#) tool to record what you've done, and then the [Competencies](#) tool to record examples of how you've demonstrated key skills.

4. Experience

The best way to decide whether a career is for you? Give it a go!

Try to get as much work experience in your chosen field as possible. This will help you determine if this job is something you can see yourself doing in the future.

Hearing the opinion of a professional can be extremely valuable when researching a career path. Make the most of your work experience by talking to the people you shadow: what is the best / worst aspect of their job? Would they choose this career path again?

Work experience will also give you a feel for the types of people that you will be working alongside in your field. Maybe your dream career attracts very competitive / creative / personable types. If you share similar skills or interests with the people you shadow, this could indicate that their job would suit you too.

After you complete your work experience, it's important to assess whether the career continues to appeal to you. It's perfectly normal to decide at this point that you're not actually interested in it. This doesn't mean that the experience has been a waste of time! On the contrary, you might have saved yourself years of effort and training, only to find that the job you're qualified for is one that you hate.

You can take notes on your thoughts and observations after each day of your work experience, and once it's done, ask yourself questions like:

- What did you enjoy about your work experience?
- What did you dislike?
- What skills did you have to use?
- How has it changed your understanding of the profession/industry?
- How does this affect your plans for the future?

5. Qualifications

Once you have an idea of the kind of career path you're interested in, the next step is to research the qualifications that you'll need to succeed in that field.

For certain professions you need to have studied a particular degree, whereas in other sectors employers value a variety of subjects and skills. Check out Unifrog's article on [How degrees can link to careers](#) for more information on choosing a relevant degree course.

Remember that while the degree or education route you choose is important, it won't define the course of your entire life. Education can often lead to seemingly unrelated careers. Students from science backgrounds, for example, are increasingly being recruited by employers in the banking and finance industry. Even someone who studies a subject that seems like it will lead straight to a career, like medicine or plumbing, can change their mind and do something else. Studying teaches you lots different skills!

6. Backup plan

Use the Unifrog's [Post 18](#) Intentions tool to think of a progression backup plan, in case your first choice of career path doesn't work out.

By addressing this possibility at an early stage, you can make sure that the degree or apprenticeship that you choose will suit your plan B pathway, as well as your plan A.

Source: Unifrog