

Career Exploration and Completing a Job Application

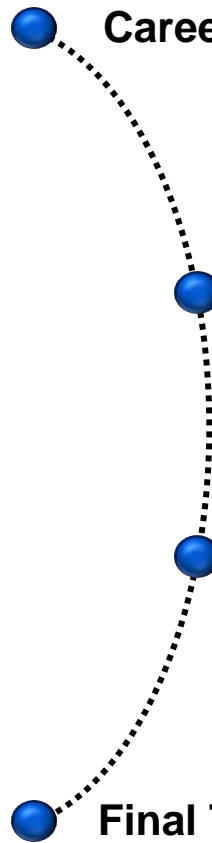
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Career exploration

When looking for a new career, there are many factors that will influence your decision. You should perform a career assessment to review these factors and to determine if the new career is a fit for you.

Career assessments:

- Learning about yourself helps you figure out what career to pursue.
- Self-assessment is a process of gathering information about yourself in order to make an informed career decision. It is the first step of the career planning process.

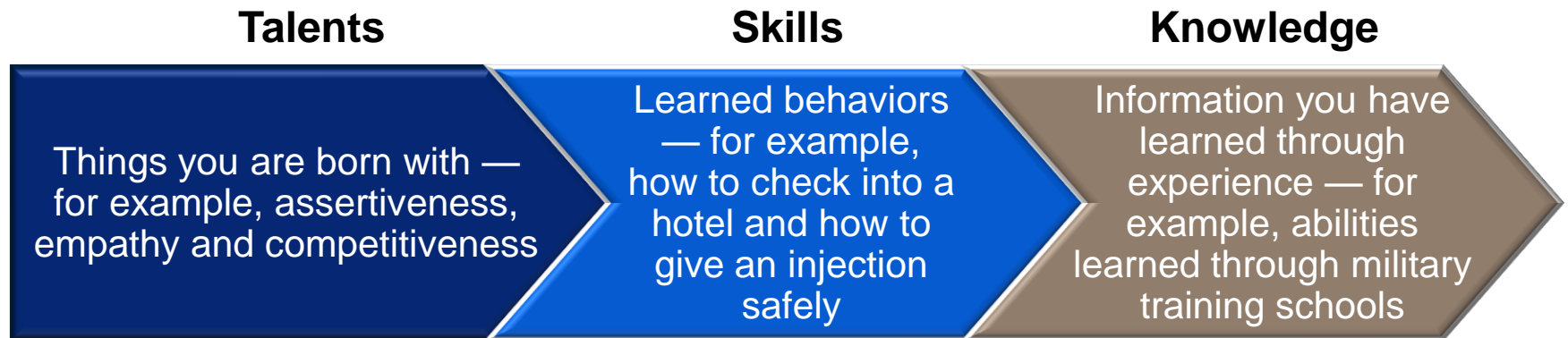
When you are ready to find a new job, you must first consider your strengths and how they fit into the job market.



Identifying your strengths

Knowing your strengths provides important information for both you and your potential employer. Not only do your strengths identify areas where you can assist the company, but also the kind of work you may enjoy.

Strengths are composed of:



If you have trouble identifying your strengths, think about the challenges you have faced throughout your life and the actions you have taken to overcome each challenge.

How to discover your strengths

All of your strengths and best qualities may not readily come to mind. To help discover your strengths, you should think about the following:

What are the challenges you face or have faced in your life?

- Can be characteristics, people, events and circumstances
- Situations that were out of your control or within your control
- Instances where you have rallied against adversity or beat the odds
- Working with individuals that made the task at hand harder than necessary

How did you handle your challenges?

- Identify the personal characteristics that helped you get through the challenge.
- List the people, places, beliefs, circumstances and events around you that helped you overcome the challenge.

A few other questions you can ask yourself to identify your strengths are:

- What type of activities are you naturally drawn to?
- What are your interests and hobbies? If you have none, what would you like them to be?
- What would you do even if you weren't paid to do it?

Initiating the job search

Searching for a job can be a stressful and time-consuming process. It is important to know all of the factors that go into making a strong employment choice before initiating your job search.

Here are some key things you should know:

- The process of searching
- Your situation, skills and desires
- The strength of the job market in your field



Interests and qualifications

To help guide you in your job search, look for jobs that interest you and for which you are also qualified. Ask yourself the following questions to determine your interests and qualifications:

Identifying interests

- Do I enjoy working with people, data or things?
- How important are salary, benefits, technology, support and job stability?
- How important is the working environment, colleagues and job stimulation?
- Do I want to be part of an organization similar to the military?
- Would I prefer to work in a specific city, geographical area or climate?
- How would I describe the perfect job?

Identifying qualifications

- What skills did I acquire in the military, training or through school?
- Do I work well with people?
- Am I a leader, self-starter or manager?
- Do I speak, write or understand another language?
- Do I communicate well verbally and in writing?
- Do I enjoy a high stress environment or working with condensed timelines?
- What is my security classification (if applicable)?

Enhancing your skills to match the job you want

Your existing skill set may not always fit the job you desire. If this is the case, the following steps can be taken to help bridge the gap from your current skills to what the job requires:

- **Additional education**
 - **Community college:** Community colleges offer classes at a discounted rate.
 - **Online classes:** Online classes are offered at a variety of online universities and training programs. The time requirement for online classes is normally more flexible than the schedule of community colleges.
 - **Skill building websites:** Certain websites offer training on specific skills. Although not as comprehensive as full semester classes, these websites can build skills such as Excel or Java.
- **Personal instruction**
 - **Seminars:** Local seminars provide the opportunity to attend a one-day presentation on a specific skill such as Microsoft Office.
 - **Career counselors:** These individuals charge a small fee or work through a larger learning organization to provide coaching and skills training.
- **Self help**
 - **Self guided e-books:** Self-guided trainings can be found at most libraries and allow you to move at your own pace while learning a new skill.
 - **Reading:** Reading printed and E-books increases your personal vocabulary.

Note: For more information on available resources and opportunities for skill enhancement, refer to <http://www.militaryonesource.com>.

Conducting your job search

Once you have identified the type of job you're interested in and that matches your skill set, you should start applying for these jobs immediately. The following are powerful resources that can be leveraged in your job search:

Technology	Career websites Websites, such as Monster.com or USAJobs.gov, that help direct your search to companies that are hiring in your field of interest.	Company websites Most companies will have a careers section on their website. This avenue has a smaller applicant pool than online search engines, but has a limited selection of jobs.
People	Recruiters Contacting an individual who specializes in placing applicants in their desired job field is another way to explore opportunities and get your name in the job market.	Your network Friends, family, former colleagues and your contacts can all be used to aid your job search.

Note: Be careful to not oversaturate a single company with applications. Human Resources departments can see how many jobs you have applied for within the company and may look negatively upon too many open applications.

Filling out a job application

Job applications will vary across industries and organizations, but a few commonalities do exist. The following tips and common questions can aid you as you begin filling out applications:

Common application questions

- Full legal name, mailing address, telephone number and email address
- Days and hours available for work
- Education history
- Military service
- Work eligibility
 - Legal documentation
 - Criminal record
- Employment history
- Business/professional references

Tips for filling out application

- Do not repeat details — try to say something different.
- Proofread, proofread and proofread again.
- Do not be tempted to fill up space — less is more.
- Take your time completing the application.
- Be aware of word count limits for online applications — draft your application before submitting the final copy and check the word count.

Final tips

Beginning a new career or transitioning careers is an exciting and challenging time. When setting out on this journey, you should remember the following:

- Think about your passions, interests and strengths when considering what job is right for you. Not only should you be interested in the work you are doing, but you should have the appropriate existing skillset to perform the role at a high level.
- To discover your strengths, you should think about the challenges you have faced and how you overcame them. What skills and talents did you use to overcome those challenges and what was the final result?
- Ensure that your interests and skills match the qualification listed for the job. If you do not have the skills required yet, you should take steps to enhance your skillset and become qualified for the job.
- There are multiple resources that can be leveraged when searching for a new job, such as job search engines, recruiters, companies' websites and your network. Whatever resources you choose to leverage, ensure that you do not oversaturate a single company with applications.
- A job search will help you begin a new chapter in your life and open doors to your future.

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