

## Choosing a Career, ASAP

You must strike a balance in selecting a career to pursue. Actually there are several balance points – 1) time to make a selection – choose too quick and maybe you don't opt for the best for your interests and talents or select too late and the opportunity is gone because of the growth curve for the occupation; 2) balance the costs and time commitment of the training – choose too expensive and maybe it takes much longer to recoup your investment or choose too cheap and the long term payoff doesn't justify your investment; and, 3) location, location, location – you have to balance the choice you make and the nature of your environment (you don't want to pursue a manufacturing career if the area you are in has less than 10% of the area total employment in that field because you will have little opportunity for growth).

Sound advice is to use the **ASAP** method of career choice – **A = Assessment**, **S = Skills**, **A = Analysis**, and **P = Preparation**. Here I'm not meaning As Soon As Possible, but another acronym of four critical steps to success. If you work through these four items you will make a wise choice good for your particular situation. For the **Assessment** phase, do two steps – use a career interest inventory (Kuder, O\*Net Interest Profiler, SCOIS, Strong, etc.) to provide guidance and then use your gut feelings to assess your passion avocation. Be sure and review the occupational job duties and make sure you are comfortable with the assignments. Step two, or the **Skills** phase, is important to develop and enhance your skills to do the job in the career field you are pursuing. Find what the “occupation and industry leaders” are doing to succeed in the job. If it is music, study what makes the genre of music leaders be successful. If it is a top ranked military or business leader study their background to see how they moved up the career ladder. Take all steps necessary to enhance your skills (Certification Tests, Skill Building e-learning, WorkKeys, etc.).

For the **Analysis** action phase, determine how to get from point A to point B. Study the career ladders of progression within a career ([www.onetcenter.org](http://www.onetcenter.org) can help with that step). Talk with people you know in the business to get their advice. Review national occupational web sites which discuss the cream of the crop in their respective businesses. Once you have done that you are ready for action and the final step – **Preparation**. This preparation step can be the scariest because it involves the biggest decision impacting money and resources, but that is where “being prepared” is the best strategy to achieve your success comes into play. Use all of the available resources to outline your money needs, possible financial aid, the length of time to complete your target goals, academic/family support structures, and part time jobs (especially geared in the field you are striving for) along the way.

Finally, people don't plan to fail but many times they fail to plan. Make sure you have developed short and long term goals with benchmark points along the way to achieve your dream career. Position reward achievement points along the way to provide self incentives for keeping you focused on your path. Many of you have already taken that first step along your plan by working to obtain your high school diploma or GED. Some of you have decided to change to a new career. Others may be waiting for the right time – the time is now. Now you are ready for the next phase – **YOU CAN DO IT!**