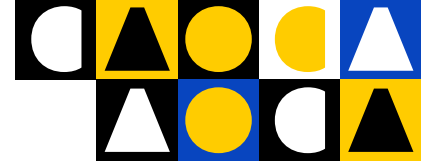


# Career Planning Guide



# Career Planning Guide

Whether your professional situation has changed, you want to move up, or you are pondering a new career, creating a solid plan is essential to building the career and the life you desire. This guide will lead you through personal and professional components that, when connected, will help you decide which career is the right fit for you.

Let's look at your puzzle pieces and start building!

## Checklist

- Learn about yourself
- Understand your responsibilities
- Identify what you want
- Create your career vision

## Learn about yourself

### Personality

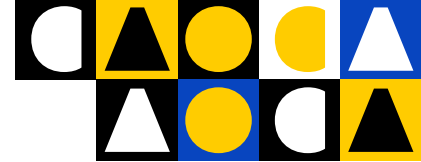
No one knows you better than you do, but now is a good time to become even more self-aware. Ask close friends, family members, and colleagues what they think your top skills and personality traits are. Ask them what job roles they see you excelling in now and in the near future.

Write down the skills that best describe you and the roles that you think are the best fit for you. Once you get feedback from others, add those to your list.

Skills	Roles
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

Once you have a list, order your skills by importance and your roles by interest level.





## Your experience

The best way to think about what you have done and what has shaped you is to think about important activities and memories from your past. Some questions to think about are:

### Childhood and high school:

- *What memorable stories do you have from your childhood?*
- *Who were your major influencers?*
- *What were your strengths as a child and how did they have an impact on you?*
- *Were there any major changes or transitions that you went through that changed your perspective?*

### College:

- *How did you decide where to go to college?*
- *What did you major in and why?*
- *What classes did you love the most and why?*
- *What student activities were you a leader in, and how did that help you grow?*
- *What did you learn from nonacademic experiences, such as an on-campus job or volunteering?*

### Professional experience:

- *What jobs have you had since graduating from college?*
- *Why did you select these jobs?*
- *What are some challenging professional experiences you have had? Rewarding ones?*
- *How have you been a leader in your professional environment?*
- *What have you learned that's made you better at your job?*
- *Is there someone from past or current jobs that inspires you and why?*

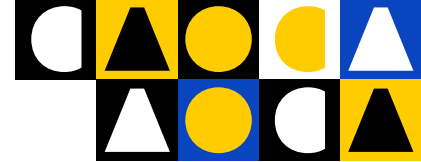
### Community involvement:

- *Have you done any volunteer activities since college?*
- *Have you been a leader or had a measurable impact on any of those activities?*
- *Why did you choose to do those activities?*



Take some time to read all your answers. What did you learn about yourself? Did you realize you like a certain topic, or maybe an actual type of task? Or, maybe you confirmed that you excel in collaborative environments or leadership roles. Write it down.





## Understand your responsibilities

A key element for career satisfaction is to ensure you can take care of your responsibilities. Here are a couple of questions that will help you assess what you should consider when creating your career plan.

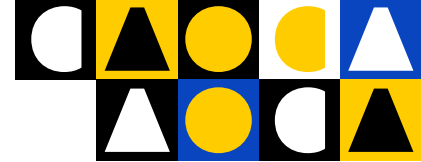
- **What is your monthly budget?** This will provide you with the minimum salary amount you should be targeting. Think about what you spend every month: rent, food, utilities, insurance, entertainment, etc. Look at your bank account statements to get a sense of your expenses. If you want to be able to afford a different lifestyle, you need to first start by covering your basics and then make it your goal to earn a higher salary. Check out our [creating a budget for financial success](#) article and [50/30/20 budget calculator](#) to get started.
- **Are you still in school? How many more credits do you need to graduate? Are you thinking about pursuing an MBA or master's degree?** This will provide you with a timeline and a schedule. A graduate degree is a clear path to career success and a higher salary, and it's one of the best investments you can make for your career, but it requires time and dedication. [Take our quiz](#) to find out if going to grad school should be in your career plan.
- **Do you have family or dependents that would be affected by your career decisions? How?** For example, if you are the only source of income for your family or you support someone else, your salary will most likely be a top priority when making career decisions.
- **Do you have any loans or plans to apply for them?** Even though credit loans are at an all-time low, this is a line item in your budget what will feed into your minimum salary requirement.

Don't stop here. If you know you have other responsibilities, add them to your list. Once you have a comprehensive list, let's convert it into the career parameters your next role must meet. Please note you might not have any requirements at this point, and that is a great place to be in, but for the ones that do have certain responsibilities, this will ensure you select the right career.

Next role requirements
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Examples: base salary of \$60K, short commute, 9-to-5 schedule.





## Identify what you want

There are three ways to think about what you want—what you value, what excites you, and what you need.

### Make a list of all the items you can think of.

What do you value?	What excites you?	What do you need?

Examples:

**What is important to you?** Prestige, flexibility, making a difference in the world, advocating for equality, etc.

**What excites and motivates you?** Collaboration, new projects, challenging tasks, etc.

**What do you need?** Higher salary, better benefits, supportive culture, etc.

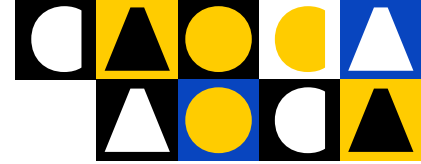
Just in case, let’s dig a little deeper into your career wants. Here are a couple of questions you might want to think about while filling out your chart above.

- *What would I want to be responsible for?*
- *What type of boss/coworkers/team would I want?*
- *What kind of hours would I want to work?*
- *What type of company would I want to work for?*
- *What sort of culture would I want the company to have?*
- *What city would I want to live in?*
- *What salary would I want to earn?*
- *What would I want my approach to stress, workload, and deadlines to be?*

Knowing what you want is important but knowing what you don’t want is crucial. Make a list of things you don’t want in your next role. Then, turn that dislike around to create a list of needs. Are they the same as the ones you listed above? Did you find any new ones?

Dislikes	Needs
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.





## Create your career vision

You've spent time looking into yourself, your values, your motivators, your responsibilities, your needs, and your wants. There is one more step before you can start building a career action plan: your career vision.

Find a quiet place, close your eyes, and envision yourself in your dream role. Think about every detail. What are you wearing, where are you, what are you doing, who are you working with, how are people interacting with you? Live that moment. Then come back and write it down.



If you can dream it, you can do it.”

– Walt Disney

Now that you have a career vision in mind, you are ready to take action.

TAKE ACTION

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### Comments?

Let us know if this content was helpful or if there is anything you would change by contacting us at [optimists@gmac.com](mailto:optimists@gmac.com).

