

# 1

## Making the Transition from School to Work

### Key Terms

job  
occupation  
career  
career clusters  
job shadowing  
work-based learning programs  
school-to-work programs  
school-to-work coordinator  
program coordinator  
training station  
supervisor  
work-based mentor  
training sponsor  
cooperative education  
internship  
transferable skills

### Chapter Objectives

After studying this chapter, you will be able to

- **identify** what students should consider when trying to make a career decision.
- **explain** how a work-based learning program is organized.
- **list** the purpose and types of work-based learning programs available.
- **describe** the benefits of the work-based learning programs for students and employers.
- **identify** the career knowledge and skills that all students should develop.

### Reading Advantage

Read the review questions at the end of the chapter *before* you read the chapter. Keep the questions in mind as you read to help you determine which information is most important.

A young woman with dark hair pulled back, smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a light blue lace-trimmed apron over a white top. She is holding a vibrant red geranium flower. The background is a lush nursery filled with various flowers, including large red geraniums in the foreground and pink flowers in hanging baskets above.

## Key Concepts

- To find the job that is right for you, you will need to explore the options available.
- Work-based learning programs can help you prepare for the world of work.
- Participating in a work-based learning experience has many benefits.
- Career clusters knowledge and skills and transferable skills can help you succeed on the job.



Chances are you will spend more time working than doing any other activity in your lifetime. Deciding what to do to earn a living is one of the most important decisions you will ever make. Like any important decision, having all the information you need improves your chance of making a good one.

Before making a career decision, you will need to become familiar with the workplace and the requirements of different occupations. Basic information about the world of work can be obtained in many ways—through school counselors, the Internet, and library resources. It is very important, however, to confirm what you learn about the work world through actual exposure to the workplace.

## Exploring the World of Work

A key concern of people entering the workplace is finding a job they enjoy. A **job** is a task performed by a worker, usually to earn money. It is rare for a person to stay at the same job for a lifetime and not want increased variety, responsibility, and pay. These are provided by a series of more challenging jobs. When work requires the use of related skills and experience, that work is called an **occupation**. However, an occupation is not a career. A **career** is a progression of related occupations that results in employment and personal growth.

Each person is unique, so your idea of the ideal career will not match someone else's. Making a good career decision requires knowing yourself, your strengths, and your interests. It also involves knowing about the different types of jobs that make up the workplace.

### Reflect Further

What work-related skills have you learned through school courses and extracurricular activities? What jobs use these skills?

## The Career Clusters

One of the best ways to learn about careers is by studying the **career clusters**, the 16 groups of occupational and career specialties. Reading the titles of the career clusters is the simplest way to begin thinking about the 16 basic career areas, 1-1.

Students usually begin thinking about their future in the workplace by trying to imagine themselves in different work settings. They consider how well different occupations match their talents, abilities, and interests. Eventually, they narrow down the many choices to two or three careers that seem most interesting. For an overview of the career clusters and the interests and abilities important to each, see Chapter 13, "Learning About Careers."

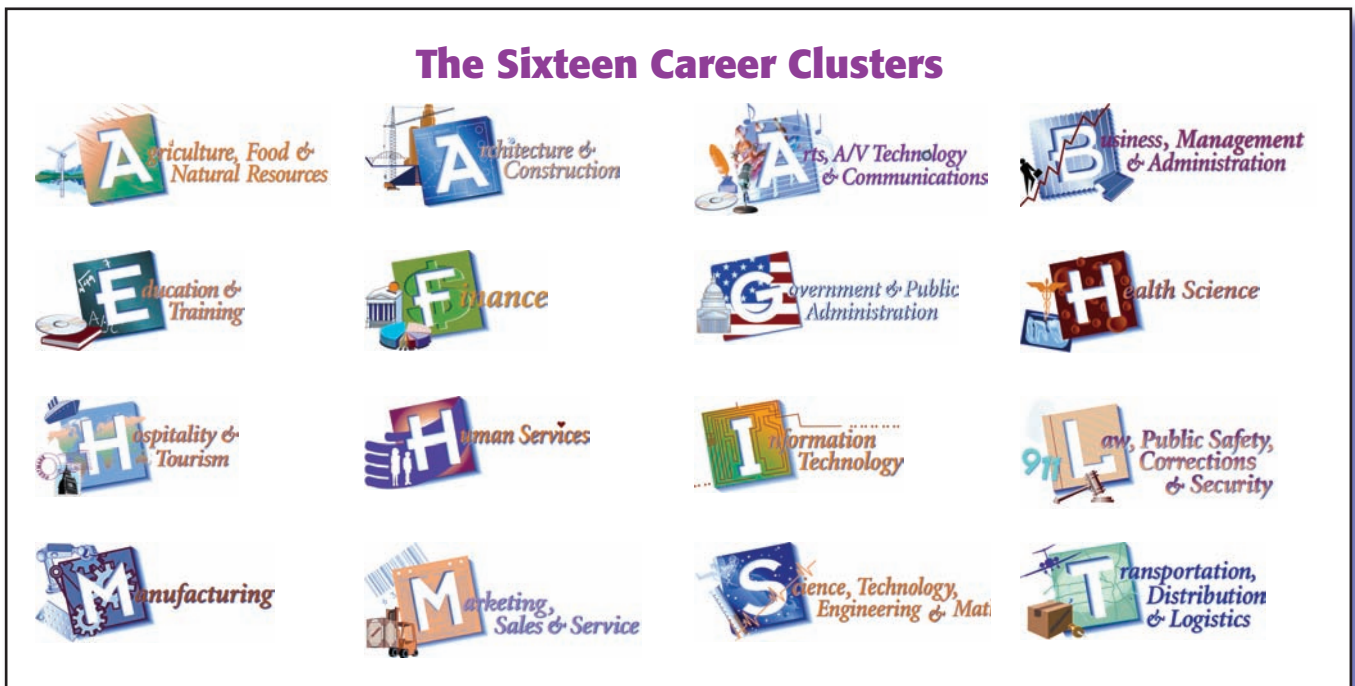
Each cluster includes several career directions, called *career pathways*. Within each pathway are various occupations ranging from entry-level to very challenging. All the career choices within a given pathway require a set of common knowledge and skills. This means the related careers require very similar programs of study. Being prepared for more than one career in a related field allows more flexibility when you are ready to look for a job.

# Extend Your Knowledge

## Using the Career Clusters

Ask your teacher or guidance counselor for advice on investigating the career clusters at [www.careerclusters.org](http://www.careerclusters.org). Examine two clusters that include careers you may decide to pursue. What new facts did you learn during the search? Did your research help you move closer to making a career decision?

The career clusters are important because they are part of a broad plan that links school preparation to career success. The plan was developed by educators, employers, and professional groups. These experts carefully examined what students must know and be able to do in order to be prepared to handle any given job. With the help of teachers and counselors, you will develop a study plan matched to your career goals. Compatible activities and learning experiences will be added as you refine your career choice.



The Career Clusters icons are being used with permission of the States' Career Clusters Initiative, 2008, [www.careerclusters.org](http://www.careerclusters.org)

### 1-1

All occupations in the U.S. workforce are addressed within these 16 career clusters.

## Workplace Exploration

Making a career decision is not always easy because there are hundreds of choices to consider. Attending career events at school and listening to guest speakers are activities that can help you decide. These speakers can provide practical information on what it takes to get into their fields.

Another way to explore the workplace is by participating in field trips to different employers in your community. You can help arrange field trips as part of a class project. Most employers are happy to conduct group tours during slow business periods. You can also try contacting a company that interests you and visit on your own.

Another way to learn more about the world of work is through job shadowing. **Job shadowing** is following a worker on the job and observing what that job involves. If you know someone who has a job that sounds interesting, ask if it is possible to spend some time with him or her at work. The experience may last a few hours or a couple days, but it always requires the permission of the employer.

Volunteering is another way to learn about work. Animal shelters, recycling centers, and many other nonprofit operations rely on volunteer help. By volunteering, you can observe different types of work while contributing to activities that benefit your community.



### Thinking It Through

Who would you like to observe on the job?  
Where can you volunteer and observe a work setting unfamiliar to you?

## Opportunities to Learn on the Job

Several types of school programs are designed to prepare students for work. They are called **work-based learning programs** because they provide students with job training. They are also called **school-to-work programs**.

Work-based learning programs bridge the gap between school and work. They help students make the adjustment from full-time students to full-time employees, 1-2. Students attend classes and work part-time alongside full-time employees in business and industry. These programs give students an opportunity to learn in two places—school and work. The programs are especially valuable to students who want to succeed in a full-time occupation right after high school. For students planning to attend a technical school or college, these programs can help them decide which study plan to pursue.

Work-based learning opportunities do not just happen. They are developed by contacting businesses and convincing them to work as partners with high schools for the benefit of students. Finding business partners and handling the details of creating and operating a school-to-work program can be a full-time job.

Students in work-based learning programs have a special teacher or counselor at the school assigned to them called a **school-to-work coordinator**. Another common term for this important person is **program coordinator**. The program coordinator works on the student's behalf to help make the work-based learning experience successful. He or she

consults with everyone who must be informed about your progress. This person also provides the information, support, and help you will need to solve problems and make decisions.

Your contact with your future employer is through the program coordinator. He or she is responsible for reviewing your application for work experience. An effort is then made to match your occupational goals with an available work experience.

The coordinator carefully discusses your qualifications for a work experience with one or more potential employers before you are assigned to a training station. A **training station** is a job site where a student works to learn job skills. A training station may be a manufacturing company, hospital, hair salon, bank, construction site, auto service center, or some other workplace. The training stations available to you depend on the type of work-based learning program you follow and the cooperating employers in your area. Usually you are responsible for providing your own transportation from school to work.

When you report to the job on your first day of work, you will be introduced to your supervisor. The **supervisor** is your boss in the workplace. He or she explains what is expected of you on the job and evaluates how well you do your work. The supervisor is responsible for the training station and your job training.

The supervisor explains the job and the company as much as possible, but often assigns an assistant to help you with day-to-day questions. This helper is called a **work-based mentor**. Another common term for this worker is **training sponsor**. He or she is an employee who knows how to do the job and teach you to do it well. Students tend to form friendships with their mentors and feel more relaxed when they are around.

Remember, the work-based learning experience is a three-way relationship involving you, your program coordinator, and the employer, 1-3. You have the most to gain from this relationship—professionalism, skills, knowledge, and work experience. Two common types of work-based learning programs available to you are cooperative education programs and internships.

## Cooperative Education

**Cooperative education** is a school program that prepares students for an occupation through a paid job experience. Cooperative education programs are also called *co-op programs*. They team a school with a local employer who agrees to hire a student part-time and pay an hourly wage. The employer provides job training to help a student prepare for a career goal.



Thornridge High School

1-2

Work-based learning is designed to help students make smooth transitions from their classrooms to meaningful jobs.

### Reflect Further

What might be discussed with a school-to-work coordinator that wouldn't be discussed with another teacher? Why is a student's relationship with his or her mentor different from that with teachers?



## 1-3

For a work experience to be successful, the program coordinator and the workplace mentor must work together cooperatively with the student.

### Reflect Further

How might a work-based learning experience affect your career plans?



At school the student takes classes for approximately a half-day to meet requirements for graduation. The student also takes a cooperative education class taught by the coordinator to learn how to set career goals, apply for jobs, and manage finances. The student earns credit toward graduation for both the cooperative education class and the work experience.

## Internship

An **internship** is a school program providing paid or unpaid work experience for a specified period to learn about a job or an industry. Students participate in this supervised work experience by enrolling as they would for a class. Instead of attending a formal class, however, the student works or volunteers at a temporary position during or after school hours and earns credit toward graduation.

A variety of internships are available to provide many different learning opportunities. An internship may involve routine duties as well as specially designed projects. Students must usually work for a specific number of hours and prepare a formal report that records their experiences. The school offering the internship establishes specific requirements.

### Thinking It Through

How are the different work-based learning programs similar? How are they different? Which type of program is best for you?

# In the Real World

## A New Outlook for Tony

At 7:30 on a February morning in northern Texas, it's very cold! It seemed even colder to Tony when his car didn't start. The engine coughed once, then twice, and finally started. Tony muttered to himself, "Eleven more car payments to make, and it needs a new battery."

As Tony drove to school, he thought about quitting and looking for a job. During his three years in high school, he experienced nothing but discouragement. Freshman year was okay, but school had become a drag since then.

Tony didn't fail any of his classes, but he didn't study much either. Three reasons accounted for Tony's lack of enthusiasm. First, he had no goals for his future. His study habits were very poor. Finally, he had recently burdened himself with monthly car payments.

Tony was considering dropping out of high school when a friend suggested applying for the cooperative education program. The friend said, "You go to school for half the day and work part-time. You get paid for your work and school credit for the job."

"Oh, I've heard about that," Tony said, "but how do I get into the program?"

"See Mr. Lamas, the program coordinator. You had two courses in auto mechanics and

enjoy working on cars. Maybe you can get a job at an auto repair shop. Then you won't need to quit school."

Tony met with Mr. Lamas and applied for the cooperative education program. The day Tony was accepted, his outlook on life seemed to change. All summer Tony looked forward to his senior year and his cooperative work experience.

During his senior year Tony worked for an auto service center. He learned how to tune car engines and repair brakes, transmissions, and other car parts. He also learned something about running a business. It was hard work, but Tony enjoyed it. Not only did Tony pay for his car and learn new skills, but he also made the B honor roll in his last semester.

### Questions to Discuss

1. Why do you think Tony's outlook on life changed when he was accepted into the cooperative education program?
2. Why do you suppose Tony's grades improved in his senior year?
3. How did the cooperative education experience benefit Tony?
4. What do you think would have happened to Tony if he had quit high school?

## Benefits of Learning on the Job

Participating in a work-based learning experience has many benefits. School-to-work programs can help students in the following ways:

- *Gaining on-the-job experience.* Every occupation requires certain skills and knowledge as basic job requirements. The work-based experience helps you develop these needed requirements. It also helps students make the personal transition from school to work.
- *Acquiring marketable skills.* By working in a real job under real working conditions, you develop skills that are useful in your job now. These skills will also help you get other jobs in the future.



## Thinking It Through

Which benefits of on-the-job learning would most help you?

- *Recognizing career goals.* Work-based learning gives you a chance to test some of your career interests. You can discover what you like to do and are able to do. In addition, you can discuss your career goals with others at work as well as in school.
- *Learning to work with others.* You will learn to communicate with a variety of people, including supervisors, coworkers, and customers. As a new employee, you learn how to conduct yourself in a work situation.
- *Earning money.* Many school-to-work programs provide opportunities to earn an income. The expression “earn while you learn” applies to work-based learning.

Employers benefit from work-based learning programs, too. They earn recognition in the community for their willingness to help young people. They receive interested part-time workers who are eager to learn and do a good job. Also, employers get the opportunity of a short-term labor supply they can pair with short-term projects. However, employers often are so pleased with the job performance of students that they offer them full-time employment after they graduate.

## Preparing for Career Success

It is true that different jobs require different skills and knowledge. However, different jobs also require certain similar abilities in all workers, no matter what jobs they hold. Companies try to hire workers who possess the knowledge and skills needed for workplace success.

## Reflect Further

Which of the 10 knowledge and skills seem the most difficult to master? Which seems easiest?

## Career Knowledge and Skills

Preparation for the world of work begins long before you actually have a job. Workplace readiness involves the knowledge and skills you are learning now.

Employers have identified what learners and employees should know and be able to do to be successful in their work. Their recommendations were condensed to a top-10 list of essential knowledge and skills. This brief list is used to identify the specific requirements of a given career, 1-4.

For example, thinking logically, reading, and writing are skills you strengthen through class participation and homework. They are the same skills used by a worker when communicating with coworkers. In the workplace, being able to write instructions for coworkers can mean the difference between getting the job done well or having it totally confused.

Possessing the required knowledge and skills makes employees more valuable to their employers. When you focus on a career goal, you will recognize the link between the 10 brief terms and specific career requirements. You will have many opportunities to develop the necessary knowledge and skills long before you join the workforce. Taking advantage of these opportunities will help you develop to your full potential.

Career Knowledge and Skills	
Basic Knowledge or Skill	Expression of a Career Requirement
Academic foundations	Knowing how to read, write, make presentations, and listen well, and use math and science principles
Communications	Using illustrations to convey complex concepts
Problem solving and critical thinking	Analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating data
Information technology applications	Using Internet searches, presentation software, and writing/publishing applications
Systems	Understanding the roles within the team, work unit, department, and organization
Safety, health, and environment	Knowing and following the procedures required by health and safety codes
Leadership and teamwork	Demonstrating integrity, perseverance, self-discipline, and responsibility
Ethics and legal responsibilities	Behaving in ways that are appropriate for the workplace
Employability and career development	Recognizing what needs to be learned or accomplished to gain a promotion
Technical skills	Correctly using the technological systems and equipment common to a chosen career

1-4

The 10 knowledge and skills required in all careers appear in the left column. The right column shows examples of how they are used to identify the requirements of specific careers.

### Reflect Further

What skills or qualities are evident in the workers you most admire?

## Transferable Skills

Often the skills used in one job are also used in another. These are called **transferable skills**. A specialized skill such as speaking a second language is an example. People who possess transferable skills can easily use them in other jobs that require them.

Specialized skills are not the only skills that qualify as transferable skills. Broader skills such as good writing, problem-solving, and leadership skills are transferable skills, too. Your future success will depend on developing skills that can be used now and applied to future work opportunities. This means using the skills you develop as a student and transferring them to a work-based learning program. There you will polish your skills and learn other skills, all of which can be transferred later to a full-time job.

Continue developing transferable skills. They make you a more capable person and help expand the knowledge and skills you will need in the workplace.

### Thinking It Through

How can you use classroom and school activities to develop transferable skills? How can you use activities outside school to achieve the same goal?

## Summary

Making a good career decision involves studying the career clusters and knowing about the many career choices available. It also requires knowing one's abilities and interests. Participating in career events, taking field trips, job shadowing, and volunteering are some ways to obtain first-hand advice on careers.

Work-based programs give students the opportunity to gain work experience while still in school. Of the various work-based learning experiences available, most are paid. Participating in these programs helps students prepare for a career goal. In a work-based learning experience, the student gains work experience through a part-time job with a local employer. The employer helps the student develop skills under actual work conditions. The program coordinator guides the student through a successful work experience.

While on the job, students gain marketable skills as they get experience in an occupation. They learn how to conduct themselves in work situations and gain job skills. Employers benefit by helping young people in the community and by gaining a valuable employee at the same time. They give interested students training that can lead to full-time employment after graduation.

It is important for students and workers to know certain knowledge and skills to achieve success in the workplace. Many of the skills are transferable from school to work and from job to job.

## Facts in Review

1. True or false. Jobs, occupations, and careers always involve work that is done for pay.
2. The different career choices existing within each career cluster are called career \_\_\_\_\_.
3. List two ways for students to gain actual exposure to the workplace besides holding a job or participating in a work-based learning program.
4. Briefly explain how a work-based learning program is organized.
5. Who is usually responsible for providing transportation for the student from school to work?
6. Who is in charge of a training station?
7. Which work-based learning program(s) may consist of an unpaid work experience?
8. Name four benefits of a work-based learning program.
9. When should students develop the knowledge and skills they will need in their future careers?
10. Identify five transferable skills.



## Developing Your Academic Skills

1. **English.** Select a topic related to your current job, research information on it, and write a paper. Make sure all the information is communicated clearly. Use proper grammar and research-paper formatting.
2. **Social Studies.** Research the history of the U.S. Department of Labor at [www.dol.gov](http://www.dol.gov). Write a report on the reasons for creating the department, as stated in its founding legislation in 1913.

## Information Technology Applications

1. Use a drawing program to diagram a comparison of the two types of work-based learning programs described in this chapter: cooperative education versus an internship. Use the diagram to show commonalities shared by both programs as well as characteristics unique to each.
2. Do an Internet search to identify different types of work-based learning programs offered to high school students throughout the United States. Write a brief description of each program and prepare a spreadsheet or chart to summarize your findings.

## Applying Your Knowledge and Skills

1. **Leadership and Teamwork.** Work with a small group of classmates to list the adjustments students may encounter as they make the transition from full-time students to full-time employees. Share your findings with the class.
2. **Communications.** Write a half-page summary explaining why you enrolled in a work-based learning program and what you expect to gain from your experience.
3. **Employability and Career Development.** Investigate volunteer opportunities in your community. Report on one that appeals to you. Identify how the volunteer activity contributes to preparing individuals for a future job.
4. **Problem Solving and Critical Thinking.** Work with a small group of classmates to develop a plan for exploring the world of work. The plan should include a variety of possible experiences including Internet and library searches, guest speakers, field trips, job shadowing, and volunteering. Include the names and telephone numbers of speakers and companies to visit.
5. **Communications.** Form a discussion group with a small group of classmates to discuss what work means to each individual. Which do you see more often—people treating work as a problem or as an opportunity? Discuss what may inspire workers to view work as fun and exciting.

## Developing Workplace Skills

Working with a small group of classmates, interview a former student of the school who participated in a work-based learning program. (The person you interview can be someone you know or a person whose name is provided to you by the school-to-work coordinator.) Determine how the former student's work experience helped him or her develop the knowledge and skills needed in the workplace. Show your findings in a concise chart and briefly report them to the class.