

Assisting Others: For Parents, Caregivers and Grandparents

When young people consider their career paths, they do not act alone. Career development begins at childhood where our ideas about life roles and work are:

- based on the adults we identify with
- the communities we grow up in
- influenced by images in the media
- expressed in play.



The relationships that children have with parents, caregivers and grandparents or other family members influence young people's career development.

In their teens, young people begin to identify their interests and skills, and to explore the world of work in search of a suitable career path.

It helps to talk to your children about the type of career that interests them. There are positive ways to affect your children's career by:

- encouraging your children to get the most out of education and introducing the concept of lifelong learning
- talking about your own experiences of career decisions
- valuing differences
- positive role modelling
- developing their knowledge about work, especially:
 - new concept of careers
 - exploring career fields
 - developing job seeking techniques
- generating options
- preparing them to make decisions
- challenging stereotypes
- helping them to become skills oriented
- knowing about the Gap Year.

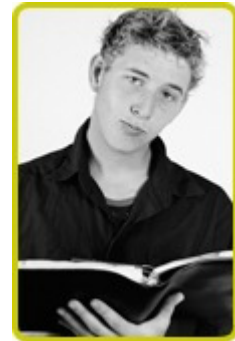
Getting the Most out of Education

Research shows that family involvement in the child's school leads to an improvement in the child's academic performance (White-Clark & Decker 1996, 1994). As a result, some schools are encouraging more family participation in the school.

You may not have the time to be on the school council or board but showing you value and support the school will demonstrate to your child your continued interest in her/his academic well-being.

Good education and training is an important factor influencing access to employment prospects, a range of jobs, higher income and a much greater range of career choices. Supporting your child's success in school includes:

- taking the time to listen, help and support
- reading with your child
- helping with homework
- encouraging her/his progress
- finding out what she/he is good at in school
- having realistic and reasonable expectations
- working with teachers
- having an idea about pathways that open doors to future careers.



Understanding the requirements and options for entry into further education and training will help you to support your child make decisions about:

- school to work transition
- New Apprenticeships
- vocational education and training (VET)
- university.

For further information read the article written for students, [choosing school subjects](#).

Lifelong Learning

Changing patterns of work have meant that workers are required to continually update their skills and knowledge to stay current. A commitment to lifelong learning will be necessary to attain and retain the stimulating career your children are seeking.

Formal education is only one aspect of learning. If you help your children develop a love for learning in school and through other life activities, then they will be more likely to pursue the various paths of self-development and professional development that are available.

Talking About Your Own Experiences

Your own career satisfaction affects your children.

- Consider how you speak to your children about your own work and career choices (eg remarks you make about your day at work or your employer).
- Consider what your own parents said about their careers and how this influenced your career choices and decisions.
- Reflect on and review your own career path.

When discussing careers with your children, it is helpful to keep the following issues in mind.

- It is appropriate to share your own career dreams and history with your children but make sure they don't feel pressured to follow your career path (or your desired career path).
- The world of work has dramatically changed in the last 20 years. You may need to discard beliefs about the workplace which may no longer be valid.
- Young people need to be responsible for their own career choices. If you suggest that they shouldn't pursue a particular career you run the risk of them blaming you later if they are unhappy.
- Try to be impartial and realistic. Listen to your children and help them make up their own minds. It is their future not yours.

Valuing Differences

Intelligence has often been judged on ability in maths and language skills. However, research has shown that human intelligence can be expressed in different ways. Howard Gardner, a psychologist at Harvard University, organised intelligence into seven different categories. Gardner suggests that everyone uses the seven, in varying degrees to solve problems and create products, with one or two predominant intelligences standing out. It is important to value and acknowledge these attributes in your children. Remember, their intelligences may well be different from your own.

Gardner's seven forms of intelligences are:

- **Interpersonal Intelligence:** The ability to understand other people.
- **Intrapersonal Intelligence:** The ability to understand one's own feelings and thoughts.
- **Kinaesthetic Intelligence:** The ability to use one's body to its greatest potential.
- **Linguistic Intelligence:** The ability to understand and use language properly.
- **Mathematical Intelligence:** The ability to use logic and reasoning to recognise patterns.
- **Musical Intelligence:** The ability to understand pitch, melody and tone.
- **Spatial Intelligence:** The ability to understand the visual aspects of the surrounding world.

Gardner suggests that there are other intelligences which have yet to be identified. Recently, Gardner added an eighth form of intelligence:

- **Naturalistic Intelligence:** The ability to understand the world of nature.

Acknowledging these differences allows people to express the different combinations of abilities and patterns of strengths and weaknesses. It will be more likely that they will choose career fields that suit them if your children have a clear understanding of their interests, abilities, values and personality characteristics.



Positive Role Modelling

You are your child's 'first teacher'. Your beliefs, attitudes and behaviour have an important effect on your child's development. Your child learns about herself/himself from you.

When children are faced with a new or different situation, they often look at what you would do in a similar situation. Children are constantly working out the consequences of their actions (ie 'If I do this - this will happen'). Therefore, it is important to be the type of role model you want your child to copy.

Often, when children are asked about their occupational aspirations, they often say they want to be like their parents or other adults they are close to. Children are also influenced

by a parent's attitude towards different occupations. It is important to maintain a healthy attitude towards different occupations when you speak to your children.

Developing Their Knowledge About Work

The career and life decision choices your children will make will be shaped by what is happening around them.

There are a number of steps you and your children can go through to help them learn about work. You can encourage them to:

- read about different career fields
 - talk to and interview people in different career fields of interest
 - find short-term employment/courses in the field of interest
 - go to local agencies for state and local information
 - explore work on the Internet
 - do volunteer work in an area of interest
 - follow and observe a person to learn about her/his occupation
 - find out about work experience opportunities.
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New Concept of Careers

It is important to understand the new concept of careers. Employees having the same occupation, working for the same employer, or even in the same industry, for life is now outdated. Changes in the labour market call for flexibility and resourcefulness; employees now may change jobs frequently. Therefore, the skills, attitudes and expectations required of your children will need to be more varied than the skills you acquired by the time you entered the job market.

The keys to today's job market are:

- versatility
- ability to communicate effectively in oral and written forms
- computer literacy
- blends of skills as opposed to skills in one specific area
- the desire to undertake training and professional development throughout a career
- the ability to apply learning and life experience to work contexts.

For further information on work patterns and trends in Australia, visit [Patterns of work](#).

Explore Career Fields

Career fields are clusters of similar occupations requiring different levels of education and training. As career fields are broader than single occupations, your children will be exposed to a wider choice of work. Exploring career fields will help your children realise which subjects are vital for their favoured career path and help them plan further study and extracurricular activities around that path.

When your children have chosen career fields of interest, they may then explore occupations within those fields.

As a first step towards working together to realise your children's career goals, we suggest you and your children visit My Guide (click on tab above) for further information on careers.

My Guide is designed for all people seeking career information and we suggest that you and your children undertake the activities it offers. My Guide will assist your children to identify career fields through a series of activities.

When you visit My Guide, it will be important to work through the Identifying, Exploring and Deciding sections in that order so that you can:

- generate career ideas
- explore the ideas that suit your children
- select and decide on the ideas that suit your children.

For further information on careers, visit:

- [What is a career?](#)
- [Career development](#)
- [Pathways.](#)

Develop Job Seeking Techniques

An important aspect of learning about work is to encourage your children to develop their job seeking techniques in:

- application writing
- resume writing

- developing interview skills (role-playing the job interview process is considered extremely useful)
- developing networks
- researching the industry, region or organisation they wish to work in
- identifying skills required for specific occupations.

For further information read [Get a job](#).

Generating Options

Talking to your children about career aspirations while they are still in school provides an opportunity to discuss and think about the range of options available.

Be creative when exploring career aspirations and don't exclude conversations about work that may currently seem impractical.

Aspirations that may sound impractical now may lead to other roles or industries. For example, marine biology currently has a limited number of positions available but this study could lead to other roles in the expanding eco-industry or animal care industry.

Similarly, web design, as an occupation, did not exist in 1988. However, the last five years has seen web design move from a small niche within the IT sector to an industry of its own and the positions available within the industry have grown accordingly.



Preparing Them to Make Career Decisions

Preparing your children to make informed career decisions requires supporting them to:

- collect relevant information
- promote discussion to prepare for making decisions
- find out about alternative pathways
- discuss strengths and interests
- visit a career counsellor
- discuss a range of options
- recognise they are capable of doing more than one type of work.

For example, you could support your children to:

- get a part-time job to learn about the different types of work, their rights and responsibilities as a worker, and the range of tasks required in a job
 - reflect on open questions you might ask, like 'What sorts of skills/interests/values/preferences do you want to develop and why?'
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Challenging Stereotypes

It is important when you and your children are looking at career options that you are not limited by stereotypes. Individuals need to be encouraged to develop lifestyle choices based on their unique blend of talents, abilities, skills, needs and values.

Encourage your children to research traditional and non-traditional occupations and understand different types of work.

For example, men in Australia can expect a very different work and career future from what their grandfathers and fathers would have experienced. Men in Australia may need to think about issues such as:

- considering a non-traditional career for men
 - staying at home with children
 - their partners/wives working full-time outside the house
 - working for a female employer
 - negotiating household responsibilities (ie cleaning, cooking, shopping).
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Helping Them to Become Skills Oriented

Did you know that the average person has between 500 and 800 skills? Skills are activities that you can do right now.

Skills are used together to accomplish a task and a combination of tasks makes up an activity. Activities are a part of a job, volunteer work, hobbies, recreation or daily life.

- Job specific skills are skills required to complete activities like cleaning, computer programming and record keeping.
- Self-management skills are skills required for less specific activities like being punctual, dependable, independent and flexible.

The My Guide section of this site will assist your children to identify their specific skills.

Knowing About the Gap Year

Many young people take the opportunity to spend time away from their studies or occupation to gain life experiences. This is known as a Gap Year (although it could last anything from weeks to months or even several years). It can take the form of an overseas working holiday but, in reality, is unlimited in its scope. For example, your children may want to take time out to pursue a hobby or work in a field unrelated to their occupational choice.

It is understandable that you may be concerned if your children decide to spend a year travelling or working rather than continue their education, but Gap Years are being increasingly seen as an important part of a young person's learning and personal development.

If your children are planning to spend all or part of their Gap Year overseas, they can emphasise the life skills they have gained and how these skills can benefit the employer.

Travelling overseas also offers your children the opportunity to visit professional associations and do short courses and community work (if this is legal in the country they are visiting), so do not overlook these experiences as they can greatly enhance your children's understanding of their chosen career field.

For further information on the Gap Year visit Independent.co.uk

Tip!



- Don't panic! Expect your children to change their minds about career directions, as they are still exploring their place in the world of work.