

# JUMPSTART YOUR CAREER EXPLORATION

## 10-STEP CHECKLIST FOR SUCCESS

Gaining experience & exposure in the areas that interest you will set you up to feel more confident and clear about your career path and the classes and future internships that will get you there.

Here are 10 supercharged and simple steps to explore your career path. Build out your unique exploration plan with a combination of online and in-person opportunities to maximize your success:



### #1 TAKE ONLINE CLASSES IN YOUR AREA OF INTEREST

 Start by making a list of subjects and/or career areas that interest you. Then, look for free or paid online courses to help you get clear on whether or not you truly have an interest in that career or area of study.

 Many of the students I work with have thought they had to wait until a certain class comes up in their schedule to see if they like the subject. Don't wait for "the" class to find out! You can find an online course for nearly every subject and get the same type of exposure to help you make your decision sooner. My favorite online resources are [edx.org](https://edx.org), [coursera.org](https://coursera.org), [creativelive.com](https://creativelive.com), [khanacademy.org](https://khanacademy.org), [lynda.com](https://lynda.com) or [this article from The Muse!](#)

### #2 VOLUNTEER

 Research local non-profit organizations and/or small businesses that match your areas of interest. Research roles that would give you exposure to the type of career that you're interested in, and reach out to share your skills and tell them you'd like to volunteer or gain experience. You can find great volunteer opportunities at [volunteermatch.org](https://volunteermatch.org), [idealist.org](https://idealist.org), and [LinkedIn's volunteer hub](#).

 Here's an example: if you're interested in marketing as a possible career path, find a volunteer role or offer to volunteer in a junior marketing role. Even a few weeks volunteering will give you hands-on information and experience to help you gain a better understanding of your interest in that area long-term.

### #3 INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

 Talk to people who are already in the jobs that you're interested in to learn about whether those jobs are a good fit for you. Ask your parents, family friends, connections, friends' parents, teachers or other adults to connect you. Use this [sample informational interview script](#) to prepare for your meetings.

 For example, if you want to be a nurse, talk to 5 nurses about their career path, current position, favorite things about the job and biggest challenges. Informational interviewing is the gold standard for exploring careers and one of the most important steps you can take to gaining more confidence and clarity for your career path.



## #4 RIDE-ALONGS

 Like informational interviewing, this can help you learn about the ins-and-outs of the job that you're interested in. Meet with people who are already in those jobs and ask if you can shadow them for a few hours or a day. See if the job, the company or the type of environment is a good fit.

 I refer to Job Shadows as "Ride-Alongs," because just like if you're thinking about becoming a police officer, a job shadow - riding along for a day or two - is a powerful way to learn about the actual experience of any job you're interested in. Spend a day in their shoes and you'll quickly find that you're either a "YES" for a career path or a "NO".

## #5 ONLINE RESEARCH

 Simple searches about possible career paths can expand your knowledge and confidence in a short amount of time. It's been said that people spend more time researching vacations than they do planning their careers. Maybe that's why 70% of people report feeling unfulfilled by their work?

 LinkedIn.com is my go-to resource to start your online search. Begin your search for job titles of interest and study the profiles of people in those jobs, the companies they've worked for, their education, associations and groups. You can also use [linkedin.com/alumni](https://www.linkedin.com/alumni/) to search for alumni from your college or university who work in your area of interest.

## #6 PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

 These are groups of people who are specifically focused on a career or industry. You can think of them like college clubs. They gather to network, share information and industry trends, and listen to guest speakers. Some of these associations, like the American Marketing Association, even have college chapters.

 These meetings are perfect for connecting with people for informational interviews and job shadows, as well as for learning about companies in your area and trends in the industry. [You can find local associations here](#) with scheduled meetings, local chapters, and other resources.

## #7 INTERNSHIPS

 Use paid or unpaid internships to "test drive" career paths that you're interested in. There is no substitute for actually doing the work, and this is the #1 way to gain both experience and exposure. I suggest and believe in paid internships (and that's the legal interpretation of an internship), but short-term unpaid internships also provide valuable exposure. Internships are also perfect for gaining connections and experience that will pay off many times over in the future!

 You can find great internships through your college career center, career fairs, or connections at companies you're interested in. [Here are 10 great places for finding an internship online.](#)

## #8 PART-TIME WORK EXPERIENCE

 Ideally, find a part-time position in your industry/area of interest. You'll gain valuable exposure and experience just by being in the industry. This is a great way to add relevant skills and experience to your resume.

 Use the same tactics to find a part-time job as finding an internship. Look for opportunities at companies where you can gain relevant skills to build your experience and resume, even if it's not in your ideal industry. For example, if you're interested in marketing, finding jobs in retail or event planning can translate well. Interested in art? Try finding a position at a local museum or library/bookstore.

## #9 DISCOVERY TOOLS

 The earlier you can start gathering knowledge about yourself and your interests, the better equipped you'll be to evaluate college and career options along the way! There are great discovery tools - like career assessments - online. I always advise focusing less on the specific career options that are recommended in your assessments and more on the common words/phrases that are being used to describe your interests.

 One of my favorite career assessments is [www.careerkey.org](http://www.careerkey.org). After reviewing the results and your dominant interest areas, head over to [onetonline.org](http://onetonline.org) to learn more about great-fitting college majors and careers!

## #10 CREATE A PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

 Create a plan to leverage & continue your career exploration. By making a plan, you'll take charge of your future career path by adding in a few opportunities each semester and gaining more exposure to career fields along the way. In addition to the academics, you'll graduate with a much better idea of which career paths truly fit you best.

 Here are some elements of a great "school year" career exploration plan: visiting your campus career center, identifying the top 10 companies that recruit from your area in your desired industry, researching and making connections at those companies, attending career fairs and listening to guest speakers, joining campus clubs, and updating your resume and LinkedIn profile.

**Did you know? 80% of all job opportunities come from your connections.**

By completing these 10 steps, you'll find that you've built a network that will benefit you throughout college and into the future. Not only will you walk away from the experience with more clarity & confidence, but you'll end it with a great set of connections for the future. Priceless.



**Truly, the best resource that I know for helping you discover and build your career path is ME!**

Whether you're trying to decide your major, find internships in your industry, or just want to graduate with an answer to "what are you doing after graduation?" -- let's talk.

Schedule a free 30-minute discovery call by emailing me at [deanna@youthcareercompass.com](mailto:deanna@youthcareercompass.com).

