

which **direction** should I take?

High school may very well be one of the busiest times in your life. Whether it's sports or music practice, student government or homework, life can pull you in a lot of different directions. Who has time to think about what to do next after high school?

What do you want to do with the rest of your life? Talk about overwhelming!

As you get started, remember what you decide now will probably be just a starting point. It's estimated that most people switch careers six to eight times over their lifetimes. So don't sweat it; think of your future as the 'Big Picture.' You don't have to be 100% sure about what you want to be doing 20 years down the road.

The most important step in choosing a potential career path, is doing what feels right for you! Remember, the path that other people take may not lead YOU in the right direction.

Whether you decide to get a job right after high school or attend a four-year college, set a goal and then figure out what you need to do to get there.

If you love to cook and want to be a chef or open your own restaurant, you know you're going to need a college degree. If you love helping people or enjoy working on cars and want to work in health care or be an auto mechanic, there are several ways to get training.

Take the first step, start early, and believe in yourself. Check out this list of things that you can do now to start thinking about potential career goals.

Get some advice.

Make a list of four people you know (friends, teachers, counselors, or relatives) who can help you make a career decision. Then talk to them! You might be surprised at the insight you gain just from discussing your options with other people.

Do some homework.

Finally an assignment that you won't be graded on, here are some suggestions to get you started:

Use this book to compare different careers.

Visit a career counselor or your local CTWorks Career Center (see page 8 for locations and phone numbers).

Check out the Occupational Outlook Handbook. This book contains detailed information on hundreds of occupations nationwide. To access this book online go to <http://www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm>

Use the Internet!

Start with the Connecticut Department of Labor's Job & Career Connection www.ctjobandcareer.org and check out some other great online resources listed on pages 1-2 of this book.

Narrow it down...

After doing some homework, start narrowing down potential career options. Make a list of five different occupations that pique your interest.

Get the facts.

The facts are there, use them! Look at the Career Table in this book for education and training, job outlook, and wage information for the five occupations on your list. Then, talk to employers in your field of interest. What expectations do they have of their employees? What qualities do they look for?

Pros and Cons...

Make a list of all the advantages and disadvantages of each occupation on your list.

Learn by doing!

To get a handle on the skills you'll need in your chosen career field(s), get out there and start working. Apply for an internship, volunteer, or find a paying part-time or temp job where you can really learn what it's like to work in the job.