

10 Steps to a Successful Career Change

Review these tips for assessing your interests, exploring options, evaluating alternative career paths, and making the move to a new career

1. **Evaluate your current job satisfaction.** Keep a journal of your daily reactions to your job situation and look for recurring themes. Which aspects of your current job do you like and dislike? Are your dissatisfactions related to the content of your work, your company culture or the people with whom you work? While you're doing this, there are some things you can do at your current job to help you prepare to move on when it's time for a change.
2. **Assess your interests, values, and skills.** Review past successful roles, volunteer work, projects and jobs to identify preferred activities and skills. Determine whether your core values and skills are addressed through your current career. There are free online tools you can use to help assess career alternatives.
3. **Consider alternative careers.** Brainstorm ideas for career alternatives by researching career options, and discussing your core values and skills with friends, family, and networking contacts. If you're having difficulty coming up with ideas, consider meeting with a career counselor for professional advice.
4. **Check out job options.** Conduct a preliminary comparative evaluation of several fields to identify a few targets for in-depth research. You can find a wealth of information online simply by Googling the jobs that interest you.
5. **Get personal.** Find out as much as you can about those fields and reach out to personal contacts in those sectors for informational interviews. A good source of contacts for informational interviewees is your college alumni career network. LinkedIn is another great resource for finding contacts in specific career fields of interest.
6. **Set up a job shadow (or two).** Shadow professionals in fields of primary interest to observe work first-hand. Spend anywhere from a few hours to a few days job shadowing people who have jobs that interest you. Your college career office is a good place to find alumni volunteers who are willing to host job shadowers. Here's more information on job shadowing and how it works.



7. **Try it out.** Identify volunteer and freelance activities related to your target field to test your interest e.g. if you are thinking of publishing as a career, try editing the PTA newsletter. If you're interested in working with animals, volunteer at your local shelter.
8. **Take a class.** Investigate educational opportunities that would bridge your background to your new field. Consider taking an evening course at a local college or an online course. Spend some time at one day or weekend seminars. Contact professional groups in your target field for suggestions.
9. **Upgrade your skills.** Look for ways to develop new skills in your current job which would pave the way for a change e.g. offer to write a grant proposal if grant writing is valued in your new field. If your company offers in-house training, sign up for as many classes as you can. There are ways you can position yourself for a career change without having to go back to school.
10. **Consider a new job in the same industry.** Consider alternative roles within your current industry which would utilize the industry knowledge you already have e.g. If you are a store manager for a large retail chain and have grown tired of the evening and weekend hours, consider a move to corporate recruiting within the retail industry. Or if you are a programmer who doesn't want to program, consider technical sales or project management.