

INTRODUCTION

The programme created by CHOICES Career & Education Advice is aimed at fostering the development of essential skills that youth need to prepare themselves to function successfully in the world of work.

This training will help you to help students to:

1. clear their minds of confusion relating to possible career choices, and to get on the right career path by understanding how to choose a career and make a plan for success in that career.
2. Bring youth to a point where they can identify their foundation skills and know if they are ready for the world of work.
3. Help youth to know how to make important decisions correctly which will affect their career, education and life generally.

On a practical level, the CHOICES programme will help each young person to gain knowledge about how to write cover letters and resumés, and go confidently and well-prepared into job interviews.

They will learn to create their own career portfolios and vision documents, which will be useful in mapping their progress as they work to realise success in their chosen careers.

One of the best ways to understand the programme is to experience the principles it encourages on a first-hand basis. We recommend that you read its contents thoroughly before you begin your career training sessions. You should do **The Career Key** test and use the materials provided to judge the readiness of your own foundation skills. Watch the DVD, read relevant issues of *CHOICES Magazine*, *Making The Best Decisions For Career, Education & Life* etc., and ensure that you fully understand what you are going to be imparting to your students. Through this process, you will be able to fully relate to the principles that you will be teaching, and will have a first-hand understanding of the materials presented here, and how they work in the process of enlightenment and empowerment.

The programme includes materials created and supplied by CHOICES Career & Education Advice and internet resources through our website. These activities are by no means exhaustive, and we encourage you to create your own activities which can improve the effectiveness of your programme.

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LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

We've all heard the question before: "What do you want to be when you grow up?" It's a question that people ask in order to find out what career area a person wants to be involved in. Each of your students, as the future working population, must go through a stage where they answer this basic question about what they want to do with the rest of their lives.

Ask any person who has been in the working world for over two years, and they will tell you that job satisfaction contributes to a large percentage of overall life satisfaction. The fact is that most of our weekdays are spent on the job. That's five out of seven days (usually)! These days, therefore, need to be spent doing something that makes us feel happy and fulfilled, and adds positive value to our lives.

Explain to your students that career planning entails more than just learning how to write a resume or ace a job interview. It involves building what are known as foundation or life skills, which will last for the rest of their lives and help them to be better, more disciplined and well-rounded individuals.

STEP 1: SELF-ASSESSMENT

One of the first things that people need to do in order to answer the question, “what do you want to be when you grow up?” is an assessment of who they are and where they are in life. Before they make plans for their careers, they need to truthfully assess themselves, their skills, abilities, strengths and weaknesses. This requires asking questions like:

- What do I like to do?
- What activities do I find motivating, interesting and enjoyable?
- What skills and abilities do I have or want to develop?
- What personal characteristics do I have that are important to me in the workplace?
- What goals do I want to accomplish in my career?

In the following activity students are required to think seriously about what they already know about themselves, so they will have a clear picture of exactly where they are, and thus determine what they need to do to get to where they want to be.

Activity: Learning More About Myself

Every young person needs to choose a career which fits their unique qualities, especially in terms of their:

- Values
- Aptitude
- Interests
- Personality
- Skills

With a career that “fits” in all of these areas, they will be happy and more satisfied and lead healthy, balanced and well-rounded lives. This will not only make them happy employees or entrepreneurs, but also sociable people.

Answer the following questions to find out what you already know about yourself and where you are in your life right now:

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Address:
4. What one thing (subject/topic/area/field) interests you most?
5. What are the things you enjoy doing most?
6. What are the things you dislike doing most?
7. What would you consider to be your three main strengths?
8. What would you consider to be your three main weaknesses?

If friends are available, ask them to answer these questions about you as well, to get an idea of how other people see you, and what type of person they think you are.

PERSONALITY TYPES

Personality types can be grouped under six headings: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising and conventional. Below are the explanations for each.

1. **REALISTIC:** A practical, mechanical person who likes to work with animals, tools and machines.
 2. **INVESTIGATIVE:** A scientific and intellectual person who likes to study and solve problems (especially mathematical).
 3. **ARTISTIC:** An imaginative and independent person who likes creative activities such as art, drama, dance, music and creative writing.
 4. **SOCIAL:** A helpful, friendly and trustworthy person who likes to help people by teaching them something or giving information.
 5. **ENTERPRISING:** An energetic, ambitious and sociable person who likes to lead, persuade and sell things or ideas.
 6. **CONVENTIONAL:** An orderly person who likes to follow a set plan and likes to work with numbers, records or machines in a fixed, orderly way.
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Activity: Determining Personality Types

Ask your students to tell you what they think each personality type means. Maybe they can identify persons in the room, or in their communities, who they believe exhibit the different personality traits. After doing this exercise, allow everyone to figure out their own personality types by doing The Career Key Test. After doing the test, they should be able to answer the following questions:

1. What is your main personality type?
 2. Which other two personality types are highest on your Career Key?
 3. Which jobs in the relevant listings interest you the most according to your personality type? Write down as many as you wish.
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STEP 2: CAREER EXPLORATION

Having gotten an idea of the different personality types of students, you can now encourage them to investigate all the career choices, options and opportunities available to them to see which ones they are interested in, and which ones suit their personality. They can do this by attending career fairs, reading widely, talking to people in various careers, and job shadowing or spending time with people in careers that interest them (as these people do their jobs). Radio, television and the internet can also be sources of relevant information on different careers.

Activity: Finding Out About Different Jobs

This activity is designed to help your students record what they observe about the careers they are interested in. Encourage them to write down everything they learn about each occupation, as well as their thoughts and ideas on them. To find out about different jobs, students should:

- Interview people in the area of work.
- Get information from a teacher, counsellor, parent, older sibling or the local library.
- Do volunteer work in their area of interest.
- Participate in internship or work experience programmes.
- Take a part-time, temporary or holiday job.
- Consult relevant websites such the CHOICES website at www.choicescaribbean.com, and the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* website at www.bls.gov/oco.

For a fast, fun, 'in-house' version of the career investigation, place your students in groups and assign each group to a computer. They all start searching at the same time for descriptions of the same careers (be sure to use some rarely known careers to make it interesting and exciting). The first group to find the answer before a minute expires can get a small prize (sweets, snacks, etc.). Career options can be researched in the Occupational Outlook Handbook at www.bls.gov/OCO/. Even though this is a resource of the U.S. Department of Labour, it will help students to broaden their knowledge of different career areas and opportunities that they can learn more about. This also teaches them to have a balanced world view, and to understand that the world is their oyster.

If sufficient computers are not available for this activity, you can make this activity an assignment, and ask students to bring information from three working persons who they know in different areas of work – this can be anyone, from a labourer to a school principal or from a pastor or a nurse.

Another fast, fun activity is to have your students form pairs. One partner will pretend to work in a career area that he/she has investigated, and the other will play the role of the interviewer, asking questions about the job. You can suggest questions such as:

1. What is this job like?
 2. How hard is it to get a job in this area?
 3. What kind of training do I need for this career/job?
 4. In what type of place will I work?
 5. How much does this job pay?
 6. Are there other jobs like it that you know of?
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STEP 3: GOAL SETTING

After doing **The Career Key** test, assessing their personality types, and investigating interesting careers, your students should have an idea of the kind of career options available to them, and, hopefully, some of them now know what areas they want to go into. They may not be 100% certain just yet, but by now they would hopefully have a general idea of where they want to go with their lives. If this is the case, it is time for them to set goals.

When you set goals, you ask yourself, 'What do I have to do to prepare for the career I've chosen?' 'How much education or training does it take to prepare?' Then you make a note of the things that you need to do in order to prepare and become the person you dream about being.

Activity: The Vision Document

1. Get pictures of famous people (athletes, singers and musicians, presidents, great national and international heroes, etc.) and show them to students one by one. For each picture, ask what that person is best known for, and why. At the end of this exercise, explain that all of these people are successful in their different fields because they have learnt how to set and achieve goals.
2. Now ask your students to close their eyes and take a couple of deep breaths to relax their minds. Ask them to think about what they have learnt so far. Ask them to see themselves where they are now, and then, ask them to think about where they want to be in the future – as millionaires, doctors, lawyers, firemen, school-teachers, where ever they desire to be. Ask them to visualise the type of house they want to live in, the type of car they want to drive, the type of lifestyle they wish to lead and to see themselves in their ideal work place. Now ask them to open their eyes, and get some of the group members to share what they visualised. Explain that this is a serious exercise because their dreams can actually become a reality. Explain that these dreams and desires they have for the future – for houses, cars, and ideal jobs, are called goals, and, with proper planning, they can be attained.
3. Ask your students to write down the things they want to accomplish (career-wise) in their lives. Encourage them to think big, and to write down whatever it is that they want to see happen in their future careers, even if at this moment they have no idea how they will achieve it. Each user should make three copies, and give

one to you, one to a mentor or close friend – someone who will encourage them and help them to stay on track and review it with them on a regular basis – and keep one for him/herself.

STEP 4: TAKING ACTION

Goals and dreams for an ideal career look nice on paper, but it takes work for them to actually happen. For each goal, there are some necessary actions that must be fulfilled before that goal can be realised. Career goals always require educational preparation and training plus great job-hunting skills.

THE CAREER PORTFOLIO

It is important for every job-hunter to have a folder, or some type of holder, in which to store all job, education and career-related materials. This is called a career portfolio and it will be a valuable tool to assist them on their career journey. Their career portfolio should include:

1. Results of The Career Key Test.
2. A copy of an up-to-date resumé – all new work experience and qualifications should be added as they occur.
3. A basic cover letter which can be updated and modified to suit each job application.
4. Information gathered about promising occupations – this can be taken from newspapers, magazines and the internet.
5. A brief statement outlining career plans and goals, and steps to be taken towards achieving those goals should also be included (the vision document from the activity above is an excellent addition here).
6. Things which will be needed at job interviews, such as external exam certificates, certificates of achievement from school and extra-curricular activities and photographs.
7. Records of things students have done and feel good about. These will be a good reminder and may be included in a resume or referred to when answering interview questions.
8. Information about schools and colleges, training programmes and college courses. This will be a reminder to always be looking for ways of improving qualifications and skills.

A well put-together career portfolio will help students to make good job-hunting decisions based on the information gathered about various professions, companies, the labour market and trends. Important information relating to career aspirations, personal goals, and educational opportunities can also be kept in the career portfolio.

THE RESUMÉ

The resumé is an individual's first introduction to a company with which he/she would like to work. From the information provided, and the cover letter which goes with it, the prospective employers will decide whether or not to invite that individual to an interview.

Activity – Working on resumé

Ask your students to bring copies of their resumé with them to this session so that you can go through with them and determine what their resumé need to look like.

ESSENTIAL RESUMÉ INFORMATION

All contact information should go at the top of the resumé. This includes name, address, telephone numbers – home (or stable landline), as well as cell – and e-mail address. Every resumé should also contain the following:

- An objective or summary stating what the individual's objectives are in relation to the specific post for which he/she is applying. Objectives should be re-written to suit each job applied for.
- Education details – students who do not have much work experience should list their educational information first, including the institutions attended in reverse order – i.e. the last one first – and academic qualifications and honours, if any, achieved at each one.
- Work Experience – Here, students should briefly give employers an overview of work that has taught them skills. Encourage them to use action words to describe their job duties and remind them to list their work experience in reverse chronological order – that is, put the last job first and work backward to the first

relevant job. Good powerful action verbs include “managed”, “instructed”, “planned”, “monitored”, “arranged”, “maintained”, “achieved”, “created”, “developed”, “established”, “expanded”, “founded”, “lead”, “managed”, “streamlined” and “implemented”. There are many more.

Their resumés should also include:

- Name of organizations where they have worked.
- Their title or position, and a description of their work responsibilities with emphasis on specific skills and achievements.
- Location at which they worked.
- Dates of employment.
- Special interests – In this section, leadership experience in extra-curricular, community or volunteer organisations can be listed. Your students can also include participation in sporting activities.
- References – Students may list the name and contact details of two references. They should be sure, however, to always ask people if they are willing to serve as references before they give these persons’ names to potential employers. It is sometimes acceptable to put ‘references are available on request’ if they have not yet checked with their references.

These tips will make resumés easier to read:

- Use white or off-white 8 1/2” x 11” (letter size) paper.
- Print on one side of the paper only.
- Use a readable font size, 11-12 point, possibly Arial or Times New Roman.
- Choose one non-decorative typeface and stick to it.
- If you must mail your resume, send it in an 8-1/2- x 11 inch envelope and do not fold it.

Activity: The Right and Wrong of Cover Letter Writing

Ask your students to bring two cover letters with them to read. Find one that is an excellent example of what a good cover letter should be, and find another one which is the complete opposite – you can supply this one if necessary. Read the bad one, then the good one, and ask your students which applicant they would hire. Naturally, they will say the good letter, and this will provide an excellent launching pad for their next lesson, which is on how to write good cover letters.

THE COVER LETTER

The cover letter is a vital part of the application process. Recruiters routinely discard many applications based solely on poorly written cover letters; so one that is well-written will more than double your ' chances of getting that all-important job interview. Be sure to stress the importance of the cover letter to them.

The goal of the cover letter is to both introduce and sell the applicant to the company. So here are the main points that you must emphasise to your students about writing the cover letter: Make it short! No more than one page. Be professional and concise. Never try to be humorous. Keep the tone business-like. Never mention any work experience in the cover letter that is not included on the resumé. Have someone proofread the letter before mailing it to make sure it contains no typographical or grammatical errors. Know what post is being applied for. Be specific. Know the job title.

Encourage your students to state clearly why they want to work for the company. Include this information in the first paragraph. In paragraph two, state the contributions that the applicant will make to the company based on previous skills and experience gained elsewhere. Students should always specify a date on which they will follow up with the company and say how they will do so – whether in person, by phone, e-mail, etc. Remind them that since their goal

is to get in the door for an interview, taking the time to create a winning cover letter is a tactic they really cannot afford to skip!

Activity: Role Play (for the job interview)

You play the role of an interviewer, and throw out questions to the students (who are playing the role of interviewees. As you ask each student a question, ask their peers to evaluate whether or not they gave good responses. You can use this exercise to introduce students to the concept of interviews.

THE JOB INTERVIEW

The purpose of an interview is to allow the applicant and the prospective employer to get to know each other. This is an excellent opportunity for the applicant to market him/herself, and to find out if there is a good fit of skills, experience and aptitude for the job.

Remind students that as they prepare for this important event, there are some important factors that they need to consider. Here are some tips on job interview etiquette (these can be read to the group):

- When preparing for your interview, take great care in your appearance. Check your clothes, nails and posture. Find out about the organisation's dress code by telephoning their receptionist. If in doubt, wear a tailored suit. If you don't have a suit, be sure your clothes are professional, clean and fit well. Ensure that your nails are clean and manicured, not bitten or scruffy.
- Also bear in mind that you want to choose an outfit that is comfortable and one that will not be crumpled after you have taken the bus or taxi to get to the location. In fact, it is advisable to try on your entire outfit a few days before the interview. Make sure that your clothes are properly ironed, that your hair is clean, tidy and appropriately styled for an interview and your shoes polished.

- Pay attention to your personal hygiene. This is always very important. Do not use too much of your favourite cologne. If in doubt about your breath, carry fresh breath mints with you, and don't ever forget the deodorant.
- Before going to any interview, research the company and learn as much as you can about it. This shows enthusiasm and will give you a great head start.
- Be early for your interview – i.e. not more than 15 and not less than 5 minutes early, or else you may appear to be late. If you are not familiar with the location, find it at least a day before the interview. When you arrive at the location, be polite and courteous to everyone as you can never tell who is involved in the recruitment process.
- Your handshake is one of the most important parts of a first impression. A firm handshake, good eye contact and a relaxed smile will give you a confident start. Practice your smile! Do not slouch. Your posture should be upright.
- Be confident but not arrogant, ace the interview and your foot will be inside that door of opportunity.

STEP 5: EVALUATION

It is important to evaluate plans periodically to ensure that they are still relevant and necessary. Encourage your students to ask themselves, 'Am I on the right track?' 'Is there new information I need to investigate about my chosen career?'

Remind them that it is never too late to move in another direction or to add more exposure or opportunities to their career plans. These steps can also help if they have to change careers mid-stream – whether by choice or necessity.

When you have gone through this section with your , you can review everything and emphasise the points by showing them the CHOICES *Get Ready For Work DVD*.

LIFE VALUES DETERMINE CAREER SUCCESS

Career guidance must include the essential question of principles and values. It is one thing to acquire a job, but it is another thing entirely to keep it. The values and principles that an individual applies on the job will determine how well that individual performs on the job, how he/she gets along with others, the progress that individual makes in terms of promotions and expanded responsibilities, as well as how long he/she actually keeps that job.

Ensure that your students understand that there are certain essential values that are expected from any good employee in the work environment. These values cover the most basic common courtesies that must be displayed to all people, and work ethics that guarantee productivity, effectiveness and success.

Below is a list of some of the values that are necessary in the work environment:

1. Positive attitude
2. Professionalism
3. Respectfulness
4. Punctuality
5. Generosity

Activity - Determining work values

Consider two different scenarios: “Sloppy Sam” and “Productive Pete”. As the names suggest, one of these characters is productive and prosperous in his career, (as your students will guess, this is Productive Pete), and the other has terrible work experiences that are formed from his own “sloppy” habits. Ask your students to identify some of the habits and attitudes that they can associate with “Sloppy Sam” and with “Productive Pete”, then ask them which one of these men they think will be more successful in his career and why. This is a good opener for a discussion about values and ethics in the workplace and how important they are to one’s career success.

Activity: Assessing Employability Skills

Part I

Ask your students to pretend that they are employers.

Ask them to honestly answer this question:

“Considering your own values, attitudes and habit, would you hire yourself?”

Ask them to say why, or why not. It will be interesting to hear the answers that they come up with. If they are honest, they will admit that they are not 100% ideal employees, and have habits that they need to change. This is the perfect time to explain to them that having faults is a normal and even expected part of being human. However, the great thing about this is that they do not have to remain that way. Developing an awareness of their shortcomings now means that they can work at changing them.

Part II

Give each of them a sheet of paper and ask each one to fold it down the middle giving two columns. Label one column ‘positives’ and the other column ‘negatives’. Ask them to list under the appropriate column, what their main traits are in each area and in relation to employability. For every negative, ask them to state ways in which they can change that behaviour. For every positive, ask them to think of ways in which they can portray this over their negatives.

Part III

This part of the activity requires your students to step a little bit out of their comfort zones. Cut up paper into small pieces and hand them out. Ask each user to write down one of their faults on that paper, then to fold it up and drop it into a bag that you will provide. After everyone has done this, choose a random person to come up and choose a paper from the bag. The person will read the fault on the paper so everyone can hear, and then you will ask the other students in the room to aggravate that person in the way identified on the paper (without going overboard or being deliberately hurtful or disrespectful, of course). For example, if the paper says, “I do not like to take orders”, the students will order this person around for a bit. And then you will use that situation to explain to your students

ways in which they can maintain self-control when in a situation where they want to get upset. You can repeat this activity with as many other students as you have time for before moving on.

A quick and easy way to remember the main values that comprise good work ethics is to learn and memorise the 7 'D's:

1. Direction – know where you are and why you are there (for example, you must recognize that the workplace is not a play area, and as such, conduct yourself with professionalism.
2. Decisiveness – be very clear about the decisions you make.
3. Discipline – be willing to do what is necessary to be a good employee (for example, arrive at work early, meet deadlines, respect set work hours and lunch periods)
4. Diligence – be serious and careful about your work (ensure that you do the work properly and don't rush through it and make too many trivial mistakes)
5. Determination – do whatever it takes to get the job done properly
6. Dedication – be committed to finishing the task
7. Detachment – separate yourself from the negative elements and habits that may break your focus or get you in trouble.

LIFE-LONG LEARNING

One of the main ways that your students are going to remain relevant and useful in the job society is if they develop the attitude of being 'life-long learners'. This means they are always seeking opportunities to learn new skills and enhance those they already have. Your students should be encouraged to learn what skills are needed and valued in the industry which they are interested in, now and in the future. A good place to start is to go to the industry itself or by telephoning a place of business.

In Section 3, you will find more information about how to encourage your students to develop their skills.