

## Chapter 9: Preliminary Career Research

Welcome to the second phase of your career counselling journey: Career Exploration and Research. In the previous chapters, you carefully identified the key factors that influence your ideal career fit.

These factors, which make up your “career criteria,” include:

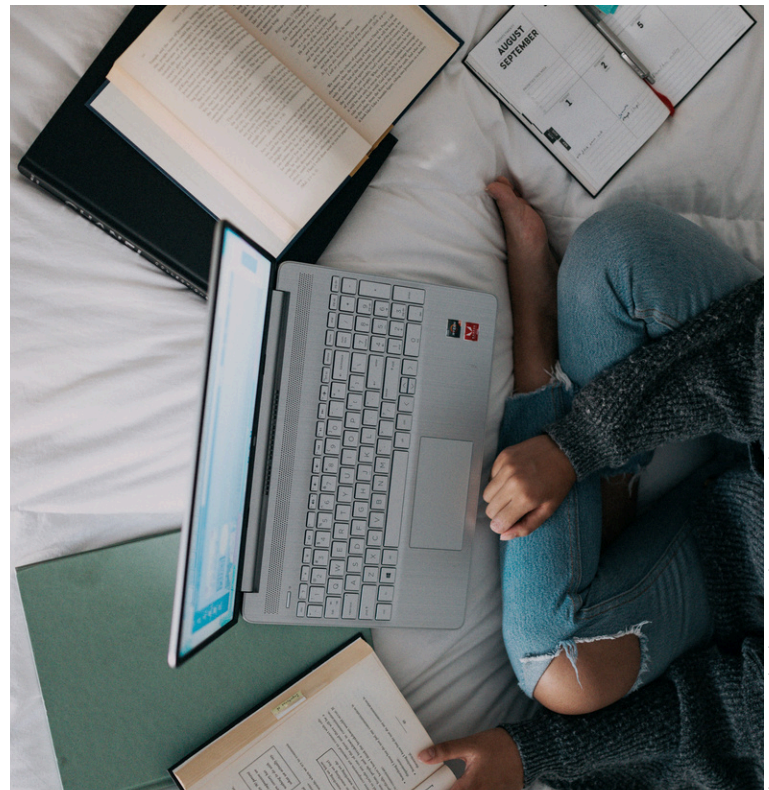
1. Your **beliefs** about work and career (*Chapter 3*)
2. Your **interests** – both the subjects/topics and industries that appeal to you, as well as the duties, responsibilities, and tasks you enjoy doing (*Chapter 4*)
3. Your skills and strengths (*Chapter 5*)
4. Your **personality**, which helps inform what you need to feel satisfied in a career (*Chapter 6*)
5. Your career **values** and what you need to feel fulfilled and motivated (*Chapter 7*)
6. Your ideal lifestyle and any **reality factors** that may limit your career options (*Chapter 8*)

Now it's time to focus on career exploration and career research.

In the next two chapters, the focus of your career counselling work will shift from learning about yourself to learning about the careers on your list, and potentially identifying other careers you haven't yet come across.

As you explore, it isn't uncommon to come across careers that are similar or related to the careers on your list.

If any of these careers interest you, add them to your Career Ideas List and include them in your research as well.



<https://unsplash.com/photos/v94mlgvsza4>

Ultimately, the goal of career research is to narrow your career options; however, expanding your options may also be a part of the process.

While the career research phase of career counselling is housed in only two chapters, working through this phase will require just as much time and effort as the first eight chapters. Simply put, most of your career exploration happens outside of your workbook.



Let the process of discovering details about careers that interest you spark your curiosity. Your counsellor is excited to hear all the insights you'll be gaining.

These two chapters are set up to guide you through the preparation and execution of your career research so you can feel confident about how to conduct your career research!



#### NOTE:

It's completely normal to feel confused and unsure about your career choice at this point in career counselling. If you're feeling this way, please know that it's a very common experience to be uncertain!

Our clients often worry that they are missing something or that they aren't progressing through career counselling the way they should be, which is **not** the case.

After completing the first phase of career counselling you should feel clearer about yourself and your needs in a career. You shouldn't yet have made a decision about which career to pursue.

Understanding yourself and your needs in a career (Chapters 1-8) are only one half of the career puzzle. In order to make an informed career decision – which is the purpose of the career counselling process – you must now learn more about each of the careers on your list.

## WHAT IS CAREER RESEARCH?

Simply put, career research is asking questions and gaining the answers and information you need to evaluate a career. In the first step of your research, you will need to ask questions that help you answer the question:

**"IS THIS CAREER A FIT FOR ME?"**



As outlined before, over the past several weeks you've done a deep dive into learning about yourself and your needs in a career.

Chapter by chapter, you've explored your "career criteria," which is made up of all of the things you'll need in a career in order to feel engaged, satisfied, and fulfilled.

The more an occupation aligns with your criteria, the more confident you can feel about whether the career is a fit for you. For example, if one of your interests is organizing information, you'll want to notice if that is a job responsibility in each career you research.

Similarly, if one of your career values is helping others, you'll evaluate the occupations on your list to see whether they'll provide you this opportunity.

Conducting career research can be done in a variety of ways. In this process, you'll complete both **preliminary and interactive research**. Completing preliminary career research will be discussed later in this chapter, while interactive career research is the focus of Chapter 10.



You may also want to utilize the helpful features of AI when thinking about your career options and identifying occupations to explore through your career research. ChatGPT, a free generative artificial intelligence chatbot, pulls information from a multitude of websites and resources available on the internet to generate a summary response based on the information that you provide. Try asking ChatGPT to generate some career ideas that align with your career criteria or that are similar to careers you've already explored. You can even list your theme code from the Strong Interest Inventory and your MBTI personality type, along with other career criteria (e.g., your reality factors and/or skills and strengths) to see which jobs best align!

## GETTING ORGANIZED: YOUR CAREER CRITERIA SUMMARY

Through the chapters you've completed, the assessments you've taken, and the discussions you've had with your counsellor, you've been adding any relevant information to your **Career Criteria Summary**.



### REMEMBER:

If you feel unclear about any of your career criteria, revisit the specific chapter(s) or let your counsellor know so you can discuss it with them further.

While it isn't necessary to memorize your career criteria, it is important that you can identify and speak about each aspect because you'll rely on this information throughout the rest of the career counselling process.

Before jumping into either form of career research, we recommend having your Career Criteria Summary on-hand; doing so will help you as you explore and compare how each occupation aligns with what you've learned about yourself so far.

As a resource, you can review an example Career Criteria Summary on the next page, which should help you in completing your own version!



# EXAMPLE: CAREER CRITERIA SUMMARY

## MESSAGES OR BELIEFS TO BE AWARE OF:

- I need to choose a career that uses the university degree I already have.  
(Keep an open mind about careers that require other education! If a new career would be a good fit for me, it might be worth further education. If my new career doesn't require my old degree, that doesn't mean it was a waste. Getting that degree was part of my journey to getting here!)
- If my parents/partner/family don't agree with my decision, it's not the right career choice.  
(This is my life and I want to enjoy it. It would be nice to have support from the important people in my life, but I need to do what's right for me. I can trust my own judgment!)

## SKILLS & STRENGTHS

### TRANSFERABLE SKILLS:

- Linguistic
- Critical Thinking
- Interpersonal
- Computers and Tech

### JOB SPECIFIC SKILLS:

- Good problem solver
- Strong verbal and written communication

## INTERESTS

### SII CODE: **S A C**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| (A)rtistic <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | (E)nterprising <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| (I)nvestigative <input type="checkbox"/>       | (C)onventional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| (S)ocial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>   | (R)ealistic <input type="checkbox"/>               |

### INDUSTRIES:

- Counselling/coaching
- Education
- Healthcare
- Marketing/advertising
- Performing Arts
- Technology/IT
- Professional services

### TASKS/RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Teaching or training others
- Helping other people (customers/clients/patients)
- Writing (documentation, opinion, or persuasive)
- Organizing information in a way that other people understand it
- Creating visual presentations (e.g. slide decks, merchandising)
- Problem solving
- Analyzing data/information
- Setting up processes and procedures
- Managing a team

# EXAMPLE: CAREER CRITERIA SUMMARY

## PERSONALITY

### MBTI CODE: **E S F P**

- (E) Extraversion ☒ (I) Introversion ☐  
(S) Sensing ☒ (N) Intuition ☐  
(T) Thinking ☐ (F) Feeling ☒  
(J) Judging ☐ (P) Perceiving ☒

### WHAT I NEED IN A CAREER FOR IT TO BE SATISFYING:

- Plenty of opportunities to work closely with a variety of other people on a variety of projects
- A relaxed, friendly, and active environment where I feel part of a team
- Work that is of a practical and helpful nature, where I see the results of my efforts
- The opportunity to learn and master skills and then use them to solve problems using my common sense and realistic point of view
- The chance to mediate problems, solve crises, and use my warmth and sense of humour to defuse tense situations and bring them to a positive ending

## TOP 5 CAREER VALUES

1. Helping others
2. Influence
3. Working with others
4. Mental challenges
5. Work/life balance

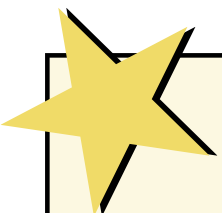
## TOP 5 LIFE VALUES

1. Stability
2. Travel
3. Humour
4. Practicality
5. Growth and development


## REALITY FACTORS:

- I am tied to Toronto (significant other and home here) – future work and/or education must be here or be accessible remotely
- Finances – I need to earn at least \$55,000 at a minimum. Ideally, I want to be able to grow in my new career and earn at least \$100,000 over time
- I have ADHD – need to be aware of how this will impact my performance in different careers
- My family lives abroad – I need the time and income to visit them at least 1x/year

## TOP CAREER CONTENDERS



High school teacher  
Psychologist  
Mediator  
Doctor  
Life coach  
Business coach  
Administrative professional  
Executive assistant  
Consultant  
Sales (business to business sales)  
Sales (business to consumer)  
Marketing manager  
HR professional  
Business analyst



### NOTES

- Ask counsellor about assessment
- Review questions in chapter 4

## HOW TO CONDUCT PRELIMINARY CAREER RESEARCH

You might be wondering, “How can I learn more about the occupations that look like a good fit for me?” Once you have affirmed a particular occupation or occupational field is one you want to explore further, we suggest you then complete more in-depth research about the roles that draw your attention the most.

It makes sense to start with the information that’s easily accessible and requires a minimal amount of time to review. Therefore, it’s typically easiest to begin your research by reviewing online resources.

Reading information and watching videos about different careers are examples of **preliminary research**. This involves taking in and evaluating information, without having to interact with others.

Taking part in an Information Session at a post-secondary is also a great way to learn about program options and connected career paths.

Dates for information sessions are listed online on the school’s website and are offered as live, in-person sessions and recorded sessions you can watch on demand.

There are great sites that give detailed descriptions of occupations as well as the type of training and education required to attain the job you want.



In addition, local libraries, campuses/educational institutions, career centers, and book stores have electronic and print materials (i.e., educational institutions websites, pamphlets, booklets, etc.) that explain some of the occupational opportunities that exist in particular fields.

While we recommend beginning your research using some of the sites we’ve listed in the **Resource section** of this workbook, you’re welcome (and encouraged!) to go beyond these resources, especially if the careers you’re exploring are niche or uncommon.





### NOTE:

As you complete your preliminary career research, your goal is to assess if the options on your Career Ideas List seem to be a fit for you. In addition to gaining a deeper understanding of each occupation, your task is to assess how each of the items in your Career Criteria Summary align with the reality of each career.

In some cases, finding the answer will be relatively clear cut. In others, identifying how a career aligns with a given criteria might be unclear, ambiguous, or influenced by job-specific factors.

For example, if someone values collaboration, a given career could fit or misalign, depending on the specific workplace an individual chooses. You may consider using a system like: *"aligns well"*, *"aligns,"* *"misaligns"* or *"it depends"* when keeping track of your research. Some clients have preferred to use a 0 to 5 ranking system, where "0" indicates a poor fit, "5" means an excellent fit.

When researching occupations online, many people wonder:

**"HOW PERFECT OF A FIT DOES THE CAREER HAVE TO BE FOR ME?"**



Although the answer may differ for everyone, as a guide, if the majority of the characteristics and demands are a fit for you, but there are one or two components that you are concerned about, it might be worth exploring the occupation in more detail by talking to someone in that field.



For example, if you were interested in being a nurse but read an occupational profile which stated you would have to do shift work, which isn't something that you are willing to do, it might be beneficial to confirm this directly with someone currently in the profession.

Perhaps if you spoke to people in the field, they may have solutions to this concern that you were not aware of!

## WRAPPING UP YOUR PRELIMINARY CAREER RESEARCH

Due to (1) the volume of easily accessible information, and (2) the challenge of gauging the accuracy and/or thoroughness of the information you read, it's sometimes difficult to know how much preliminary research is necessary. Some clients spend hours, meticulously researching across numerous sites. Others move (sometimes) too quickly through this work.

To help you assess the quality of your preliminary research and determine if you're ready to begin preparing for your interactive research, complete the checklist on the next page.



If you answer **"no"** to any of the following questions, speak to your counsellor about the items you're having difficulty with.

They'll help you to identify your next steps and overcome any challenges you're experiencing in your independent research.

Once you have answered **"yes"** to each question and have identified your top career options, you're ready to begin your interactive career research, discussed in the next chapter!

	YES	NO
1. I have completed my Career Criteria Summary		
2. I am happy with the list of careers I researched		
3. I have read about each career from a minimum of two different sources		
4. I am able to share information about the careers on my list		
5. I have considered how each career aligns with my career criteria		
6. For each of the careers I ruled out, I can clearly explain why (i.e. which criteria it misaligns with)		
7. I have identified my top 1 - 5 career options		



<b>My career options include:</b>	