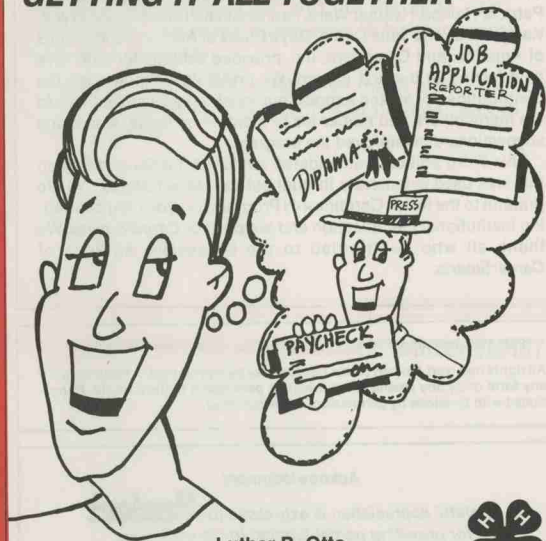


# CAREER DECISIONS

GETTING IT ALL TOGETHER



Luther B. Otto  
Vaughn R. A. Call



# CareerSmarts

## Preface and Acknowledgments (Third Edition)

*CareerSmarts* is a collaborative effort between the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work and the Department of 4-H and Youth Development, of the Agricultural Extension Service at North Carolina State University. The authors developed earlier editions of *CareerSmarts* while at Father Flanagan's Boys' Home, Boys Town, Nebraska, with support from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation.

Many people helped shape the ideas and mold the form and content of the *CareerSmarts* series including Peter Ellis, Cynthia Evahn, Kenneth Spenner, Richard Millard, Sandra Wendel, Patricia Wallace, Heather Ware, Fannie Belle Burnett, David Wynn, Karen Bartz, and Jane Quinn. Boys Clubs of America, Girls Clubs of America, and Camp Fire, Inc. provided settings for extensive field testing of the first edition. We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of all and express our indebtedness collectively to the many others, too numerous to mention by name, who made suggestions that improved the program.

This Third Edition is an updated version of the Second Edition that was used extensively throughout the United States. We are grateful to the North Carolina 4-H Program for providing continuing institutional identification and support for *CareerSmarts*. We thank all who contributed to the successive editions of *CareerSmarts*.

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### Acknowledgment

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## **CAREER DECISIONS: GETTING IT ALL TOGETHER**

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**“Why worry about career decisions? I’m going to get a job and make lots of money! What career decisions do I have to make?”**

The fact is that you are making career decisions right now!

- Choosing whether or not to finish high school is a career decision. A high school diploma gives you more job choices. And employers sometimes call high school principals or teachers to find out about job applicants.
- Selecting what courses to take is a career decision. Some jobs require skills you can learn in high school. For example, you can learn how to type or repair engines. Also, many colleges require that you have specific high school courses to be accepted in college—like math or science or a foreign language.
- Doing your homework and doing well on tests are career decisions. Employers may want to know about your grades when deciding whether to hire you. Colleges look at grades when deciding whether to accept you.
- Deciding to attend school every day and to be on time is important. Employers may check your attendance records. You learn a lot more if you don’t miss classes.

But you also have career decisions to make in the future.

What occupation do I want to prepare for?

- There are thousands to choose from.
- Most require additional education or training beyond high school.

What career preparation plans should I make?

- Go to college?
- Get training while working in an apprenticeship, on a job, or in the military?

What career decisions face you right now?

What career decisions will you need to make in the next few years?



## **TWO WAYS TO MAKE CAREER DECISIONS**

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### ***Wait and see what happens.***

Some people hop from one job to another—no idea of where they are going.

Others hop from course to course in college—take different courses till they find an area that interests them. But they never figure out if courses in that area will help them get a job when they finish.

People lose time and waste money that way—floating along without something to aim at—without a plan to follow. They just hope to end up in a career they will enjoy.

**Take some time now and look at several career options—occupations and career preparation possibilities that interest you.**

- ✓ Identify your interests and relate them to occupations.
- ✓ Learn what occupations are in demand and what are the requirements for getting those jobs.
- ✓ Find out what career preparation possibilities are available and sort out the ones that interest you.
- ✓ Make a plan that will help you achieve what you want.

Working now at choosing a career will give you a goal—something to aim for—and a plan to follow—a way to get to your goal. But before you can set goals, you have to decide what you want.



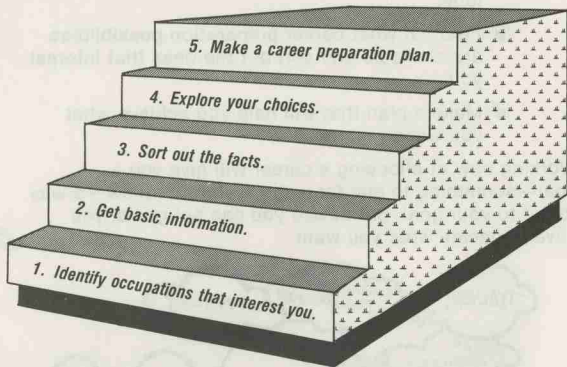
## **DECISION STEPS**

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There are a lot of things to think about when making career decisions. Here are five steps to follow that will make your decisions a little easier. You can use these same decision steps to make all kinds of choices:

- to choose an occupation
- to decide on a way to prepare for a career
- to pick out a stereo set

Here are the decision steps to choosing an occupation:



### **STEP 1: IDENTIFY OCCUPATIONS THAT INTEREST YOU**

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There are many different ways to identify occupations that interest you.

You probably already have an idea of one or two occupations you like. You may have had a part-time job you enjoyed. Or you may know someone who works in an occupation that looks interesting.

**Name two occupations that you like:**

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Things you like to do in your spare time may give you some more ideas about occupations you like. If you enjoy fixing things, you may want to be an appliance repairer or auto mechanic. If you like helping people, you may want to be a teacher, counselor, nurse, or youth worker.

**Think of a spare-time activity that you enjoy. What is it?**

**What occupation does it suggest?**

Parents, friends, or teachers may have suggested occupations for you to think about. **Name one they suggested.**

**From the occupations you listed above, write the names of the two occupations that interest you the most.**

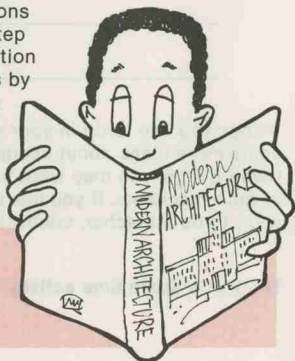
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## STEP 2: GET BASIC INFORMATION

Once you know the occupations that interest you, the next step is to get some basic information about them. You can do this by reading about jobs, watching the different kinds of work people do, and by talking to people about their work.



The best book that gives information about occupations is the **Occupational Outlook Handbook**. Most career centers and libraries have it. The **Handbook** tells you these things about each occupation:

- what you would do on the job
- hours you would probably have to work
- work settings—whether you work in an office or a factory or outdoors
- abilities you need in order to do well in this occupation
- kinds of companies that hire workers in the occupation
- kind of training it takes to get a job in that occupation
- whether there will be many or few job openings in that occupation
- average pay for beginning and experienced workers

If you have trouble finding a copy of the **Occupational Outlook Handbook**, ask a librarian, counselor, adviser, or youth worker to help you. Get the basic information about occupations that interest you.

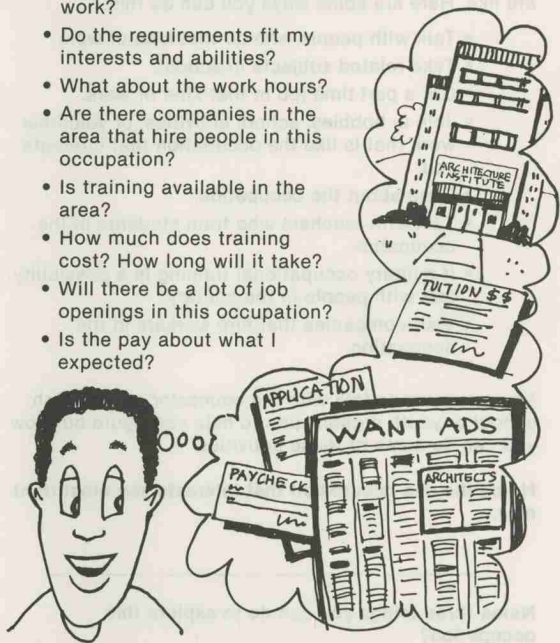




## STEP 3: SORT OUT THE FACTS

After you get information about occupations, you need to sort it out and decide how you feel about it. Ask yourself:

- Would I enjoy that kind of work?
- Do the requirements fit my interests and abilities?
- What about the work hours?
- Are there companies in the area that hire people in this occupation?
- Is training available in the area?
- How much does training cost? How long will it take?
- Will there be a lot of job openings in this occupation?
- Is the pay about what I expected?



These are the kinds of questions you need to ask yourself after you get information about an occupation that interests you.

You don't have to make your final career decision right now, but think about the good and bad parts of occupations that interest you.



## **STEP 4: EXPLORE YOUR CHOICES**

After you narrow your choices to one or two occupations that really interest you and get some basic information about them, find out for yourself what those occupations are like. Here are some ways you can do this:

- Talk with people who do that kind of work.
- Take related subjects in school.
- Get a part-time job in that kind of work.
- Join in hobbies, school activities, or volunteer work that is like the occupation that interests you.
- Read about the occupation.
- Talk with teachers who train students in the occupation.
- If military occupational training is a possibility, talk with people in the military.
- Visit companies that hire workers in the occupation.

You may want to talk with the counselor at your high school or youth organization to help you figure out how you can do some of these activities.

**Name the one occupation that interests you most right now.**

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**Name three things you can do to explore this occupation?**

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## **STEP 5: MAKE A CAREER PREPARATION PLAN**

After you decide what occupation interests you the most, figure out what you need to do to get a job in that occupation. This step may require two kinds of plans: a short-term plan and a long-term plan.

### **A SHORT-TERM PLAN**

Do things right now that will help you reach your goal.

- Take high school courses that will help prepare you.
- Take a part-time job to get experience you will need.
- Volunteer for work that interests you.

Do these things now. But you also need a long-term plan, because you have a much better chance of getting into the occupation you want if you prepare for it.

### **A LONG-TERM PLAN**

Find out what kinds of training will help you reach your occupational goal. Training could involve going to a four-year college, a two-year community college, or technical school. Or you might be able to get the career preparation you need through an apprenticeship, the military, or on-the-job training.

**The important thing is to find out what is necessary to reach your occupational goal. Develop a long-term career preparation plan and follow that plan.**



# **CAREER PREPARATION PLAN**

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Four out of five occupations require education or special training beyond high school. Here are the steps required to make a long-term career preparation plan.

## **STEP 1:**

**IDENTIFY THE KINDS OF CAREER PREPARATION NEEDED**—find out how other people who are working in the occupation have prepared for the jobs. You can get this information from the **Occupational Outlook Handbook**.

For example:

- A surgical technician must complete high school and get training at a technical school or community college.
- A lawyer must complete college and law school and pass a state test.
- Most telephone repairers receive either on-the-job training or must attend a technical school. Many receive their training in the military.

As you read the **Handbook**, you will discover that there are many different ways to prepare for occupations. However, the occupation you are interested in may require a specific kind of preparation. You need to find out what is required.

## **STEP 2:**

**GET BASIC INFORMATION**—about the training programs required for the occupation you like and where you can get that training. Talk to school counselors about schools that train people in that occupation. Find out what the military service offers. Also, there may be companies that offer on-the-job training or apprenticeships.

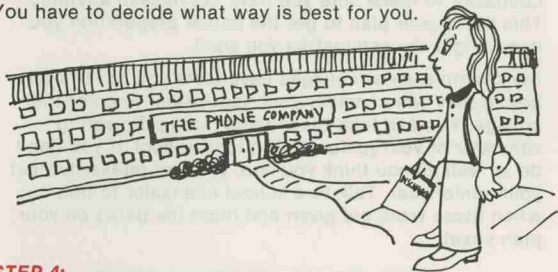
### **STEP 3:**

**SORT OUT THE FACTS**—about career preparation possibilities and decide how you feel about the different possibilities.

For example, perhaps you want to be a telephone repairer. Many repairers are chosen for on-the-job training from employees who are telephone operators, clerical workers, and telephone line installers. You may have to spend several years working in one of these occupations before you may be promoted to repairer.

Another way to become a repairer is to enter the military and take communications training. After discharge from the military, a telephone company may hire you as a repairer without requiring you to start in another job.

You have to decide what way is best for you.



### **STEP 4:**

**EXPLORE YOUR CHOICES**—explore the education and training programs that interest you the most. Get school catalogs from the colleges or technical schools you may want to attend.

Find out:

- about costs
- about financial aid you can get
- if the school is accredited
- if the school will help you get a job when you finish the training
- what subjects you can study
- how long the program will take

Ask your counselor to help you find this information.

Get information about military occupational training from a recruiter—but don't let the recruiter talk you into enlisting right then. Take the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery exam to find out which military training program you qualify for—before you enlist.

If money is a problem, you may want to consider occupational training in the military or look for a school that offers the best financial aid package.

### **STEP 5:**

**MAKE A PLAN**—once you make a choice, find out everything you need to do. Mark all the important dates and things you must do on your calendar or list them on a sheet of paper. List them in order. Talk to your counselor to make sure you have not missed anything. This list is your plan to get the career preparation you need to get the occupation you want.

For example, most colleges have tests you have to take before they will consider your application to enter their college. You can take these tests during the spring semester of your junior year in high school. If you don't do as well as you think you can, you can retake the test your senior year. Talk to a school counselor to find out when these tests are given and mark the dates on your plan sheet.

**Deadlines are  
important!**

In November and December of your senior year, you need to get and fill out financial aid forms—or you may not be able to get financial aid the next September when you want to go to college.

These dates may not seem important to you, but they are important to the college. If you want to get in, you have to play by their rules.



## **GETTING IT ALL TOGETHER**

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Having a plan makes it easier for you to reach your goal—to do what you want to do.

That doesn't mean that you can't change your plan. You can. But have a plan. And if you change, then have a good reason to change.

Making career decisions is a lifelong process. You never stop making career decisions. After taking some related courses or working in a job for a while, you may decide that the occupation no longer interests you.

You can use the same five decision steps to decide on a new occupational goal. You can get basic information about other occupations, and sort out the facts, and explore them. Then make a new plan to help you work toward your new goal.

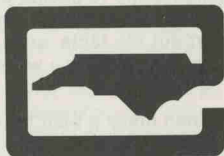
So, decide on your career goal. Then make a plan for how you will reach it. Then follow it. That's the best way to get it all together.

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**BE CAREERSMART!**



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