



## Assessment Test

### Getting on Track

This Assessment Test is designed help you quickly develop the knowledge, self-awareness and motivation it takes to make a good career choice and set long and short-term goals for getting into that career. Learn how to develop your competitive edge and make it work for you in post-secondary education and the world of work.

We recommend completing the Assessment Test before using the Career Planning Tool to search for information on specific jobs.

### Education

*Knowledge of yourself, post-secondary education options and courses, and career options.*

Education is a process of learning about yourself and your future. It is a process of figuring out how you can use post-secondary education most effectively. Education also involves learning more about post-secondary education itself: the courses that are offered, the expectations, the responsibilities, and the opportunities.

As you begin this session take some time to assess your current knowledge base using the following self-rating scale. (0 = No knowledge, 5 = Average knowledge, and 10 = Expert knowledge/could advise others on this area).

#### Self-Rating:

My knowledge about careers	(0 - 10)
My knowledge about post-secondary education	(0 - 10)
My knowledge and awareness of myself	(0 - 10)

#### Complete these sentences:

There is one thing I simply **must do** in my life. It is: (Could be more than one thing)

- Friends and family have always told me that I would be good at....
- When I think about my ideal day I am...
- I think post-secondary education is different from high-school in the following ways:

#### On a sheet of paper, list two learning goals for this session.

Keep these personal learning goals in mind as you complete the rest of the Assessment Test.



## Direction

*Activities, focus, goals; not what you are but what you do.*

One of the initial challenges of choosing a career track that fits you is discovering the direction you wish to go. The direction you choose should be informed by what you have done, where you are now, and a number of thought-through possibilities and alternatives. The following two-part exercise will help you discover your personal direction.

### Part I: Highlights of my life

On a sheet of paper, write out:

- the highlights of your life according to *you*; and
- the highlights of your life according to *others*.

Highlights can be special moments of accomplishment, first experiences, and/or times of celebration. When you think about others' views of your highlights, these could be moments that parents, siblings and friends have valued.

After you have identified the highlights of your life, reflect briefly on what you have written:

- Were the highlights the same or different in the two groups?
- What does that tell you?

One of the goals of this exercise is to assist you in beginning to live the life you appreciate and desire. Part 2 of this exercise will help you identify your personal dreams and hopes, gather your dreams together, and grab the dreams that are really yours.

### Part II: My Dream History\*

On a sheet of paper, write the dreams you have had throughout your life. For example:

- At 3, I dreamed of having my own room.
- At 6, I dreamed of being a royal queen (even for a day).
- At 9, I dreamed of becoming a famous mystery writer like Nancy Drew.
- At 10, I dreamed of marrying the boy across the street.
- At 13, I dreamed of being elected the outstanding, most admired student.
- At 15, I dreamed of moving to an exotic island.
- At age 16, I dreamed of being a famous, wealthy, independent career person returning home to a dinner in my honor.
- At 17, I dreamed of a major role in the school musical.
- At 20, I dreamed of owning a beautiful home on a golf course.
- At 21, I dreamed I would one day be recognized publicly by having a feature story in a major news magazine.

\*Source: Shier, Barbara, *It's only too late, if you don't start now: How to create your second life after 40*. (New York: Delacorte Press, 1998).



Complete this process by adding the dreams you have today to the list. For instance, are there places you long to see, careers you long to have, or lifestyles you find appealing?

Now, ask yourself one final question:

- How will post-secondary education help me realize the dreams I have today?

## Gifts

*Self-knowledge, self-awareness, and self-confidence.*

You have unique talents or traits that are related to your current success and your future aspirations. Because these gifts are so much a part of you, you may take them for granted or not realize that you possess them.

They are, however, the third critical component of your competitive edge. The following exercise encourages you to think creatively about yourself and your unique and special gifts.

### Exercise: The Television Show

On a sheet of paper...

1. Select the type of television show you would like to be a part of from the following list:
  - Sit-Com
  - Drama
  - Action Adventure
  - Sports
  - Game Show
  - Soap Opera
  - Talk Show
  - Cartoon
2. Next, identify the character you would like to be in that production. Describe the character. Identify activities this character is enthusiastic about.
3. Create a scene that demonstrates a special moment, an insight, a happening.
4. What are three characteristics others appreciate in this character?
5. What 2-3 skills make this character successful?
6. What are your wishes and how can you make them come true?
7. Finally, describe how the talents, capabilities and interests of this character reflect your own personal gifts.



## Energy

*Enthusiasm, commitment, and fuel.*

The fourth critical component of your competitive edge is your energy. Your energy is that creative source within you that drives you and keeps you going. Each of us has learned how to refresh and motivate ourselves. Knowing how you motivate yourself and how you help yourself continue in spite of obstacles and barriers are part of that special quality about you: your energy.

Go and do an activity that gives you energy. Then, on a sheet of paper, write the answers to the questions below.

**Think about a typical day in your life. You are getting up in the morning ready for school or work... what makes the difference between a day you anticipate and one that you'd like to avoid?**

- What excites and motivates me?
- What do I feel passionate about?
- What helps me keep going when I feel discouraged or uncertain?

## Work vs. Play

Chances are that most of you thought about fun activities or "play" when you were asked to consider ways to re-energize yourselves. It is doubtful that any of you would have chosen to "work" as a means to feel renewed. Why is this? Can't work be fun? Take a few moments to compare and contrast work and play.

On a sheet of paper, complete these statements:

- Work is...
- Play is...
- The difference(s) between work and play is (are)...

## The World of Work

*Developing an awareness of the world of work and my future career possibilities.*

If you are like most people considering post-secondary education, the primary reason you are doing so is to get a job or improve your job status. You may or may not have a very specific career direction, but you are aware of the value of post-secondary education for your future. An important part of maintaining your competitive edge is matching your abilities and interests to the marketplace. To do this effectively, you need to learn about the world of work, expand your awareness of career options and determine what career alternatives would be personally fulfilling.



## Career Values

Career values are the needs and/or rewards people want from their work. They can be thought of as personal reasons for being motivated to work or as unique preferences for job satisfaction. When you examine what would be personally fulfilling work or what would be a "good" job for you, you are examining career values.

Knowing your career values will help you identify and choose between career alternatives. Knowing your career values will also help ensure that you end up working in a job that is energizing, interesting and rewarding.

Take a few moments to read the definitions of the career values listed below and then select the five that are most important to you.

**Independence:** A career that will allow you to set your own schedule, work at your own pace and make your own decisions.

**Leadership:** A career where you will have the opportunity to lead and direct other people.

**Risk:** A career where you will have adventures by taking personal or financial risks.

**Achievement:** A career where you will be challenged to continually achieve at a high level.

**Competition:** A career where you will be compared with and tested against others.

**Lifestyle:** A career that allows you a great deal of control over your lifestyle.

**Security:** A career that allows you to feel that you will always be employed or that you can always find employment.

**Helping Others:** A career where you are educating, curing, helping, developing, or supporting others.

**Variety:** A career where the work is frequently changing and different.

**Intellectual Stimulation:** A career that requires a great deal of mental activity/thinking.

**Social Recognition/Prestige:** A career where you will get respect, approval, status and recognition from others.

**Creativity:** A career where you will have the opportunity to be innovative, original, expressive, imaginative or artistic.



### **My top five career values are...**

(On a sheet of paper, list them in order of importance, with 1 being the most important. You are not restricted to using the career values listed on the previous page - add any that occur to you.)

Take a moment now to consider which career values you would be willing to sacrifice if you could only have three satisfied. A person's top three career values are often the ones that they really can't do without.

**Important:** Be sure to use the career values you defined here when you begin to evaluate specific jobs. Your career values will help you determine which careers will be most rewarding for you.

## **Pulling It All Together**

*My Competitive EDGE.*

This section will help you "pull together" what you have learned so far and arrive at a clear understanding of your competitive EDGE. Knowing your competitive EDGE gives you the greatest opportunity for success in post-secondary education. Your competitive EDGE will help you to select a career track and courses that will excite and motivate you. This, in turn, will ultimately lead to career and academic success.

Take a few moments now to briefly summarize what you learned from each stage of the Assessment Test.

Use the statements below as your guide.

- Completing the **Education** (open-ended questions) section of this test taught me...
- Completing the **Direction** (highlights and dreams) section of this test taught me...
- Completing the **Gifts** (TV show) section of this test taught me...
- Completing the **Energy** (energizing activity & work vs. play)

### **The World of Work and Your Competitive EDGE**

Review the summary of your competitive EDGE and your career values and identify up to ten possible interest areas that incorporate components of your EDGE and your career values.

These interest areas do not have to be specific career areas (e.g., forensic accountant) although they can be if you wish.



Identifying interest areas and/or possible career alternatives is a preliminary step toward determining which courses or programs you may want to enroll in for the upcoming year. Knowing which career track you wish to be on makes course decisions very easy.

### **The Next Step: Researching Specific Careers**

The interest areas and/or possible career alternatives you identified in your summary are a great starting point for career exploration. Review your summary and identify two or three interest areas or career alternatives that you would like to learn more about. Then, proceed to research these career options using the Career Planning Tools available at

- <http://www.workfutures.bc.ca/>
- <http://www.educationplanner.bc.ca/>

## **1st Year University Students**

### *Designing Course Options*

Your courses are the track to your future. As a first year university student, your goal is to select courses that reflect your aspirations and abilities. They will be courses that allow you to keep as many paths open as possible. They will be courses that reflect your awareness of career alternatives and the realities of the current marketplace. They will be courses that reflect your competitive edge.

Now that you have determined your competitive edge and learned about possible career opportunities you must focus yourself on the career direction you wish to pursue.

- In five years, having completed your university undergraduate degree, what would you like to be doing?

Working backwards from that idea, think of what courses you can take now to help you get there.

- What are your priorities for this year?

If this is a year of exploration and discovery, what do you want to explore? If this is a year for determining whether or not your decision to pursue a particular career path is the right one, how will you judge this? If this is a year of proving to yourself that university will open new doors for you, how will you know that you have succeeded?

### **Setting Priorities**

Your priorities are the learning and accomplishments you would like to achieve.



- What are your priorities for this year?
- What are your priorities for the next five years?

### **Building Your Future by Establishing START Goals**

You build your future by developing concrete plans that reflect your priorities. These become your goals for the next year. Remember, goals are dreams with deadlines. To successfully start university or any other postsecondary program, it is important that you develop focused goals. Goals are more than vague ideas: a successful goal is Specific, Testable, Attainable, Realistic and Time-limited (START).

Take some time to write three START goals for the upcoming year. Remember to keep the goals specific, testable, attainable, realistic and time-limited.

#### **Example 1:**

I am interested in a career that involves helping people overcome psychological difficulties. Therefore, I plan to enroll in Introductory Psychology for September and pass this course with an A. I also plan to become a volunteer in a helping agency such as Child and Family Services by the beginning of January. My goal is to volunteer for three hours a week each week during the second term of this, my first year at university.

This Assessment Test was written by the University of Manitoba's counselling service.