

Why is work important to me?

Chapter 1

The Importance of Work

Key Terms

work
job
occupation
career
career ladder
income
needs
wants
identity
lifestyle
self-esteem
economy
career clusters
transferable skills

Chapter Objectives

After studying this chapter, you will be able to

- **distinguish** the difference between a job and a career.
- **identify** three reasons for working.
- **explain** how work influences identity and lifestyle.
- **describe** ways in which work provides satisfaction.
- **discuss** how work keeps the economy strong.
- **explain** how to study careers.

Key Concepts

- School work prepares you for the workplace.
- Work provides income to meet needs and wants.
- Work influences your identity and lifestyle and provides satisfaction.
- Work affects the country's economy.
- Work requires career knowledge and skills.

What Is Work?

What is work? **Work** is defined as an activity done to produce or accomplish something. People work to gain something in return. As you go to school, you work. You do homework, read books, give reports, and study for tests. Students receive passing grades in return for doing their schoolwork well.

At this point in your life, schoolwork is very important. You are preparing yourself for your future work—your career.

A Job or a Career?

A **job** is the work done, usually to earn money. For example, delivering newspapers is a job. Some jobs are full-time, but many are temporary or part-time. You may take a job to earn extra money for a special occasion, such as a class trip, or to make a special purchase.

Jobs may involve as few as one task, but an occupation involves various tasks. An **occupation** is employment that requires related skills and experiences. However, an occupation is not a career. A **career** is a series of occupations, usually in the same or related fields, that help you advance in a chosen field of work.

A good way to display the steps of a career is with a career ladder. A **career ladder** shows a sequence of work in a career field, from entry to advanced levels. Each rung of the career ladder is another step in the progression to a better job. Each step in your career may require that you learn new and more-complex information and skills. Reaching your final career objective may take many years and require considerable education and training. See 1-1.

Careers require that many skills be learned to progress in a chosen area. No matter what career direction you choose, advancing will depend on learning more-complex information and skills. There is a direct link between how well you do in school now and your future in the work world. Prospective employers will consider your school records when they make hiring decisions. Apprenticeship programs, trade schools, and schools of higher education will consider academic success when processing applications for admission.

work

An activity done to produce or accomplish something.

job

The work a person does, usually to earn money.

occupation

Employment that requires related skills and experiences.

career

A series of occupations, usually in the same or related fields, that helps you advance in a chosen field of work.

career ladder

An illustration that shows a sequence of work in a career field, from entry to advanced levels.



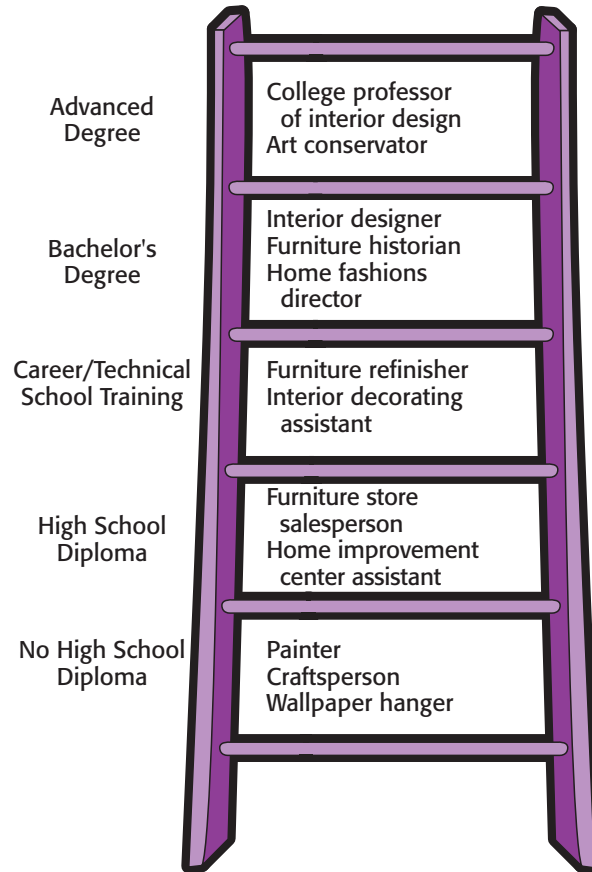
Your Reading

How does school prepare you for work?

1-1

This career ladder shows different choices at each step that individuals can make to advance in the interior design field.

Career Ladder for Interior Design Careers



That's why it is important to make every effort now to do well in school. See 1-2.

Work Provides Income

The purpose of work is to produce or accomplish something. That *something* could be job satisfaction or personal gain. Other reasons for working include a sense of obligation, commitment to a goal, or a sense of pride. The list could go on, but for most people, income is the key reason for working.

income

The amount of money a person receives for doing a job.

Income is the money a person receives for doing a job. With the money people earn from working, they buy things they need or want.



1-2

Success in school paves the way for future success in a career.

needs

The basics a person must have in order to live.

wants

The items a person would like to have, but are not needed to survive.

While you are still in school, you may have a part-time job. If so, it probably would allow you to earn spending money and save some money for the future. After you graduate from high school, you will probably find that you must have a full-time job to meet your needs. **Needs** are the basics you must have in order to live. You may need a car, a place to live, money for food, and tuition for further education. Eventually, you may need enough income to support a family. Satisfying greater needs usually requires income from a higher-paying job.

In addition to your needs, you also have wants. Wants go beyond actual needs. **Wants** include items you would like to have, but do not need to survive. For instance, while you may need a car, you may want a new sports car. You may also want a big apartment, stylish clothes, and fun vacations. Affording your needs and wants requires earning a living by working.



Your Reading

How is income related to needs and wants?

Work Influences Identity

Look around the community where you live. You will find many successful people in all types of occupations. Some people work for others. Some people work for themselves. Some of the businesses are big, while others are medium-size or small.

The work you choose to do is likely to influence your identity. Your *identity* is the sum of traits that distinguish you as an individual. Your identity is two fold. It is how you see yourself. It also is how others see you. When you describe yourself, you are talking about your identity. For instance, you may say that you are a family member, student, and member of the swim team.

As an adult, your job will be an important part of your identity. Your work will influence the way you think of yourself and the way others see you. It is important to choose work that will allow you to respect yourself and develop a positive identity.

identity

The sum of traits that distinguishes a person as an individual.



Your Reading

What does your work say about who you are?

Work Influences Lifestyle

How do you spend your time? What activities do you enjoy? Where do you live? What is important to you? Your answers to these questions will help you describe your *lifestyle*, or typical way of life.

The work you choose will affect your lifestyle in many ways. It will affect where you live. For instance, if you want to be a flight attendant, you should live near an airport.

Your work will also affect the people you meet and the time you have to spend with your family and friends, 1-3. Some jobs may require working nights and weekends. Others may involve overtime hours or out-of-town travel. Some work schedules are fixed—they are firmly set. Working hours and days do not change. Other work schedules are flexible, with work hours and workdays changing frequently.

Income is another factor that influences lifestyle. The more money you make, the more expensive your lifestyle may be. You may be able to afford a nice house, pricey clothes, and new cars. If you work too much, however, you may not have time to enjoy your purchases. How you balance your work and nonwork hours depends on your lifestyle decisions.

lifestyle

A person's typical way of life.



Your Reading

What aspects of your lifestyle will your work influence?

**1-3**

The amount of time you have to enjoy leisure activities will depend on your work schedule.

Work Provides Satisfaction

One of the most important reasons for working is to gain satisfaction. Doing a job well helps you build *self-esteem*, which is confidence in yourself. When you have self-esteem, you feel good about yourself. You are proud of who you are and what you do.

Work also provides a feeling of accomplishment. When you complete a job and do it well, you feel good about it. Others recognize excellent work and compliment you for it. That's why you should always put your best possible effort into any work you do.

Another kind of satisfaction from work comes from being with other people. Most types of work allow occasional opportunities to socialize with others.

Work also provides the satisfaction of feeling useful. You can feel useful by earning money to support yourself. You can also feel useful by doing work that you believe is important. Work that provides a public service gives workers a strong sense of usefulness. Some examples include helping people in need, enforcing the law, fighting fires, and cleaning the environment.

Many people judge their success in terms of satisfaction rather than income. They do not feel they have to become wealthy to be successful. Many successful people have limited financial resources. They receive their rewards by seeing others helped. They take pride in their jobs and in their accomplishments.

Many of the most famous people in history dedicated their lives to helping society without expecting financial rewards. These people are regarded as society's heroes. See 1-4.

self-esteem

The confidence a person has in himself or herself.



Your Reading

In what ways can work bring you satisfaction?

1-4

Volunteering at a library and sharing your love of reading with others is an example of work that improves the quality of life.

**economy**

The way goods and services are produced, distributed, and consumed in a society.



Community Connections

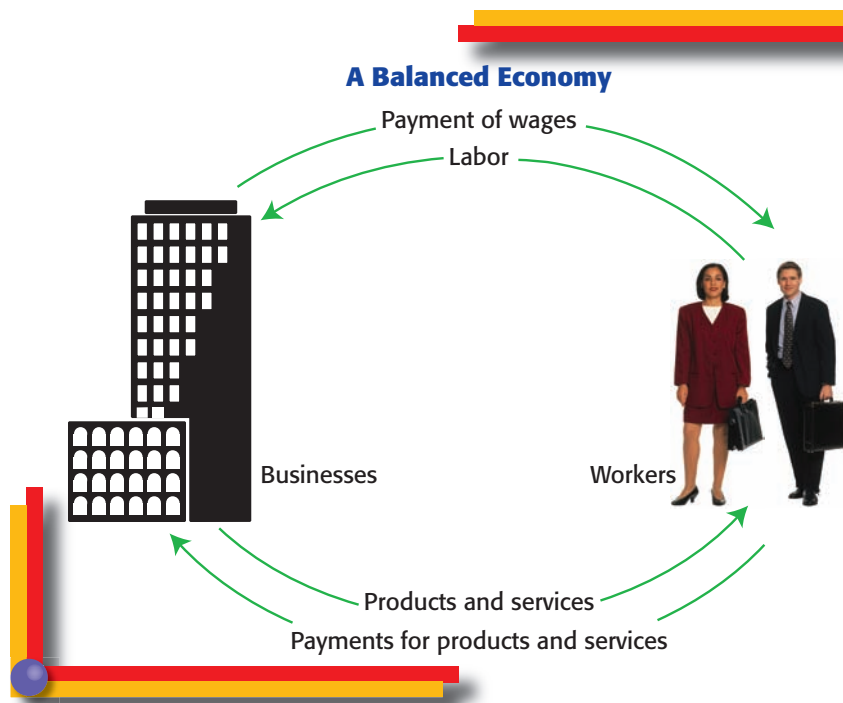
Work in groups to list the following: What does the local economy produce? What services does the community provide? Who are the major employers? What jobs do most residents hold?

Work Keeps the Economy Strong

When people go to work, they make products and perform services that others buy. They also earn money that allows them to buy whatever they need, such as cars, homes, clothes, and food. By making these purchases, people recycle their earnings back into the economy. A country's **economy** is its way of producing, distributing, and consuming goods and services. This process is one big cycle, 1-5. The income you earn from working goes back into the economy when you buy something.

When we purchase goods or services from another country, we are helping the economy of that country. The global marketplace has increased the way people, businesses, and countries all depend on one another.

Individuals and businesses in the United States depend on each other. Both must do their parts to keep the economy healthy. Businesses put goods into the marketplace and pay workers for their labor.

**1-5**

A strong economy depends on the balance between the production and consumption of goods and services.

Enthusiastic workers help keep the economy strong in two ways. They help businesses succeed by providing labor. They also buy goods and services in the marketplace when they shift from the role of worker to consumer.

You can do your part to keep the economy strong by taking your work role seriously. This will include performing your job correctly, being willing to learn, and having a good attitude. The jobs you will hold during your life will exist because customers are willing to purchase goods or services from your employer.



Your Reading

How do workers and businesses keep the economy healthy?

Work Requires Knowledge and Skills

Before you are hired, the employer will ask, “What can you do?” This short question requires much thought. The answer must convey all that you can bring to the workplace, such as special skills you have, your educational background, and previous work experiences.

Preparing yourself for the workplace is easier when you know what employers seek. To help students prepare for future success, experts in your state and across the nation

have refined school programs to better address career and workplace needs. As a result, students learn about career choices and the importance of career planning much earlier in their studies.

Linking School to Work

One of the best ways to study careers is by checking the **career clusters**. These are 16 broad groups of occupational and career specialties. See 1-6. Since all possible careers are

career clusters

The 16 broad groups of occupational and career specialties.

1-6

The career clusters connect students to careers and the knowledge and skills needed to achieve them.

The Sixteen Career Clusters



organized into just 16 groups, studying careers is easy with this method.

A key step in studying careers is recognizing your interests, talents, and abilities. They will determine the career areas that interest you. You may have no interest in many clusters, but some interest in others. After careful thought, one or two career areas will appeal to you more than others. (See Chapter 5, “Types of Careers,” for more information on the career clusters.)

Each cluster includes several career directions, called *career pathways*. Within each pathway are various occupations ranging from entry-level to very challenging. All the career choices within a given pathway require a set of common knowledge and skills. This means the related careers require very similar programs of study. Being prepared for more than one career in a related field allows more flexibility when job hunting.

With the help of teachers and counselors, you will develop a study plan matched to your desired career. Compatible activities and learning experiences will be added as you refine your career choice. At least annually, you should review your study plan to see if it’s still on target.

Through high school and further education, students will be asked to select courses based on their career plans. For many jobs, students must study to obtain licenses or certifications, too. For example, to practice hairstyling in a salon, a person must have a cosmetology license. Other licensed workers include a registered nurse, private detective, and insurance agent. See 1-7.

Many states offer certificates that are optional for some occupations. However, having one tells employers that you have successfully met the requirements. Examples of these include a certified public accountant, a certified home health aide, or an ASE (Automotive Service Excellence) certified automotive technician.

Developing a Foundation

Academic skills, thinking skills, and important personal qualities—these form a foundation on which workplace readiness can grow. Much of your work as a student is aimed at developing that foundation so you are prepared for the world of work.



Making a Difference

Brainstorm 10 volunteer jobs for teenagers. Make a list of the locations of these jobs in the community and identify contact information. Use the findings to make a poster to display in class. Discuss how these volunteer opportunities can relate to future careers.

1-7

Emergency medical technicians (EMTs) must have one of several levels of certification to identify the specific types of emergency situations they can handle.



- *Academic skills* allow you to express your thoughts and communicate with coworkers. The key skills are reading, writing, speaking, listening, math, science, and basic computer skills.
- *Thinking skills* allow you to develop ideas and solve problems. The key skills are thinking creatively, visualizing ideas, making decisions, and thinking critically (analyzing, reasoning, and evaluating).
- *Personal qualities* shape the way you work and the kind of worker you are. The key qualities are positive attitude, self-esteem, sociability, flexibility, integrity, responsibility, leadership, and a “team” focus.

As a student preparing for the world of work, look for ways to develop these skills in yourself. Become involved in student council, school clubs, extracurricular activities, and community programs.

Workplace readiness is sometimes called *employability skills*. However, many believe that term is too limited because it implies a focus on just getting a job. Sometimes the term *career-success skills* is used. That term is a good substitute since having workplace skills yields lifelong success at work.

Developing Transferable Skills

Skills in one career that can be used in another are called **transferable skills**. For example, the skills of a store cashier in working with money are the same skills needed by a teller in a bank. Usually academic skills and thinking skills are considered transferable skills. Specialized skills also are transferable, such as speaking a second language.

Having transferable skills is important to your future career success. That's because few jobs last forever. You are likely to switch jobs, and possibly career paths, several times during your life. Sometimes people tire of a career and desire something different. Often a person's interests and abilities expand, prompting a search for new opportunities.

Whatever the reason for a job change, examine which of your skills will carry over to a new position you desire. Consider a chef's artistic skills. Knowing how to apply the principles of design to make food attractive is a must. Similar artistic skills are used by advertising managers, interior decorators, and fashion designers. However, their focus is something other than food.

Another example of a transferable skill is the ability to persuade people. This is important to lawyers as they argue a case in court. Being persuasive is also important for salespeople as well as for doctors and nurses who deal with difficult patients.

Most people underestimate their skills. Be sure to take the time to identify all your skills in your search for a rewarding career.



Community Connections

Select someone employed in your community to interview. Document the worker's place of employment and skills needed for his or her job. Beside each skill, write down various school lessons and activities in which you are involved that might help you to learn these skills.

transferable skills

Skills used in one career that can be used in another.



Your Reading

Why do employers value the knowledge and skills of their employees?



Summary

In your lifetime, you will have many different jobs. A job may or may not be related to your career. A career requires that you learn increasingly more difficult jobs related to a chosen field. A career can be compared to a ladder. Each step is a progression toward a career objective.

Work is important for several reasons. It allows you to earn an income so you can buy things you need and want. It influences how you see yourself and others see you. Work also affects where you live, when you work, what you do, and whom you meet. Work provides a sense of purpose and direction for life.

One of the most important reasons for working is to gain satisfaction. Satisfaction from work comes in many different forms. The work satisfaction you seek may be different from the satisfaction others seek.

Work is needed to keep the country's economy strong. Every person who earns money and spends it plays a role in keeping the economy healthy. Workers who do their best on the job help make their employers successful. This makes the economy stronger.

Successful workers have the knowledge and skills their careers demand. They study career options and follow programs of study that match their choices. They develop the academic and thinking skills and personal qualities that employers seek. They link the demands of their future career to their schoolwork, extracurricular activities, and community involvement.

Reviewing Key Concepts

1. In your own words, define *job* and *career*.
2. Why is your schoolwork important at this point in your life?
3. For most people, what is the key reason for working?
4. Show the difference between needs and wants by listing three needs and three wants.
5. Describe three ways in which work influences lifestyle.
6. Explain how work can boost self-esteem.
7. Why should you always put your best possible effort into any work you do?
8. Satisfaction from work can come from _____.
 - A. being with other people
 - B. earning money
 - C. doing work that helps others
 - D. All of the above.
9. Explain how work keeps the economy strong.
10. True or false. Academic skills and thinking skills are considered transferable skills.

Building Academic Skills

1. **Speaking, listening.** Prepare interview questions for your parents, grandparents, or other adult relatives regarding the type of jobs they held during their lifetime. Questions can cover what they liked most and least, and the skills they used on the job. Share with the class how satisfied you think the people you interviewed were with their career choices.
2. **Math.** Describe your desired career, income, and home. Estimate how long you must work at various careers to afford the lifestyle of your choice. Assume that 20 percent of your gross pay can be used to pursue your dream lifestyle, while 80 percent will go toward paying taxes and buying the basic necessities of food, clothing, transportation, and shelter.
3. **Reading, speaking.** Read a current magazine story about the role workers play in keeping the economy strong. Summarize the story in a brief, oral report.
4. **Writing.** Develop a list of at least 10 transferable skills you are learning in your various classes. Write a paragraph, summarizing how these skills will help you in a future career.

Building Technology Skills

1. Choose three careers. Estimate what the yearly income of a beginning worker in that career would be. Using a Web site, research average salaries for your career choices. Visit the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* Web site at bls.gov/oco to look up salaries. Was your prediction of yearly income for beginning workers accurate?

2. Use Internet resources to begin investigations into careers. Search <http://careers.yahoo.com> plus the following Web sites: careerjournal.com, and bls.gov/oco. Plot categories on a chart so you can easily compare several careers. Update this chart throughout the course. (You can refer to this chart in future chapters.)

Building Career Knowledge and Skills

1. Examine the classified section of a newspaper. Categorize the listings as jobs or occupations.
2. Ask three people in different careers how their work affects their lifestyles. Write a paper explaining what you learned. Also, identify the kind of lifestyle you prefer and the type of career that would allow you to achieve it.
3. Interview an individual approaching retirement regarding how his or her work and skills have changed over the years.

Building Workplace Skills

Work with two classmates to research career information and present it to the class. Select a career area and present a career ladder showing how a person can advance from one job to another. Decide as a team how to divide the work. Prepare a written plan outlining who will do each task. Find the following facts for each job listed on the career ladder: the predicted job growth or decline, the anticipated earnings, the skills and academic preparation needed, and whether a license or certificate is required. Present the findings to the class using charts, graphs, or pictures.