

LIFE
SKILLS
HANDBOOKS

Workplace *Readiness*



Entering the Workforce | Occupational Training
Applying for a Job | The Job Interview

Entering the Workforce

Getting your first job is a big deal. It's a huge step toward becoming independent. But how do you know what job is right for you? First, it's important to ask yourself certain questions. What kind of work are you interested in? How much money do you need to make? What employee **benefits** are you looking for? Knowing where you stand on these topics will help you find a job you love.



Planning for a Bright Future

Maura isn't surprised when her high school **guidance counselor** suggests she consider becoming a veterinarian. That was the career recommended by a test she'd taken. The test was about personal interests and possible careers. But Maura knew long before taking the test that she would enjoy working with animals.

Becoming a veterinarian will mean going to college for about eight years. Maura discovered the educational requirements by searching online. She also read about where vets can work and what kinds of tasks they do. To learn more, Maura visited several area animal clinics. Talking to real vets gave her even more insight.

Eight years is a long time. But Maura has a plan for how to become a vet. She gets a job in one of the animal clinics she visited. Working there the summer after high school will give her valuable experience. When college starts, she'll go to the local university and continue working at the clinic.

When it comes time to attend veterinary school, Maura will need to move out of state. There are no vet programs in her area. Getting good grades in her early college years should help her get into an excellent veterinary school. The experience she will gain working at the animal clinic may come in handy too. It might help her get another part-time job after she moves.

Maura's plan covers both her education and work experience. She is sure that following it will help her reach her goal of becoming a veterinarian.



Chapter 1

Figuring Out Your Future

In the world of work, you have many different choices. But what kind of job is a good fit for you? Which **trade** or **profession** will give you the most satisfaction? What occupation best matches your skills and interests?

Learning About Your Skills and Interests

You can learn the answers to these questions by taking two kinds of tests:

- **Aptitude tests:** The word *aptitude* means “skill” or “ability.” An aptitude test helps determine what you’re good at. This kind of test isn’t like a math or history exam. It’s often taken on a website or a computer using special software. Aptitude test questions are devised to reveal your natural abilities. They’re also designed to show how quickly or easily you solve problems or learn new information.
- **Interest inventories:** An inventory is a survey or checklist. On an interest inventory, you might be asked to read a list of activities and check the ones you’d like to do. After you go through all the items, you’ll get an evaluation of your answers. Types of jobs that seem right for you will be suggested. For instance, the report might tell you that you should work outdoors or in a job where you can care for other people.



Types of Aptitude Tests

As many as 5,000 different aptitude tests are available. All of them evaluate one or more of the following areas:

- **Verbal ability:** how well you communicate
- **Numeric ability:** how well you do basic math
- **Abstract reasoning:** how well you understand complex concepts and solve problems
- **Spatial ability:** how well you mentally work with shapes
- **Mechanical ability:** how well you understand mechanics and engineering
- **Data checking:** how well you find errors in numbers and other detailed information
- **Concentration/clerical ability:** how well you can concentrate as well as your speed and level of accuracy



Sample Questions

Here are some questions similar to those you might find on an aptitude test.



- DeShawn is shorter than Dan.
Devon is shorter than DeShawn.
Who is the shortest of the three?
 - Devon
 - Dan
 - DeShawn
 - none of the above
- What number should come next in this series: 1 1 2 3 5 ?
 - 7
 - 9
 - 10
 - 8
- Lake* is to *puddle* as *boulder* is to _____.
 - pebble
 - mountain
 - dirt
 - island
- Which of the following words comes first alphabetically?
 - bland
 - blame
 - bran
 - blank

Here are some questions like those you might find on an interest inventory.

- Which would you rather do?
 work with people
 work with machines
- Where would you prefer to work?
 indoors
 outdoors
- Which of the following do you most enjoy?
 watching sports on TV
 reading a book
- When you are feeling sad, what would you rather do?
 be alone
 be with other people



Taking Aptitude Tests and Interest Inventories

School guidance counselors can usually give various kinds of aptitude tests and interest inventories. Your counselor can **interpret** your answers. Then they can help you decide which careers to look into.

Also check the library for books about aptitude tests and interest inventories. Look for explanations of how they work. You can also find these tests and inventories online. If you want, you can test yourself. Then you can match your results with different career categories and job types.

No matter how you go about it, exploring your aptitudes and interests is an important first step in a job search.

Uses of Aptitude Tests

According to the American Management Association, 70% of U.S. employers use some kind of skills test. These are used to review job applicants. For many jobs, employers test applicants' basic math and language skills. Depending on the job, specific skills tests may also be given. Suppose you're applying for a job in engineering or electronics. You would likely be given a test of mechanical ability.

Preparing for an Aptitude Test

It would be difficult to prepare for an aptitude test by studying all the material it might cover. You can prepare, though, by understanding what the test will be like.

- **Multiple-choice questions:** Most aptitude tests ask multiple-choice questions. To get credit for a question, you must select the correct answer from several choices.
- **Time limits:** Most aptitude tests have specific time requirements. A typical test might require you to complete 30 questions within 30 minutes.
- **Exam conditions:** Some aptitude tests must be taken on paper at a testing center. Others can be taken online from home or work.

