**Section 1 – What do I enjoy? What am I good at?**

If you understand what you’re good at and what you enjoy doing, it’s easier to choose jobs that will make you feel fulfilled. Some employers even use ‘strengths interviews’ to recruit people who enjoy using specific skills and qualities, and are good at them. So in addition to understanding yourself better, considering these questions will help you be more aware of what you have to offer an employer.

To find out what drives you, ask yourself the following questions – and remember, there are no right or wrong answers:

A. What am I good at?

B. What do I enjoy?

C. What things are important to me?

**A. What am I good at?**

All jobs require a broad range of skills such as problem solving, communication, team-working and customer orientation. Specialist skills may be important in some roles. Understanding where your strengths lie could help you choose a job or career you would be particularly good at.

Consider:

* What makes me good at my part-time job, my volunteering and/ie my work experience? (e.g. being organised, motivating others, team work, IT skills, working under pressure).
* What makes/made me successful in my studies? (e.g. researching skills, working under pressure, writing, visualising problems, coordinating team projects).
* Outside studies and work, what am I good at? (e.g. consider hobbies, extra-curricular activities, societies, social activities)
* What am I less confident/skilled in doing? (e.g. last minute working, shy about leading a group).
* What skills helped me attain my greatest achievements? (e.g. persistence, organisation, creativity).

Ask your friends and family what they think you do really well. If they are honest and tactful, they may also be able to suggest areas that you need to improve? Also, consider all the things you can do now that you couldn’t do many years ago - things you take for granted such as IT skills, language skills etc - and make a note.

Make a list of your skills using the above examples to get you started.

You should aim for a list of at least 10 skills. Ideas can be found at

Circle the skills that you feel are your strongest. Pick at least 5, and be as honest as you can. This list is for your eyes only, so don’t downplay something you are really good at, or rate yourself highly for a skill you have barely used. Distinguishing what you’re great at and what you’re just ok at can help you decide what careers might be a better match for you. Those skills you have circled are the things you are good (or even great) at, and what you could do well in a job.

**B. What do I enjoy doing?**

Look at the following questions to explore what drives you in your life. Consider all aspects of your life – not just education or work. Your interests and hobbies can also you something about what is important to you. Consider not just the activity, but also what skills or abilities you use.

* What do I like about you’re A level subjects? (e.g. research, lab work, being creative, team projects, etc.).
* What do I enjoy about my part-time job, volunteering or work experience? (e.g. customer contact, meeting people, solving problems)
* What are my hobbies? What does that say about what I enjoy doing? (E.g. helping others, co-ordinating people, team vs. individual games).
* What do I not enjoy? (pressure of deadlines, working in teams).

Make a list of activities you enjoy and the skills that are part of those activities. As with the exercise above, aim for a list of at least 10 things.

Circle the activities that you find most enjoyable from your list. E.g. playing chess (strategy), planning social events (organisation), hockey (team work), blogging (writing skills/communication), etc. Pick at least 5. These are the things you are likely to dedicate time to, and which motivate you. A job related to any of these activities or the underlying skills could be one you enjoy.

What are you good at… AND enjoy?

Revisit your top rates activities and skills for the above. What patterns emerge? What skills or qualities are common to both these highlighted groups? These are your real strengths, because you are good at these things, and also enjoy doing them. Have this list handy when looking at possible careers; it will help you make a more informed decision about the options that may suit you best.

**C. What things are important to me?**

Your values and ideas of what is important have a strong impact on whether you might find a particular job or career fulfilling. Some employers look for particular values in potential employees, so it’s helpful to become more aware of what is important to you.

Start an Important / Not important list

Creating these lists will help you when considering specific jobs or career options, and they will grow over time as you become clearer on what’s important to you and as you gain exposure to different career choices you can make.

Consider any preferences you have in the following areas. You may not have a preference in some cases, or you may prefer the opposite of the statement – make a note of whatever thoughts come up.

* Work environment – I prefer to work in an office/outdoors/lab/etc.
* Status & recognition – my worth is recognised by the role I do, the employer I work for
* Challenge – I welcome feeling challenged in what I do
* Reward – how important is a high salary (or good job benefits) to me?
* Personal development –there are good opportunities for training, career progression
* Variety – experiencing a diverse range of tasks, frequent change
* Responsibility – welcoming the chance to take on a high level of responsibility
* Helping others – helping people solve their problems and challenges, serving the community
* Values – working in a role which is in keeping with my personal values
* Independence – ability to make decisions and exert some autonomy in my job
* Job security – the role should be secure with as little uncertainty as possible
* Meaning and fulfilment –feeling fulfilled by the job I do, that my work has purpose
* Location – I wish to work in a specific location/area, or I would like travel opportunities
* Work/life balance – it is important for me to have time outside work for other activities
* And…. Whatever else is important to you

Whenever you hear or read about a type of job, add to your lists until you build up a picture of what you want.

If you can, rank these preferences from most important to least important what would be your top 5? What would you be prepared to sacrifice if you had to choose between for example, salary and location? Bear in mind that it’s rare to find a perfect job that matches what you want 100%!

How do these exercises help?

Going through steps A, B and C above will help you gain a much clearer idea of not only what you’re good at, but also what motivates you. So when you see a job advert, you can review your lists and see if the job matches what you know about yourself. This can give you more confidence that a job might be a good match for you. It can also avoid you getting lured into a great sounding career which isn’t really suited to what you want out of life.

Which jobs might be a match for me?

Prospects Career Planner is a great tool to help you work out what’s important to you and which jobs might be a good match:

Career Planner asks you a range of questions about what motivates you and that might be important to you in a job. It then matches you with profiles where people in those jobs gave very similar responses.

www.prospects.ac.uk/planner

**Section 2 – Exploring Options**

If you don’t know what your options are, how do you find out? Here are some of the best approaches:

A. Research – Read up on different jobs and employers

B. Talk to people – friends, family, teachers, OPs

C. Try things out – work experience, volunteer, join societies. Look for ways to use your skills

You might have a natural preferred style, e.g. if you enjoy browsing the web and analysing information you might find ‘researching’ the most comfortable way to do things. However, stretching outside your natural comfort zone (e.g. talking to employers and OPs) will mean you get a lot more useful knowledge. Whilst any one of these approaches can be helpful, the best way is to do a bit of all of them, so you broaden your horizons.

**A. Research**

There’s a wealth of information out there about different jobs, career paths, and study/training options – in fact it may seem like there’s too much!

Take a look at the careers information on the Transition page.

**B. Talk to people**

The internet is a great resource, but often there are details you just can’t get from the web. That’s where speaking to friends, family, OPs, employers, graduates and others come in. They can help you get a real inside knowledge of what a job is really like.

Talk to employers and recent graduates about different careers by attending talks and workshops delivered by employers, alumni and professionals. They can answer your questions about their areas of work which can help you decide if it’s for you.

Ask friends, family and people you know. These people can help in several ways:

* Ask them for feedback - they may have suggestions of careers they think might suit you. They may also point out things they think you're good at, which could help you narrow down your options.
* They can tell you about jobs they are familiar with, particularly about their own careers if they are in work.
* They may also know about the work of colleagues or other friends.
* Even if they can't give you a job, they may know who to write to, which agencies or websites to use to find adverts, or other inside information about a type of work or industry.

Talk to the Careers Advisor at Pocklington School

Mrs Jones is here to help you at whatever stage of your career. Contact her at jonesg@pocklingtonschool.com

**C. Try things out!**

Whilst websites can help you research the options, and speaking to people about their work can give you a great insight, sometimes there’s no replacement for trying it yourself. Look for opportunities to get involved, a day of ‘work-shadowing’ (observing someone doing their job), a week or work experience, a summer internship, student societies and volunteering – these are all great ways to fill in the gaps in your knowledge. Is a career in marketing really for you? Perhaps a few days working in an advertising agency will tell you!

Contact Mrs Jones, Careers and University Advisor at jonesg@pocklingtonschool.com or Mrs Dare, OP Liaison Officer at darer@pocklingtonschool.com

**Section 3 - Common career concerns**

It can be hard when you start your career planning. You are not alone in worrying about what you want to do, whether it is achievable, whether you are good enough and what others expect of you.

Whether you are concerned that you don’t have much time to think about your future, worried about the impact of your grades, or just aren’t sure where to start, you’ll find more advice on the Careers and Transition pages on Firefly or by contacting the Careers Advisor at Pocklington School.

**Section 4: How do I decide what to do?**

Hopefully by now you have some ideas about what is important to you and the options available, but that can still leave a lot of doors open, so at this point consider how to select those which suit you best. It can feel difficult, narrowing things down – don’t think of it as limiting your options, after all is it possible to do everything?

What you’re really doing is deciding on your first step, based on what you know of yourself and the opportunities open to you. You can always change direction later if you choose to – many do, it’s a natural way most people’s careers evolve as new opportunities open up. Often our personal circumstances play a large part in our choices too, so consider those as part of your decision making. This section will help you focus on the right choices for you.

Consider what’s important to you

Revisit the Important/Not Important lists mentioned in Section 1. There’s a good chance not all of these are met by some of the jobs you are considering. Consider which are the most important, non-negotiable things you need (e.g. location), and which are desirable, but not essential (e.g. salary). Can you rule some options out at this stage, or are you prepared to compromise? For example:

* Location – is the job you want available in the place you want to be? Or do you perhaps need a visa, and what are the chances you will get one?
* Salary – are you holding out for the best salary, or can you be flexible?
* Are you waiting for a job with a very narrow list of employers, or will you consider a broader range of opportunities?

Holding out for the perfect job may mean you are job hunting a lot longer than you intended. Consider compromise jobs if they help take you in the right overall direction.

Look at the Pros and Cons

From the options you are still considering, write down what you feel are the positive aspects that attract you to that type of work, and also the negative aspects, e.g. a lot of travel might be a positive for some people, but others might not enjoy it. Use this to help you evaluate your options and see if things are any clearer.

Head vs. Heart

Does your heart say one thing but your head another? Is there a dream job there but you worry it’s not realistic? Perhaps it’s a sign that you haven’t explored your dream job enough, or perhaps other decisions and factors are involved (e.g. worries about relocating, how others might see it, can I afford to support myself?). Acknowledging these thoughts can help you find a resolution. If there’s something you really want to do, is there a compromise, or perhaps it’s something you can work towards?

**Section 5: What do I do now?**

There is no ‘one perfect way’ to decide what you want to do, everybody finds their path in a slightly different way. So if talking to people or trying things out helps you get a clearer idea, rather than surfing the web – go for it. The ideas presented here are just that – ideas, you can take and use any which you find useful.

Take action

Having an idea of your career direction is valuable, but it’s also vital to take active steps forward.

Even if you aren’t sure about what you want, doing something is always better than doing nothing while you wait for inspiration. Research shows that most successful people do some fundamental things which help build their CV, their skills, their knowledge and contacts.

Good luck in your search!