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Interests, Aptitudes, and Abilities

To make a wise career choice, you must first get to know yourself. Who are you? What do you want in life? What are your

- Interests
- Aptitudes
- Abilities

Interests are things you like to do or learn about. These may include your favorite school subjects, hobbies, sports, or even movies. Finding a career field that interests you is important. Otherwise you may become bored or unhappy.

Aptitudes are skills you are capable of learning. For example, perhaps you have an aptitude for drawing. You could learn

more about it and work to develop your drawing skills.

Abilities are skills you have already learned. If you know how to use a power drill, that is an ability.

Take a few minutes to think about your interests, aptitudes, and abilities. What do they tell you about the kind of career at which you could be successful and that could make you happy? Perhaps no job can match completely with your interests, aptitudes, and abilities. However, keeping them in mind will help you make a wiser career choice.

On the lines below, write down three of your

Interests _____

Aptitudes _____

Abilities _____

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Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurs start, develop, and then run their own businesses. They could be scientists or salespeople, athletes or accountants, but they must all be business people. Here are the key business skills needed by entrepreneurs.

- **Evaluating information.** Business owners must be able to determine whether the information received from other people and sources is true or false, useful or unimportant.
- **Decision making.** It is important to have a plan for deciding what action to take in important situations.
- **Business communication.** Effective communication results from writing and speaking in ways that are understandable and persuasive.
- **Good listening skills.** Hearing and listening are not necessarily the same. When we *hear*, we use our ears. When we *listen* we use our ears and our minds. Good listeners will learn things that will help them improve their business.
- **Problem solving.** The business world is full of big and small problems. The ability to solve problems has great value.
- **Leadership.** When you own or run a business, the employees look to you for leadership.
- **Teamwork.** Employees enjoy working together, but it is not always easy. Teamwork skills are very important to any company.
- **Ethical behavior.** The character and integrity projected in the workplace are what customers see. These can make or break a business.
- **Mathematics.** Business includes a lot of numbers. A good understanding of math is essential; for example, figuring wages and discounts.
- **A will to learn.** Learning continues on a daily basis in the business world. There should be a desire to learn more.



Taking an Interest Inventory

Your interests reveal much about who you are. Examining your interests can help you identify the type of career that could be right for you. Take an inventory of your interests by answering these questions.

1. Which of the following are you *most* interested in? (check five or fewer)

- _____ helping people
- _____ talking to people
- _____ being alone
- _____ learning new things
- _____ reading
- _____ collecting (and learning about what you collect)
- _____ learning how things work
- _____ repairing things
- _____ working with your hands
- _____ drawing
- _____ writing

2. Do you have any hobbies? _____ If so, list them and tell why you enjoy them.

3. What new hobby would you like to take up? Why do you think you would enjoy that hobby? _____

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Career Readiness Skills

Taking an Interest Inventory (continued)



4. Do you prefer outdoor or indoor activities? _____
5. Do you prefer activities that require physical activity or those that can be enjoyed quietly?

6. Do you prefer observing or actively participating? _____

7. List at least three activities that you enjoy in your spare time. Explain why you enjoy each.

8. What TV shows do you enjoy watching? List at least three and tell why you like each.

9. Which school subjects do you most enjoy? Identify two and tell what you like about those subjects.

10. What types of books and magazines do you most enjoy? Why do you read and enjoy them?



The Technology Student Association (TSA) is an organization for technology education students. It provides a national program of activities and competitions.

TSA helps prepare students for the challenges of a dynamic world by promoting technological literacy, leadership, and problem solving. Students learn about the potential of technology and about careers in technology.

Members are supported by teachers, parents, and business leaders. TSA encourages the participation of local chapters in the national organization.

National Competitive Events

TSA hosts competitive events annually. The activities are intended to extend student understanding of the development, impact, and potential of technology and careers in technology. A few of the competitions of interest to technology students are described here.

Construction Challenge

This event requires participants to identify a community need related to construction. They must then plan and implement a practical course of action that includes involvement of both students and community members.

Manufacturing Challenge

Teams of participants identify a consumer need and design and manufacture a product using material suitable for recycling.

Communication Challenge

Each participant designs, produces, and submits a chapter recruitment brochure and a sponsor support request letter on chapter letterhead. Finalists produce a layout of a promotional item for a hypothetical company.

Conferences and Programs

The following additional programs provide opportunities for the demonstration and recognition of leadership and service.

- **Conferences.** These include the annual national conference and a leadership conference.
- **American Cancer Society.** Local chapters volunteer their efforts in support of the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life program.
- **National TSA Week.** Local chapters celebrate in a variety of ways. For example, they might host an open house for parents and the community. Another idea is to sponsor a competitive event for students outside the chapter so they can experience TSA activities.
- **The Great Technology Adventure.** This is a technology literacy program for elementary grades that integrates with existing curriculum to help teachers bring technology into the classroom.
 - **Achievement Program.** TSA members are recognized at the national conference for their achievements. The program is designed to encourage excellence in the areas of technological literacy, scholarship, service, and leadership.

Contact Information

www.tsaweb.org

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Keys to a Positive Attitude

The personal characteristic that probably contributes most to success is your attitude, your outlook on life. Is your attitude positive or negative, or a little of both? Following are some suggestions for developing a positive attitude.

- **Believe in yourself.** Believe that you can learn, change, and succeed.
- **Avoid being overly critical of everything.** Remember, no school or person is perfect. Do your best, but don't expect yourself to be perfect either.
- **Give other people a chance.** Assume that everyone's intentions are good. A person may have good reasons for doing something you don't like or approve of.
- **Accept your own mistakes and learn from them.** Everyone makes mistakes. Your life won't be ruined when you make them. In fact, you will probably learn a lot from your mistakes. Most importantly, don't blame others for your mistakes, and try not to repeat them.
- **Be helpful.** Other people will like you for it, and you'll feel good about yourself afterward.
- **Find something positive about every situation.** Looking on the bright side is the best exercise for developing a positive attitude.

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Teamwork

Working in a team can be fun and challenging. Like any skill, it takes practice, and now is a good time to start. Teamwork is a skill you will use in all aspects of your personal life as well as your work life.

The workplace today relies very heavily on teams of workers to get jobs done. For example, there are design teams, surgical teams, sales teams, and investment teams. In each case, the team members must work together to reach a common goal.

Are You a Member of a Team?

Working as a team member is probably already a part of your everyday life. Think of the ways you work with other people on a daily basis. For example, at home you have certain jobs that you are responsible for. At school you might be a member of a committee that has to make decisions about a school activity. Or, you might be on a sports team. No doubt there are “teams” you have been involved with. Those

teamwork experiences have probably helped you prepare for the workplace.

Each person on a team has something unique to contribute. For example, to design and build a house, there must be people who know kitchen design, electrical work, plumbing, landscaping, etc. Each contributes to making a house functional and attractive. Besides providing a variety of skills, a team that really works well together can accomplish more than each of the members could on their own.

Team Roles

Typically, a team will have three or more members. Initially, the role you play on the team might fall into one of the categories shown in the table. As the project continues, you may find that you play more than one role. For example, a leader is also an encourager and a contributor. All team members are contributors and encouragers.

Team Roles and Functions

Team Role	Primary Function
Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep members focused on the team’s goal • Make sure everyone understands his or her job • Watch the time line • Set a good example
Contributor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help others stay on task • Support other team members • Ask questions • Complete tasks • Evaluate outcomes
Encourager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen • Share ideas • Encourage everyone to participate

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Career Readiness Skills

Teamwork (continued)



Teambuilding

With a team, you need to focus on two things: completing the task and building and maintaining positive relationships with team members. Building a team that really works well does not happen automatically.

Teams commonly go through four stages before they function at a high level. The first two stages are usually awkward and

produce conflict that team members must resolve until they get to know each other and see how they fit within the team. Some teams may be formed for too short a time to reach the highest level of functioning. However, working through the stages will help your team reach the highest level possible.

Stages of Teambuilding

Stage	Tasks	Relationships
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set specific goals• Decide what to do and when• Decide who will do what• Decide who will lead or if leadership will be shared	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Get to know each other• See where members fit within the team• Share enthusiasm• Encourage shared participation
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stay focused on goals• Make decisions• Develop processes for carrying out team plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognize and accept differences• Develop ways to behave that are acceptable to all• Resolve basic conflicts and build trust• Form a team image
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• May use individual ways of getting own parts done• Follow planned process for making all the parts work together	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make team goals as important as individual goals• Cooperate and get along well, but could function better• Support, encourage, and guide each other
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Achieve high levels of productivity• Work independently• Take initiative• Focus primarily on getting the work done	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Know how to work together• Have achieved a high level of trust• Contribute equally• Resolve conflicts and make decisions quickly• Reach a level of win-win cooperation



Work Habits

✓ Communication

Employees need to be able to speak, read, and write the language that is used on the job. It is equally important to be able to listen well, to ask questions, and to explain things clearly. You will need to communicate with supervisors, managers, customers, and your coworkers. If you treat others with respect and patience, you will find it easier to communicate with them.

✓ Honesty

Employers expect their employees to be honest. One dishonest act, even a simple lie, can destroy your reputation. Would you hire someone if you knew he or she had a history of dishonesty?

✓ Responsibility

Employers want their employees to accept responsibility for their actions. It can be hard to take responsibility, especially when things go wrong, but it's important to be truthful. Explain what happened, but don't try to blame someone else or make excuses.

✓ Dependability

What one person does, or doesn't do, affects others. If somebody doesn't show up for work on time or leaves early without permission, the other employees may not be able to finish their work. Your employer will not tolerate it and your fellow employees will resent it if they can't count on you.

✓ Acceptance of Constructive Criticism

Constructive criticism is part of a boss's job. He or she needs to let employees know how they are doing. If your boss tells you that you've done something incorrectly, consider it an opportunity to learn. Ask how you could improve, and follow through on your boss's suggestions.

✓ Teamwork

A team is a group of people working together to reach a common goal. Even if your workplace is not organized into teams, you still need teamwork skills. One of the main reasons workers lose their jobs is because they cannot get along with others. An employer expects you to work cooperatively with others. A team member

- Plans and makes decisions with others
- Respects the opinions of others
- Realizes there is "give and take" in order to achieve group results
- Encourages and supports fellow team members

✓ Initiative

Taking initiative means doing what needs to be done without being told to do it. Employers value workers who are willing to go the extra mile and who look for opportunities to do more than only what they were hired to do.

✓ Positive Attitude

Your attitude toward your job is a very important factor in your success. You have a choice: you can act positively or negatively toward your job. If you have a positive attitude toward your boss and coworkers, chances are much better that they will respond positively toward you.

✓ Willingness to Learn

Employers want people who can do their job well and follow directions well. Listen carefully to instructions. If you are unsure about how to do something, ask questions. Be willing to learn any job, no matter how small. Learn all you can about your job and about the company. This information will help you do your job better and will prepare you for a promotion.



Personal Employability Traits

One way to prepare yourself for the workplace is to develop your personal employability traits. This table will help you become more aware of your strengths and weaknesses. Place a check in the column that best describes you. Be honest!

Employability Rating

Trait	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor
Communication					
Honesty					
Dependability					
Constructive Criticism					
Teamwork					
Responsibility					
Initiative					
Positive Attitude					
Willingness to Learn					
Personal Care					



Work Habits Checklist

The following checklist will help you identify skills you have and those you may need for future success in the workplace.

Communicating

- Communicate clearly with others, including those from other cultures.
- Ask questions about a task.
- Read and follow written directions.
- Prepare written communication.
- Write in legible handwriting.
- Interpret the use of body language.
- Listen to directions and follow them.
- Use good telephone etiquette.
- Use e-mail etiquette.

Demonstrating Teamwork

- Match team members' skills to group activities.
- Encourage shared participation.
- Provide support to team members.
- Build and maintain trust.
- Complete team tasks.
- Evaluate outcomes.

Maintaining a Safe and Healthy Environment

- Act appropriately during emergencies.
- Comply with safety rules and procedures.
- Use tools and equipment appropriately and maintain them properly.
- Follow environmental practices and policies.

- Maintain work area.

Demonstrating Integrity and Responsible Behavior

- Follow rules, regulations, and policies.
- Identify your employer's expectations.
- Implement job responsibilities.
- Maintain regular attendance.
- Assume responsibility for decisions and actions.
- Demonstrate willingness to learn.
- Display initiative.
- Exhibit pride in your work.

Using Resources

- Avoid waste and breakage.
- Use time management techniques to meet deadlines.
- Make a list of supplies and materials needed to do a task.
- Follow a budget for projects.
- Practice cost-effectiveness.

Using Information

- Read instructions and understand how they affect your job.
- Check supplies or products received against an invoice or packing slip.
- Find and evaluate information.
- Use a telephone directory.

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Career Readiness Skills

Work Habits Checklist (continued)



Using Systems

- Understand how your department fits within the whole operation.
- Find out what work is done in each department and how it fits into the operation.

Using Interpersonal Skills

- Teach others how to perform a task.
- Treat people with respect.
- Exhibit positive behavior.
- Respond to praise or criticism.
- Provide constructive criticism.
- Channel and control emotional reactions.
- Help resolve conflicts.

Demonstrating Technology Literacy

- Operate and maintain tools and equipment.
- Enter data into a computer system.
- Use word processing software.
- Use the computer to locate information via the Internet.

Interpreting the Economics of Work

- Describe responsibilities of employees.
- Describe responsibilities of employers.

Solving Problems

- Identify the problem.
- Use reasoning skills.
- Assess employer and employee responsibility in solving a problem.
- Identify solutions to the problem.
- Select and implement solutions.
- Evaluate options.
- Estimate results of implemented options.