

# UNSURE ABOUT WHAT TO DO NEXT?

**KEEP IN MIND THERE ISN'T ONE PERFECT CAREER OPTION OUT THERE FOR YOU. HERE ARE FIVE WAYS TO GET STARTED EXPLORING YOUR OPTIONS.**

**M**aking decisions about what to do next can seem so overwhelming. It is often difficult to know where and how to start. The reality is there is no magic quiz or computer programme that will find the answer for you – rather it's about investigating, narrowing down your options, trying them out and then investigating further.

There are probably many different jobs that could suit you and it is likely we'll have many different careers during our working lives, so don't feel that you will be tied to any decisions you make now. Don't miss out on opportunities by being fixated on one option. Being flexible and having alternative options and a back-up plan are useful if your situation or career ideas change.

## 1. What don't you want?

Working out what you don't want to do is often easier than deciding what you do want to do. Although it might sound negative, it's a great way of narrowing down the options available to you. Thinking about why these jobs don't appeal can be a step towards identifying those that do.



Think of a job that would be your worst nightmare.

<b>1</b>	<b>Nightmare job</b>
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Now think of the reasons why the role would be so unsuitable.

<b>2</b>	<b>Reasons</b>
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Having identified what you don't want from a job, can this help you work out what you do want? For example, if you don't want a 9–5 office job maybe you want flexibility and variety in your work life. Can you think of any desirable jobs that encompass your new criteria? Don't forget, you can make an appointment with your careers service to help you review your options.

<b>3</b>	<b>Desirable job</b>
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## 2. What are your skills?

Work that uses your strengths often provides a sense of achievement and is likely to be more enjoyable and fulfilling.

Think of activities you have been involved with over the past year or two where you have been pleased with your contribution and list the skills you used.

Activity	Skills
<b>Our examples</b> Part-time retail job	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer focus (received employee of the month award for excellent customer service)</li> <li>• Sales skills (attended one-day course through work to learn about sales techniques)</li> </ul>
Group research project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team work (communicated regularly to keep track of progress and motivate each other)</li> <li>• Organisation (broke project down into tasks which were shared and given deadlines; arranged status update meetings)</li> </ul>
<b>Your examples</b>	

Browse job profiles to find out which skills are required in different jobs.

- [targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/job-descriptions](http://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/job-descriptions)
- [prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles](http://prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles)

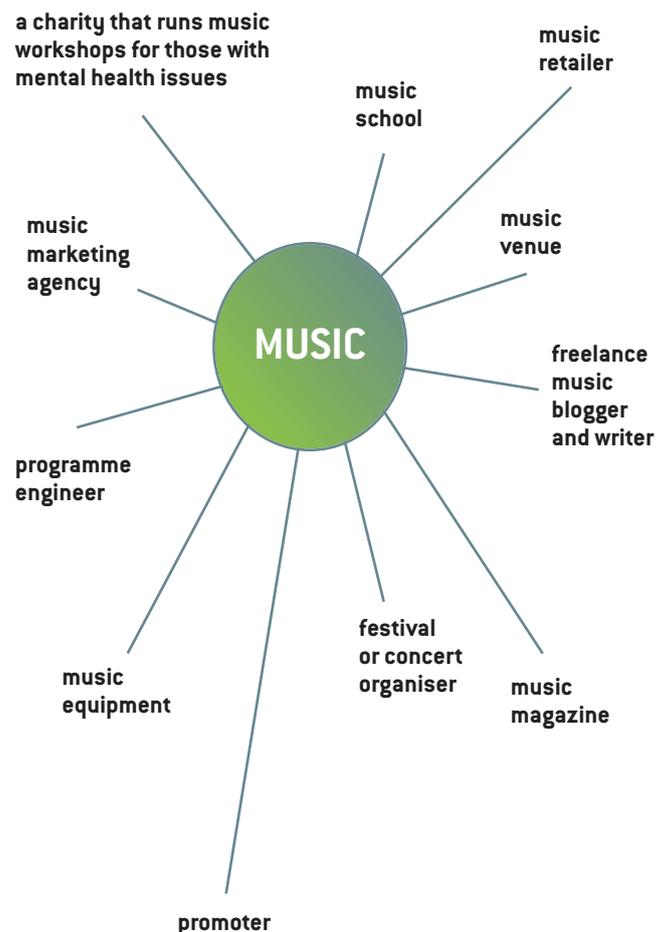
During work experience opportunities and when talking to people about what they do, find out what skills are involved in their jobs.

**See 'Experience matters' article PAGE 10**

## 3. Turn your hobbies or interests into career ideas

Thinking about what you are interested in is another way to start brainstorming different sectors and roles you can explore.

Write down one or two of your interests and then brainstorm different types of potential employers that are linked to the topic. For example, if you are interested in music which organisations could you potentially work for that are linked with music in some way? ➤



#### 4. Sector matters

Another way of thinking about your next steps is to start with the sectors or types of workplace you are interested in, and then explore the range of roles that are available within these. If you are keen to work for a charity, look at charity websites to find the range of jobs they have available. Perhaps you have identified sectors that appeal to you, for example education, but don't want to teach. Again, look at the range of non-teaching roles in schools, colleges and universities. A quick internet search for jobs at a nearby hospital found roles as varied as project manager, marketing consultant, finance and risk audit administrator, digital consultant, test analyst. The job profile links listed at the end of exercise 2 of this article can also be searched by sector, which you can use to explore potential job roles.

Create a list of employers that you think may have opportunities you would like to pursue. Find out more about them. What do they do and who are their clients? Could this provide another avenue to explore when looking for work experience? See our articles on making connections and speculative applications for further details – on pages 21 and 35 respectively.

<b>4</b>	<b>List of employers</b>

#### 5. Know what is out there!

Making decisions is difficult if you are not entirely sure what your options are. It is likely that there are a huge number of job roles available to you that you have never heard of. You may also have made some initial decisions based on assumptions that aren't entirely accurate. For example, you might think that forensic lab work is incredibly dynamic and varied, but you might find that for junior roles it can be very repetitive. You might think that accountants only work with numbers in front of a computer, but might find that some accountancy roles provide clients with advice and so need strong communication skills.

Get ideas by looking at online job boards and talking to people you know about their jobs.

Look at the job profiles online in the advice sections of **TARGETjobs** or **Prospects**, and find three job profiles that sound interesting to you. Then click through the 'related job descriptions' at the end of each to browse similar roles.

Ask three people you know (eg friends, family, contacts from extracurricular activities) what they like and dislike most about their jobs and how they got into that type of work.

#### Finally: test your ideas

The more work experience you have – whether that's part-time work, volunteering or internships – the more informed you will be about different types of opportunities and what might suit you. Reading job profiles and speaking to people in the sector will certainly give you an idea about what a job is like, but getting some experience in the role is the best way to test out the reality of a job. The people you meet and the experience you have will help to further shape your plans for the future and could introduce you to opportunities you didn't even know existed. Make the most of your time whilst studying to explore and test your options. **L**

See our articles 'Experience matters' PAGE 10  
and 'Job-hunting tactics' PAGE 19