



Assessing *you*

*The First Step in
Career Planning*

WHAT AM I GOOD AT?

WHAT DO I WANT TO DO?

WHERE DO I START?

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Assessing You:

The first step in career planning

Career Practitioners and Educators

Assessing You: The first step in career planning (formerly the *Skills Plus Handbook*) addresses the self-assessment phase of the career planning process. It will help your client or students to

- explore their knowledge, skills and abilities that are transferable from one work role to another
- explore personal management skills such as time management, problem solving and organizational skills
- understand how their personal characteristics influence their career decisions
- identify specific work that supports their desired career goals
- identify their resources (personal, material and financial) and determine which are most helpful to their career path
- understand the importance of updating their career portfolio using newly acquired information about themselves
- connect with further information and resources

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Introduction

Finding work and deciding what to do next in your career are complex processes. It takes preparation to thrive, rather than just survive, in these constantly changing times.

That means putting some thought and effort into identifying and recording your personal career assets and keeping your eyes open for different ways to use them. Then, whatever happens in your life or at work, it will be easier for you to navigate your way successfully.

This handbook will help you determine who you are, what you can do and what you want to achieve. Thus prepared, you will be able to quickly take stock of your personal career assets when you face a career decision, see what uses your assets can be put to and apply them to a new line of work or even an entirely new way of working.



Change and growth take place when a person has risked himself and dares to become involved with experimenting with his or her own life.

—Herbert Otto

➤ What Are Your Personal Career Assets?

Ancient wisdom says that four elements (fire, earth, water and air) work together in various combinations to create all things.

Similarly, four elements of your personal career assets can be combined to create many different possibilities:


- knowledge, skills and abilities
- personal characteristics
- resources
- passion

This handbook describes how to identify specific assets within each of these four elements so you can combine them in different ways when you are making career plans or looking for work.

➤ How To Use This Book

Sometimes the hardest question to answer is “What do I want to do (at school, at work, with my life in general)?”

That’s why this book includes lots of activities to get you started. Identifying your personal assets can be hard work. No doubt, you’d probably rather spend your time another way. But take heart. Research and experience shows that the effort does pay off! After working through this book, you will

- 
- know what talents you have to offer an employer
 - know which areas you need to strengthen
 - be more confident in interviews
 - have clearer goals
 - have expanded your life/work options

Identifying your personal assets takes time—in fact, it’s a process that is never really finished. Your assets evolve as you continue to learn and develop new interests, skills and approaches to your life or work.

Be gentle with yourself as you work through the activities in this book! You don’t have to

complete every activity, and you don’t have to finish the activities all at once. A variety of activities are included so you can choose the ones that best fit your way of learning.

This book is for you. Feel free to thumb through it, write in it, make it your own. If you are comfortable doing so, ask others to help you with some of the activities. Friends, co-workers and family members may be able to contribute important insights and ideas.

As you work through activities, you will be asked to record things on separate sheets of paper or electronically (your choice). It’s a good idea to transfer the most important information about you to the Personal Assets Summary at the back of the book. Or, you may find it easier to photocopy the Personal Assets Summary (pages 49 to 60) and transfer the information you collect as you go along. Whichever method you choose, be sure that, when you are done, your most significant personal career assets are together in one place.

Identifying your assets is really about knowing and appreciating yourself. So it's little wonder that when you devote time to acknowledging your gifts and talents, you develop a stronger sense of who you are, what you can contribute, and what you need to learn to grow—and that feels good!

➤ Is There Retooling Without Reschooling?

You may be wondering if you need more education or retraining at this point in your career.

The answer to that question depends on what you want, and your current skills, knowledge and circumstances.

It's true that some occupations are closed if you do not possess certain credentials—degrees, diplomas, tickets, licences—that prove you have the skills required to do the job. For example, if you want to practice law or medicine, you must fulfill the requirements set down by those professions. However, there are a variety of ways to get into many other occupations. For example, you don't need a journalism degree to work as a reporter. Competent newspaper writers can come from backgrounds in various liberal arts disciplines—or may never have been to university or college at all.

The reverse is equally true. If you are an experienced reporter, you don't have to limit your career goals to the newspaper world. Those well-honed writing/interviewing/meeting deadlines skills can be transferred to

work in advertising, public relations, radio and television or freelance writing, just to name a few possibilities.

Many people have found that their original education and training have little to do with their current occupation. Even in those fields where the relationship seems obvious, the work you actually end up doing has more to do with your lifestyle preferences, valued skills and available opportunities than it does with a long-ago earned forestry degree or carpenter's ticket. There may be a direct relationship with your first job or even your second job but, beyond that, people often discover that the skills they develop and most enjoy using take them in new directions. Someone with a carpentry or forestry background, for example, may continue to work in the same field but move into administration, management, sales, public relations or training.

→ Identifying your assets is not boasting. It's simply looking into the mirror and getting to know yourself.

➤ Mirror, Mirror On The Wall... Doing A Skills+ Inventory

How many of your personal career assets can you identify off the top of your head? If you're like most people, probably only a handful.

That's because most people don't spend a lot of time analyzing their talents. In fact, we tend to take our talents for granted. We assume that everyone else knows what we know and can do what we can. Of course, that's not true.

The activities in this book are designed to help you put into words what you already know, but might find difficult to put into words when faced with a blank piece of paper.

Be as honest and objective as you can about your assets. In other situations, you may have been discouraged from looking at or talking about your gifts. But identifying your assets is not boasting. It's simply looking into the mirror and getting to know yourself.

Although it would be nice to find a magic mirror that could identify your assets for you, the reality is that you have to do it yourself. So get ready to do some detective work, have some fun and do some thinking. In the following pages, there are many suggestions for learning about yourself. Try lots of activities. Each one will help you to identify different assets.

A black and white photograph of a man in a dark jacket crouching in a field, holding a large bunch of onions. The background shows a field of crops and trees in the distance.

Knowledge, Skills And Abilities

Your answers to the questions “What do I know?” and “What can I do?” describe your knowledge, skills and abilities.

Your *knowledge* assets include both

- the general knowledge you have about subjects such as gardening, national politics, soccer and first aid
- any specialized knowledge you may have that is required to work in a particular occupation (e.g. a physician’s knowledge of surgical procedures, a motorcycle mechanic’s knowledge of motorcycle parts, an artist’s knowledge of the colour wheel or a farmer’s knowledge of crops and weather patterns)

No doubt you have acquired a considerable amount of knowledge through experience, as well as through formal education or training. You have also learned a great deal through informal learning activities such as reading, watching DVDs and TV and observing others.

Your *skills* and *abilities* assets describe what you can do. You may know a lot about soccer, but that doesn’t necessarily mean you can play soccer well. To become a skilled player, you

need athletic ability and practice as well as knowledge of the game.

Your abilities are what you can do naturally. For example, you may have a natural ability for working with numbers, working with people or working with machinery.

Skills are learned. For example, you may be skilled at performing basic arithmetic operations, selling things to people or rebuilding car motors. You may have been born with mechanical ability, but you still have to learn specific skills to become a competent mechanic.

When you are making career decisions, it’s often useful to group your skills in three categories: transferable skills, personal management skills and work-specific skills. After reading the following information about each of these different types of skills, you can use Activity #1 and/or Activity #2 to identify your skills, abilities and knowledge assets.



➤ Transferable Skills

Some skills are key skills used in almost any kind of work. They are called transferable skills because they can be used in a variety of settings.

Interpersonal skills, communication skills, computer literacy skills and thinking skills are good examples.

Interpersonal skills are the skills required to work well with other people. If you can work co-operatively as part of a team, are confident enough to voice an opinion, can negotiate with others to reach an agreement, or are good at convincing others that they should think or act in a certain way, you have valuable interpersonal skills.

Communication skills include both verbal and written skills. If you can explain concepts clearly and accurately to individuals or groups of people in person and over the telephone, you have good verbal communication skills. If you can also explain things clearly and accurately in letters, email messages and reports, you have good written communication skills.

Computer literacy refers to your ability to use a computer, an essential skill in today's work world. If you can use a keyboard effectively and use computer programs for word-processing or other applications (e.g. for spreadsheets or presentations), you are computer literate.

Thinking skills are becoming more important as individuals in many different kinds of positions are being asked to take on more responsibilities and work in a variety of situations. To succeed in these positions, you must be able to gather, analyze and apply information, and use good judgment when making decisions.