



Worksheet

Finding Focus

in Your Job

Search





The key to streamlining your job search and finding work that you love is **focus**. A narrowly focused job search is always the best strategy. Knowing what you're looking for makes the process easier for yourself and the people who want to help you.

You don't need to have only one goal. It's okay to explore two or three different kinds of jobs. But you have to narrow your search to a short list of goals most important to you.

For most people, a dream job is one that fits with their **interests, abilities, values, and desired lifestyle**. If you don't have a clear sense of focus in your search, spend some time thinking through each of these items. Writing down your thoughts may help you identify target jobs for your search.



Interests

Here are a few prompts to get you thinking about your personal interests.

What do you enjoy doing in your free time? It's not always possible to turn your hobbies into a career but sometimes there are underlying themes or topics that can steer your job search.

What was the best job you ever had? What specifically about the position did you enjoy?

What were your favorite classes and subjects in college? Why did you find this subject so interesting?



What types of activities and things energize you?

We all have certain tasks that excite us and other that leave us feeling drained. What kinds of activities do you find yourself most drawn to?

If you could do any job in your life, what would you choose? Imagine that money isn't a factor. Don't worry about whether what you're imagining is even a real job. Just think about what you would like to do if there were no other considerations.



Skills

Everyone has a different and unique skill set—the things that we’re really good at. Sometimes our skills are acquired through experience and education; other times they are innate to who we are. Getting clear on your diverse skills will help you identify opportunities you have in your career.

Here are some questions to think about.

What are your technical skills? These are your “hard skills” related to your experience with specific tools, software or projects. These are often a direct product of past employment, formal education or a personal interest.

What are your people/social skills? These are your “soft skills” related to how you interact with others, including co-workers, supervisors, clients, and customers. Think of examples of where you thrived working with others; what did you do well in those situations?



What are your leadership skills? How well do you manage people, projects, or tasks? Give examples of how you've provided solid leadership in the past.

What are your problem solving skills? Every employer is looking for someone who can solve problems. Think of examples of when you've recognized a problem and found an effective solution.



Values

Finding a job that matches your values is key to being finding a job you love. Clearly articulating these values will help you identify and connect with employers who share your values.

Here are some questions to help you identify your values.

What are you passionate about? Are there causes, issues, or constituencies that you care about deeply?

What personal values are most important to you?

Honesty? Transparency? Kindness? Industriousness? The values that matter most to you will inform the kinds of organizations where you will feel most comfortable as an employee.



What values are you looking for in an employer? In your mind, what organizational values would make an organization a great place to work?

What are your deal-breakers? Sometimes it's easier to eliminate the organizations or causes you DON'T want to work for. If you have a values-based "line in the sand," what is it?

What would make a job "meaningful" to you? Tough question, right? Think of it this way: what would it take for you to feel that the time you spent at work mattered?



Lifestyle

Your dream job will be one that mostly aligns with your desired lifestyle. It's important to know your personal needs and wants—and to identify areas where you have flexibility.

Here are some prompts to get you thinking about lifestyle issues and your job.

What position or level of responsibility do you want?

Do you want to be the decision-maker or someone with less direct responsibility? Are you willing to be on-call 24/7 or should work end once you walk out of the office?

Where do you want to live? Job markets vary across the country and different regions offer vastly different opportunities in your field of choice. Where you want to live can also affect one of leading stress factors related to work: your commute time. Are you willing to travel?



How much money do you need to make? How much do you need to support yourself and your family? Are there other benefits (example: health insurance, a retirement plan) you require from an employer?

What kind of schedule do you want? How many hours per week are you willing to spend on the job? Do you need flexibility with your hours? Or the ability to work from home?

What kind of work-life balance do you want? What other family, social, recreational, or spiritual factor will your ideal job need to accommodate?



What's Next?

If you're still unclear about your specific job search focus, ask for help. Take the information you've gathered above and start sharing it with other people. You can start with family and friends, but it may also help to discuss this information with other professional contacts.

Your answers to the questions provide context and framework for your request for help. Let people know specifically the requirements you're looking for. They may be able to suggest avenues for work that you've never thought of before.

Here's an example of a very targeted question you might ask when seeking additional focus from others:

"I'm looking for a job that resonates with my interest in W, lets me use my existing skills in X, abides by my Y values and accommodates my Z lifestyle needs. Can you think of any jobs or careers that meet these criteria?"



About Mac Prichard

Mac Prichard, founder and publisher of [Mac's List](#), has been connecting people to rewarding work for decades. As a transplant to Portland, Oregon in the early 1990s, Mac learned the secrets to finding work in a competitive market. He has since become a recognized expert on job hunting and career management. Mac writes for the [Mac's List blog](#), hosts a weekly podcast, [Find Your Dream Job](#), and is the author of [Land Your Dream Job in Portland \(and Beyond\)](#) and [Land Your Dream Job Anywhere](#).

About Mac's List

Since 2001, Mac's List has been Oregon's premier job search resource, an online community connecting thousands of passionate and talented people to meaningful work opportunities in the Pacific Northwest. A registered B Corp, Mac's List is an organization with a social mission: to give people the tools and knowledge they need to conduct effective job searches. We do this through our [job board](#), a [blog](#), a [podcast](#), and [online courses](#) all dedicated to the nuts and bolts of job hunting and career management. More than 80,000 people a month connect with Mac's List.

Contact us anytime

mac@macslist.org
www.macslist.org





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