



## What Is the Difference Between a Job and a Career?

It can be tricky to know what the difference is between a job and a career.

For many people, they seem like the same thing and it is easy to understand why. Some will find that a role that started out as 'just a job' can become their career, whereas others may start a role as part of their career plan and find that it is a temporary job.

As a general rule, a [career is the path](#) that you will take throughout your working life.

A job is one of the many stepping stones along that path. Some jobs may only be for a short while, while others will last for years of your life.

The important thing about all jobs, however, is that they will help to guide you along the path, contributing towards your career.

# What Is a Career?

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A career is the term used for your life-long employment path.

It may be made up of a variety of completely different job roles or similar roles in different environments.

Your career is usually guided by your interest and passions, as well as your skills. To achieve certain positions within your career journey, you may need extra qualifications or training.

Some roles which might be considered a career are:

- Teacher
- Plumber
- Doctor

# What Is a job?

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A job is generally a relatively short-term employment role. It may offer a steady income and opportunity to learn skills.

A job is the term used to describe one role within your career path.

Some roles that might be considered a job are:

- [Seasonal employment](#) (usually temporary)
- Supermarket checkout staff
- Fast food restaurant staff

All of these positions are jobs within their own right and have the potential to become careers.

Even if you only do them for a short while before moving on to the next step on your journey, they can add valuable skills and experience as you progress in your career.

# What Are the Similarities Between Jobs and Careers?

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Part of the reason why it can be difficult to understand how jobs and careers fit within your life is because on the surface they look very similar.

They are both paid employment, they can both be enjoyable and they both offer the opportunity to learn new skills.

## Pay

Both jobs and careers can offer a steady income that offers long-term financial security. The exact pay rates and ranges will vary from job-to-job and career-to-career.

## Enjoyment

No matter what you do, it should be enjoyable. Whether that is a temporary job that you love because of the people you work with, or a long-term career that is enjoyable because it allows you to do something you are passionate about.

## Skills

All forms of employment will teach you skills.

It could be that a [job in retail teaches you valuable customer service skills](#), or your career as a [self-employed](#) electrician may teach you how to make budgets and spreadsheets.

All skills are adaptable and they can be [transferred from one position to another](#).

## What Are the Differences Between Jobs and Careers?

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Jobs and careers have certain things in common, but by understanding the differences it is possible to learn how the two fit together in our lives.

### Not Restricted to Just One Position

A career will often be made up of a variety of positions and roles that act to help you progress through your career.

This could be the part-time job that you took to help you get through college while you trained as a doctor, or it could be the three different teaching jobs that you took becoming a principal.

## **Qualifications**

Often, people who have careers will need qualifications.

Sometimes, it will be that a college degree is required. Other times, you will be able to learn on-the-job and progress by gaining workplace relevant qualifications and working your way up from the bottom. This enables you to gain experience at every level of your career.

## **Values**

Your career should reflect your values and align with the things that you feel are important.

This is how you will stay passionate about what you do and remain motivated when you reach a dead-end or need to change your strategy.

A career path is very rarely a straight line and you should be prepared for bumps in the road. By focusing on a career that you feel embodies your values, it will help you to keep going even when things are difficult.

## **Short-Term vs Long-Term**

Often, a job is a short-term thing. You can have many jobs during your lifetime. Conversely, a career is a long-term undertaking. Individuals will often spend their entire working lives working towards and achieving their career goals.

## Motivation

What is it that is motivating you to go to work each day? If you are simply motivated by the need for a paycheck, then it is likely that you work at a job rather than a career.

People who are working towards taking the next steps within their careers are often motivated by a desire to achieve their goals and a passion for what they are doing.

## Earnings

As you progress through your career, you are likely to find that the stability and wage increases. There could also potentially be bonuses and additional benefits that come with your career.

This is less likely in a job role. Many jobs are paid hourly, without the potential for bonuses or significant wage increases.



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## Can You Turn Your Job Into a Career?

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No matter what job you have, you will find that it can offer tools that can be used to [build a career](#).

Even if you don't see yourself staying in that role in the long-term, you will have gained skills and experience that are invaluable when it comes to taking the next step on your journey.

If you currently have a job but are unsure of how to turn that into a career, there are a few things that may help you to decide your next steps.



## What Do You Enjoy?

A career should be something you love. If you are currently working, think about the areas of your job which you enjoy. Are there other jobs that have the same features but could potentially offer more long-term advancement?

If you are currently at school or unemployed, consider the things that you enjoy doing in your spare time. Do you have a hobby or area of interest that you are passionate about? Is there a way to turn this into a career?

## What Are You Good At?

If you have a natural affinity for something, then the obvious choice would be to find a career that makes use of the skills you already have.

If you have a natural affinity for math, then a career in accounting or bookkeeping might be good for you.

If you are good at history, then perhaps consider a career as a history teacher or lecturer.

Choosing a career that makes the most of your abilities will make it much easier to stick to it when you hit a stumbling block.

## Take a Career Questionnaire

When trying to [decide on a career path](#), it can be difficult to choose which one to follow.

There may be many things which you are passionate about. You might have an extensive range of hobbies or knowledge in a number of areas. Perhaps you have already pursued one career path and are now looking for a change, but are unsure of the steps to take.

[Taking career questionnaires](#) can really help you to decide which direction to choose.

They can highlight your skills and abilities as well as suggesting specific career paths which you may be suited to. The questionnaires will often give you information as to how to approach a career, any specific qualifications you may need and what to expect your career progression to look like.

## Find a Mentor

[Having a mentor](#) is a great way to help you focus and stay on track.

Most mentor relationships will involve regular meetings, emails or phone calls to discuss your progress, talk about how you are feeling and consider whether any changes need to be made.

A mentor isn't someone who is going to hold your hand and tell you exactly how to get from one step to the next. Rather, a good mentor will talk through the options with you and help you to reach your own decisions rather than telling you what to do.

Although it is possible to hire a professional mentor, you don't have to. A mentor can be a friend or colleague who understands your chosen career path and is able to help guide you.

Ideally, a mentor will be someone who is higher up the career path than you are and is able to use their extensive experience to support and advise you. They can help you to decide which steps to take and motivate you to keep going when things are difficult.

## Consider an Internship

If you have decided on a career path, but have no experience in that area, then it is worth considering an [internship](#).

Most internships will start at the bottom of the career ladder in an entry-level position, but give you an opportunity to learn valuable skills working within your chosen area while also earning a wage.

An internship can also offer you the chance to study for qualifications that are relevant to your career, as well as learning from those who have worked within the industry for a number of years. Many people who successfully complete internships go on to progress through their chosen field.

## Final Thoughts

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It's never too late to decide what you want to do as a career. Whether you are just starting to think about your future career or are looking for a change, taking time to think about your journey can help to guide your decision-making process.

Even if you have had a career for a number of years and are now thinking of a change of path, there are options available to you.

When you find a job or a career that you love, you will find a greater sense of reward and accomplishment.