Making a Career Change

When you change careers, instead of just switching jobs, you change the kind of work you do.

Before you make a career change, it is important to have certain habits and skills. Be able to make decisions, finish tasks, meet deadlines, work without direct supervision and keep your attention on your job. You also must have confidence in your ability and be able to organize your daily routine.

If you are thinking about changing your career, you must first know what you want. It may be to your advantage to choose a field where you already have some experience. If you choose this route, you may need no further training before trying to get the job you want.

On the other hand, training programs may enhance your experience and make it easier to land that job. The experience you take with you when applying for a training program or a new job will give you an edge over people applying who have less experience. To help you make a wise decision about the type of job you want, identify your strengths and special skills.

Below are some questions that will help you find out your interests and special skills. Take time to answer these questions as you decide about making a career change.

List three things you enjoy doing in your spare time.
1. ________________________________
2. ________________________________
3. ________________________________

List three things you do well.
1. ________________________________
2. ________________________________
3. ________________________________

List three things you would like to change about your present career.
1. ________________________________
2. ________________________________
3. ________________________________
Most adults recognize that a career change in midlife is a major decision. When you are trying to think about the good and not-so-good aspects of starting a new career track, do you say:

- “I am too old.”
- “I already have a good-enough job.”
- “I have children to support.”
- “I can’t afford to quit my job and go to school.”

Believe it or not, there are ways to go into a new career with very little risk to the security you've already built.

You probably already have talents that you don't even realize you have. Let's try to find out what those special qualities and talents are that make you a unique individual.

If you have been working at the local plywood mill but want to get into a whole new field of work, start by examining your skills and talents in the field you wish to enter.

For example, cooking may be one of your special talents. If you enjoy cooking, you may consider a new career in some area of food service. You will be able to put a talent you already have to work.

Visit the following places to find out about food service jobs:

- Restaurant
- School or public cafeteria
- Prison kitchen
- Hospital kitchen
- Bakery
- Child care center

List three goals you have for next year.
1. ________________________________
2. ________________________________
3. ________________________________

What are your 5-year goals?
1. ________________________________
2. ________________________________
3. ________________________________

To make a good choice about a career change, write down your thoughts. Then sit back and review everything you have written. Weigh the good and bad points about changing careers at this point in your life. Consider these points:

1. Would I enjoy this new job?
2. What could I offer to this particular job?
3. How much can I expect to earn working in this particular field?
4. What types of retirement benefits does it offer?
5. Is health insurance provided for the employees and their families?
6. Can I expect paid-vacation time?
7. Are workers needed in this field in my town now, or will I have to move elsewhere to find this type of job?
8. How hard is it to move up the ladder in this particular work field?
9. How much education and training is required?
10. Will my past work experiences help me?

If you are thinking about changing your career, you must first know what you want.
If you enjoy taking care of the lawn, gardening or working with plants, put your talents to work in horticulture, landscaping or irrigation. Look into the following places for a job in this area:

- Landscape companies
- Golf courses, parks
- Nurseries, greenhouses
- City, state or national parks or forests
- Lawn care services

If you have pets and enjoy working with animals, a career working in animal care might be of interest. Visit the following places to get information about work in an animal-related field:

- Kennels
- Pet stores
- Science laboratories that have animal research
- The Humane Society
- Zoos
- Veterinary clinics

In your experience working with cattle, horses or other large animals, you may find opportunities as a:

- Farm or ranch hand
- Stable hand or groom
- Auction employee
- Race track worker
- Amusement or animal park trainer or animal handler

An important consideration when deciding whether or not to make a career change is whether you can afford it financially. Figuring out what a job change will cost is like planning a budget. Write down your total monthly income now and in the new job. Then list all your fixed (monthly or weekly) expenses, such as rent or a mortgage payment.

If your new job requires you to move, what will your rent or mortgage payment and other fixed expenses be? Then write down estimates for bills that may vary from month to month, such as the electric or gas bill, child care or food costs.

Will these be different if you change jobs? For example, if uniforms are provided, will your clothing costs be less? Will any meals come with the new job? What benefits will you lose?

An example of a budget plan is on the next page for you to complete.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item for a month</th>
<th>Current job</th>
<th>New job</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Total money earned</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Taxes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <strong>Take-home pay</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Total expenses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Money left over</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Housing expenses**
- Rent or mortgage payment
- Taxes
- Maintenance and repair
- Furniture rental/payments
- Household supplies

**Insurance**
- Life
- Auto
- Property
- Medical

**Car note**

**Loan payments**

**Flexible expenses**
- Credit card payments
- Food (per week x 4)
- Utilities
- Gas
- Electric
- Cable
- Phone
- Water, sewer, garbage

**Clothing, uniforms**

**Personal items**
- (Tools, hair care, tobacco, alcohol)

**Recreation**

**Church donations and gifts**

**Auto upkeep**
- License, inspection
- Gas
- Oil
- Repairs
- Car fare, bus, transportation

**Medical or dental bills**
- Medicine not covered by insurance

**Child care**
- (per week x 4)

**Total expenses**

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After you have filled in the blanks, add up the expenses. Write the total on the bottom line (Total Expenses). Subtract your Taxes (item 2) from your Total money earned (item 1). Write this amount in as Take-home pay (item 3). Subtract the bottom line (Total expenses) from Take-home pay (item 3). Write this amount in as your Money left over (item 5). Now you have a better idea of whether you can afford to change careers now.

Even if you are interested in a field in which you have very little experience, don't let that stop you. Take advantage of training programs available to you. Keep in mind the work you enjoy and will take pride in doing while making a living for you and your family.

If you would like to find out more information about a particular career, training programs or job placement services, visit your local Texas Workforce Commission. Read about jobs in the newspaper or at the local library or observe someone doing a job that interests you.

A job change is a major decision to make in your life. Don't be afraid to change your career. Check out all options and make it a smart move.
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Grant funds from the Southern Rural Development Center at Mississippi State University support the development of this publication.

Produced by Agrilife Communications and Marketing, The Texas A&M University System

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