

Career Reflection Worksheet

Finding Your Authentic Post-Graduation Path

Before diving into job applications, it's helpful to pause and consider what matters most to you.

This worksheet will help you cut through external noise and discover what you genuinely want from your career. There are no right or wrong answers—only honest ones!

Section 1: Know Yourself

We're influenced constantly—by social media, peers, family expectations, and cultural narratives about success. The first step to authentic decision-making is recognizing these influences and understanding what genuinely matters to you. Self-awareness is the foundation of career satisfaction.

1. When you imagine your "dream job," whose career path comes to mind?

Think about a specific person—maybe a family member, influencer, professor, or someone from your network. What draws you to their path?

2. What activities make you lose track of time?

Think about moments of genuine engagement. What feels both effortless and energizing to you?

This worksheet is based on the Harvard Business Review article [“Do You Know What You Really Want?”](#) by Kristi DePaul.

3. Describe your natural strengths.

These aren't just skills from your resume—they're things others often compliment you on, or tasks that may feel easy to you but challenging to others.

4. What drains your energy?

Understanding what depletes you is as important as knowing what energizes you. What tasks, environments, or dynamics leave you exhausted?

5. What do you want to be known for in 5-10 years?

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When colleagues or friends describe you professionally, what would you want them to say? This helps to reveal your deeper career aspirations.

Section 2: Define Your Non-Negotiables

Every job involves tradeoffs. Identifying your non-negotiables helps you filter opportunities and avoid regret down the line.

6. What are your must-haves in a first job?

Review the following, then rank your top 3:

- Competitive salary Work-life balance Learning and development
- Prestigious brand name Remote or flexible work Desirable geographic location
- Mission-driven work Collaborative culture Multicultural environment
- Strong mentorship Clear career progression
- Autonomy and ownership Job security

My top 3 non-negotiables (ranked):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

7. What are your deal-breakers?

What would make you turn down an offer, regardless of salary or prestige? (Examples: toxic culture, values misalignment, unsustainable hours, lack of growth)

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Section 3: Align With Your Values

Your career will consume significant time and energy. Does the work you're considering align with what matters to you beyond a paycheck?

8. What issues or causes do you care deeply about?

Think beyond work—what matters to you in the world? Environmental sustainability? Education access? Healthcare? Economic opportunity? Creative expression? Social justice?

9. How important is it that your work directly contributes to these values?

Rate on a scale: 1 (not important—I can contribute in my personal life) to 5 (very important—my work must align with my values)

1 (Not important) 2 3 4 5 (Very important)

Why did you choose this rating?

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Section 4: Future-Proof Your Skills

The job market evolves quickly. While technical skills matter, adaptable skills will carry you through multiple career transitions.

10. Which skills do you want to develop in your first role?

Consider both technical skills (AI, data analysis, coding, design, finance) and transferable skills (communication, problem-solving, project management, strategic thinking).

Technical Skills to Build	Transferable Skills to Build

11. What skills do you already have that you want to leverage?

Don't just focus on building new skills—recognize what you already bring to the table from coursework, internships, projects, or extracurriculars.

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Section 5: Find Your Proximal Peers

Influence isn't all bad—it can motivate and guide you. The key lies in choosing the right role models: “proximal peers” are those who are slightly ahead of you, but not so far that their success feels unattainable.

12. Who is 2-3 years ahead of you on a path you'd like to follow?

List 2-3 people whose careers inspire you but feel within reach. What specific actions or decisions did they make that you could learn from?

Proximal Peer	What Can You Learn From Their Journey?

Section 6: Look Ahead (But Stay Grounded)

Your first job doesn't define your entire career—but it does set a trajectory. Think about where you want to go, even if the path isn't crystal clear.

13. Where do you see yourself in 3-5 years?

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This doesn't have to be a specific job title. Think about the type of work you want to be doing, the impact you want to have, or the expertise you want to build.

14. What realistic milestones would get you there?

Break your 3-5 year vision into smaller, achievable steps. If the gap feels too large, you're less likely to stay motivated.

Year 1: _____

Year 2: _____

Year 3: _____

→ Finding the above questions difficult to answer?

Zero in on your path with this **Career Vision and Milestones** prompt:

"I'm a soon-to-be graduate struggling to envision my career 3-5 years from now. My strengths are [list 2-3], I'm energized by [activities], and my top career priorities are [non-negotiables]. Based on this, suggest 2-3 career directions that fit me—not just job titles, but the type of work and impact. Then create realistic year-by-year milestones for one path: what should I focus on in Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3?"

Your Authentic Career Compass

Now synthesize your reflections. Use this space to write a brief career statement—not for anyone else, but for yourself. What matters most to you? What are you working toward?

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My career priorities (in my own words):

Next Steps

Reflection is just the beginning. Here's how to turn clarity into action:

- Review this worksheet every 3-6 months. Your priorities may evolve—and that's okay.
- Use your non-negotiables as a filter when evaluating job opportunities. (If a role violates your top 3, it's probably not the right fit.)
- Reach out to your proximal peers. Ask them about their experiences and the decisions that shaped their paths.
- Curate your digital influences. Unfollow accounts that trigger comparison spirals. Follow people and content that inspire genuine curiosity.
- Remember: The goal is to be intentional about how you let external influence shape you.

Your career is yours to build.

Feeling satisfied and confident in your choices matters.

Start with clarity. Build with intention. Adjust as you grow.

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