A career dilemma arises from the tangled set of interrelated career issues you face
- Describe your dilemma clearly and specifically
- Give a picture of your life situation
- Identify your internal and external obstacles

Three databases of information will help you solve your career dilemma
- Personal Profile Database
- Career Database
- Education Database

The ASAP method will structure your search for information
- Ask the right questions
- Search for information
- Analyze your findings
- Plan your next actions

Your career opportunities will be affected by the globally integrated economy and rapid technological change
- Opportunities will increase in many areas
- Other opportunities will decrease or disappear

Your career network is invaluable for your success
- It provides information about career fields and job leads
- It is a source of advice and mentoring
You could be anywhere—at a family reunion, your niece's birthday party, your cousin's wedding, or just talking with your older sisters in the kitchen—when someone turns to you and asks, "What do you want to do after college?" Answering that question these days isn't easy. Powerful forces such as globalization and technological innovations are changing how work is organized and where jobs are located. You have more options but fewer certainties about the future than your parents had. Even if you have a career direction in mind, doubts often linger—Will I really like what I've chosen? Will I succeed at it?

It is easy to avoid thinking about career decisions when you are busy with classes, studying, and tests. But no matter how busy you are, choosing your career direction is a decision that just won't go away.

This book is designed to help you set a career direction with confidence. This chapter is essential to getting started. You will see the best way to get all your career concerns on the table. You'll learn how to identify the kinds of information you will need to gather before you can make wise career decisions. You'll be introduced to the four-step ASAP search method, which will make all your career and education research easier and more effective. Finally, you'll discover the importance of understanding how external forces will shape your career path.

WHAT IS YOUR CAREER DILEMMA?

Career dilemma is a term used in this book to describe the tangled set of interrelated occupational and educational issues that you face. When problems are presented in textbooks for your various courses, the hard work of describing them usually has been done for you; you know what the problem is and your task is to solve it. When you first look at your career dilemma, however, it is often murky and ill-defined. Often you are even unsure what you need to do to define your dilemma.

To get you started defining your career dilemma, let's consider typical dilemmas that college students have identified. They fall into two main areas: career path dilemmas and education path dilemmas. In the following sections, certain key phrases appear in italics; underline or highlight the phrases that reflect elements of your own career dilemma.

Career Path Dilemmas

Career path dilemmas are characterized by doubts about your career direction. They occur because you are missing some crucial pieces of information.

One piece that is often missing is how to match your interests to specific occupations or industries. For example, you may say, "I like international relations, but don't know what types of jobs match my interests," or "I want to own my own business someday, but I am unsure what kind of business I want to start." You are uncertain about which job settings match your interests or goals.
Many students are concerned about whether they are being practical. You want to become an artist or a doctor, for example, but you wonder, “Can I make it as an artist?” or “Will I be able to get into medical school?”

You may be struggling with issues of balance. One kind of balance is the focused/open balance—that is, whether to focus on a career goal or to leave the decision open. Some students ask themselves, “Will my current focus close off other options later?” For example, “I want to be a lawyer, but I don’t want to close out other options, such as teaching.” Others have the opposite concern: “Do I need to focus now?” You may be asking yourself, “Should I eliminate some options from my list and concentrate on just one or two?”

A related concern is the work–life balance. Maybe the work you like will make too many demands on you and leave too little time for other interests. You want to feel more comfortable about the fit between your career direction and your other life commitments.

Frequently students report that they lack job search skills. You know that you will be looking for a job after graduation, but you don’t know how to pick the industry and the kind of organization that suits you best, generate promising job leads, write an effective resume, or interview well.

**Education Path Dilemmas**

Education path dilemmas often involve difficult choices about whether to obtain further education and what to study.

Education path dilemmas may also involve addressing such questions as when to get further education, whether to choose part-time or full-time study, and which school or program is best for you.

**CASE 1.1**

**Examples of Career Path and Education Path Dilemmas**

*Here are the ways several students began to formulate their dilemmas. Use these as examples as you begin to formulate your own dilemma.*

- Business is a broad field. How can I narrow it down? Do I want management, accounting, or advertising?
- I did not think I had a dilemma. After doing the first assignment, I realized time is a major dilemma for me. I am going to school part-time, and at this rate it will take me another five to six years to complete my education and earn my B.A. I realized that I want to finish school in a more timely fashion.
- The dilemma I’m faced with is sticking to one career choice. It seems that whenever I decide to go after one career option, I always decide to do something else. I think this happens because I have so many ideas that it is difficult to stick to just one.
- Should I go to a four-year college right away or get experience in my field first?
- I’ll be graduating this year. It all happened so fast. I left everything for the last minute. Now I am pressured to make a decision about what I want to do.
- I am about 75 percent decided on becoming a physician’s assistant. Which school should I go to?
- The only major I am interested in is women’s studies, but I am not sure what I want to do with it.
- When should I pursue my graduate degree? I want to spend time with my children, ages four and nine.
Don’t become alarmed if you discover you have many questions. This chapter shows you how identifying your dilemma clearly and specifically will enable you to search for the right kinds of information to solve it. And you will learn an easy way to organize any research you need to do.

A real problem can arise, however, if you don’t take the time to identify all the elements of your career dilemma. This is where many students first encounter difficulties.

**AN IMPORTANT FIRST STEP: BE CLEAR AND SPECIFIC AS YOU DESCRIBE YOUR DILEMMA**

Listen in for a moment on a class of college students talking about their choices and dilemmas:

Christopher is the most confident: “I don’t have a dilemma. I’m majoring in business administration, and I want to become a manager. I believe that I can make big money in business.”

Sierra says, “I like to write, so I’m going to be an English teacher. My dilemma is, Can I get a job teaching English?”

Kevin claims, “I want to own my own company. My career dilemma is, How will I pay for my college education?”

Amanda, John, and Stephan believe they share the same dilemma: They are all questioning whether majoring in engineering is right for them.

Kim volunteers, “My uncle said that the health care field is a good career choice. Everyone needs health care, especially senior citizens. My career dilemma is that I find science difficult.”

These statements reflect very fundamental goals: the desire to be somebody, to make loved ones proud, and to have a better life—and to not waste time or money. These goals spring from the depths of the students’ hearts. We can admire their sincerity and motivation. However, as you will soon see, they are all unaware of what it takes to make an informed career choice. The trouble begins with the way they state their dilemmas. Their statements are too limited and too vague.

To lay the proper foundation for resolving your career dilemma, you must state it clearly and specifically. Many students’ ideas about their career dilemmas are in a chaotic state. Bits and pieces surface in their minds, but it is easy to ignore these thoughts and focus on day-to-day issues and responsibilities. Describing the dilemma aloud or, even better, writing it down is essential to capture its exact elements. However, stating your dilemma clearly and specifically is not always easy.

**AVOID THE ERRORS SOME STUDENTS MAKE IN DESCRIBING THEIR DILEMMAS**

Students encounter several common pitfalls in describing career dilemmas.

“I don’t think I have a dilemma.”

Some students don’t even realize that they have a dilemma. For example, Christopher has identified business as his career goal. He feels completely satisfied because he knows people can make big money in business.
CASE 1.2
Christopher’s Career Dilemma

First View: Christopher doesn’t have a career dilemma because he knows what he wants to do:
I want to go into business and make a great deal of money.

Revised View: Christopher’s dilemma, stated as clear and specific questions:
I want to go into business and make a great deal of money. What are some career and industry options in business? If, for example, I select the entertainment industry, what is the best college major, and do I need an MBA? Do I have the personal qualities that would lead to success in advertising? If I were to go into sports marketing, what is the future outlook in this field?

Let’s dig a bit deeper, though. What business function interests him—marketing? human resources? sales? Is Christopher interested in working in a particular industry like banking, hospitality, or entertainment? What kind of education is best? Should he get a master’s of business administration (MBA)? What personal qualifications are essential for success in this field? Christopher hasn’t considered these questions, and he needs to in order to make solid career plans.

“Isn’t my real goal out of reach?”

Sometimes students are afraid to state their real dilemma because they believe (or have been told) that pursuing what truly interests them is too risky or impractical. Sierra said, “I have decided to become an English teacher.” When she was questioned about her interest, she said that she wanted to be an English teacher because it was a clear and secure choice. However, her actual interest is in writing, not teaching.

Sierra’s dilemma is that she is afraid to pursue her true interest because she lacks information about how she could build a career based on that interest. She needs to learn more about writing careers.

CASE 1.3
Sierra’s Career Dilemma

First View: Avoiding the real issue:
What does it take to be an English teacher?

Revised View: Truthfully stating the situation:
I like to write, but I don’t know what occupations would use my interest in writing. It is important for me to have a career in which I can help other people. I have substantial experience in the field of education. However, in my job as an assistant teacher, I notice that I don’t like to work with children every day. What I really like is to design programs that improve educational practices. I also like to write poetry and stories.
CONSIDER YOUR LIFE SITUATION

An interest in engineering unites these three students, yet their dilemmas are different, because their life situations are different. Each student faces unique issues in deciding whether to pursue an engineering career.

Looking closely at your life situation, as these students did, provides you with the opportunity to identify personal factors that will influence your career future. It requires you to think about the various life roles you play, and what effect they will have on your decision making. Consider the full range of your commitments: to a spouse or partner, children, parents, and extended family.

You may also feel that your family situation is a less important factor than some other role, such as community member, or a particular leisure activity, sport, hobby, or religious practice.

CASE 1.4
Kevin’s Career Dilemma

First View: Focusing only on narrow, immediate concerns:
I need money for college.

Revised View: Taking long-term as well as short-term concerns into consideration:
I want information about how I can pay for a college degree. I also need information about what it takes to own and operate a business. What skills are required? What majors are best? What does it take to succeed as a business owner?

Now Sierra has a much clearer description of her real career dilemma because she has had the strength to be truthful with herself. She has stopped ignoring her true interest, which is writing, not teaching.

“There is only one obstacle in my way.”

Many students focus only on the short-term problems and constraints in their lives and miss the big picture. For example, Kevin has focused on his need for money to stay in college. While this issue is crucial, Kevin is overlooking another part of his dilemma: his need to go beyond having a good idea for a successful business and obtain more information about owning and operating his own company.

CONSIDER YOUR LIFE SITUATION

A good technique for describing your dilemma is to provide as many details as you can about your personal and family situation.

“Should I become an engineer?”

To illustrate, let’s return to Amanda, John, and Stephan. They all had the same initial description of their career dilemmas. Compare that first view with the revised versions to see the difference personal and family details can make in clarifying the individual’s situation.

An interest in engineering unites these three students, yet their dilemmas are different, because their life situations are different. Each student faces unique issues in deciding whether to pursue an engineering career.

Looking closely at your life situation, as these students did, provides you with the opportunity to identify personal factors that will influence your career future. It requires you to think about the various life roles you play, and what effect they will have on your decision making. Consider the full range of your commitments: to a spouse or partner, children, parents, and extended family.

You may also feel that your family situation is a less important factor than some other role, such as community member, or a particular leisure activity, sport, hobby, or religious practice.
CASE 1.5
Amanda’s, John’s, and Stephan’s Career Dilemmas

First View: A career dilemma without taking into account details about the person’s life:
I am interested in engineering, but I don’t know whether engineering is the right career for me.

Amanda’s Revised View: Now includes details about her life:
I am an 18-year-old single student. I do well academically. My boyfriend and college professors are encouraging me to consider engineering and to apply for scholarships, while my parents and some friends seem surprised at my choice. My dilemma is the need to sort out my personal goals and identify my interests and values. I want to find out if a career in engineering would be right for me.

John’s Revised View: Now includes details about his life:
I am married and have a full-time union job parking cars at a lot where I get big tips from wealthy customers. My wife works, too, but is thinking about returning to school. We want children, too. Financially, we have a comfortable life, but my work is boring, and I know it won’t lead anywhere. As a high school student I was unfocused. I joined the Air Force and liked the airplane maintenance training I received. I admired the engineers and feel that engineering will provide more stimulating work and more opportunities. I’m not sure which engineering specialty would be best. My dilemma is selecting the right major and balancing my career goals with my wife’s desire to get more education. Should I quit my full-time job to finish faster so we can concentrate on her education? Should she quit her job and start college now while I attend part-time? We would both like to live nearer to a wilderness area. Should we move now or later? Before we move, how can I find out about job availability for engineers in the new location?

Stephan’s Revised View: Now includes details about his life:
I am 33, married, with two children, and I work full-time. Although I was trained as a civil engineer in my country, I had to start all over when I arrived in the United States three years ago. I selected computer networking as my major because the preparation takes only two years. I like computer networking, but I still want to become an engineer. My dilemma, clearly and specifically stated, is that I feel that I am too old to continue to pursue my chosen career. I have too many responsibilities to quit my job. I don’t think I can consider a four-year degree because it takes too long to obtain by going to school part-time. My dream is to become an engineer, but can I make this dream come true?

You may want to invest more time in that role or activity and to let your work life take a less central position.

You may also need to take into account other aspects of your life situation. For example, you may be supported by your family emotionally and financially. If so, such support is an important aspect of your career dilemma because it means you have some positive factors working for you. Or you may face the opposite situation: Your family may discourage you, may be unable to provide financial support, or both. Such constraints make your dilemma more difficult.
WHAT INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL OBSTACLES DO YOU FACE?

Obstacles are hurdles. You can’t make much career headway unless you recognize the kinds of hurdles you will face. Once you have identified them, you can begin to devise strategies to get over them so they don’t trip you up. It is helpful to think of obstacles as being of two kinds: internal and external.

Internal obstacles are those aspects of ourselves that get in the way of our success. They include, for example, self-destructive habits and negative attitudes, such as poor time management, procrastination, and lack of confidence. Remember Sierra, the would-be writer? She finally realized she had a big internal obstacle. Here is her description: “My internal obstacle is fear. I am unsure if I have what it takes to succeed as a writer.”

Kim, who is interested in health careers, identified shyness as her internal obstacle. It is hard for her to meet new people or to speak up in a public setting. She realizes that this trait is limiting in any career and that she is going to have to overcome her shyness to some extent. Kevin, whose goal is to own his own business, acknowledges that he does not speak up in public either, because he is embarrassed about his accent. He realizes that he is going to have to improve his oral communication skills.

External obstacles are problems related to our life circumstances that have the potential to derail our plans for the future unless we deal with them. Sierra has to surmount some external obstacles. She is going to have to find more reliable child care for her eight-year-old son or she will have to stop school. Kevin identifies the need to finance his education as a significant obstacle. Christopher, whose goal is a career in business, has carpal tunnel syndrome. He has to limit the time he spends at the computer keyboard or his wrists and arms ache. He needs to find out what therapies or accommodations are available so that his condition does not worsen.

Once you begin looking at your career dilemma more carefully, your questions naturally increase. You need information. To progress in an orderly fashion, making sure that your information search is comprehensive yet organized, it is useful to get an overview of the types of information that are vital to making sound career and education decisions.

WHAT KINDS OF INFORMATION WILL HELP YOU SOLVE YOUR CAREER DILEMMA?

Three different types of information will help you make informed career choices. A handy way to put in order the information that is vital to making sound career and education decisions is to think about these pieces of information as belonging in different databases: well-organized information about you, about careers, and about colleges and graduate training. Within each large database, smaller subsections represent important factors to consider. Table 1.1 provides an overview of the three databases. You will learn more about the personal profile database in Chapters 2 and 3, the career database in Chapter 4, and the education database in Chapter 5.

The Personal Profile Database

Most people don’t realize that a “good job” is like a good article of clothing; it must fit the person who wears it. Something that fits one person perfectly is completely wrong for another. Identifying your values, skills, and interests is an important way to find a career that fits you.
TABLE 1.1 Overview of the Three Databases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Profile</th>
<th>Career</th>
<th>Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Nature of the work</td>
<td>Nature of the academic programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality</td>
<td>Entry requirements</td>
<td>Admission requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interests</td>
<td>Rewards and benefits</td>
<td>School profile and student body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>Outlook for the future</td>
<td>characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cost and financial aid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information about yourself helps you to clarify sources of satisfaction. You come to understand your gifts and dreams. As you obtain information about your personal identity, you will come to form a clearer picture of yourself. You will see who you are and who you want to become.

The Career Database

Career information helps you get a full and realistic picture of different occupations. You will learn whether the daily tasks of the occupation appeal to you and whether you will earn enough to support the lifestyle you seek. The information will also help you understand whether there will be jobs available when you graduate. Finally, you will learn the qualifications you will need to enter the career field you desire.

The Education Database

Whether to transfer to a four-year college is a decision that many community college students face. Even if you do not plan to transfer, examining information about four-year colleges will help you understand the key factors to consider when investing in further education. These same factors will apply if you are thinking about on-the-job training programs, online courses, or continuing education.

You may wonder whether you need to consider an advanced degree. You may think that your career direction requires more education than a bachelor’s degree, but you may be unsure about the details. Gathering information from the education database will help clarify your next steps.

Search for Information from All Three Databases Before You Decide

You will typically need to search more than one database. Kim, for example, the student interested in health careers, was focused on the career database. She was ignoring the personal profile database. She finds science boring and difficult, which are statements about her interests and skills. This is important information, because the preparation for most health careers requires many science courses. Kim runs the risk of making an unwise choice based on partial information.

Information-poor decisions frequently lead to failure, blind alleys, and the surrender of dreams. It is hard to keep putting your heart into a job once you have discovered, too late, that you find it unfulfilling. It is heartbreaking to train for a certain type of work only to discover that it will soon become obsolete. Using information from all three databases is a way to be thorough, not superficial. Using all three databases allows you to look inward at yourself and simultaneously to look outward at your career and educational options.
Identify Your Information Needs

Activity 1.1, Define Your Career Dilemma and Take Stock of Your Need for Information (p. 14), lets you pinpoint which dimensions in each of the three databases you need to search in order to solve your career dilemma. Take a few minutes to complete it, either now or after you finish reading the chapter. Completing this activity is an extremely valuable use of your time. It will raise your personal awareness, and you will begin to understand your information needs.

The process of describing your dilemma and taking stock of your situation is significant because it provides the groundwork for solving every career problem. You understand that you have a dilemma. You have the courage to be honest with yourself and have made the effort to be clear and specific in describing your dilemma. Taking stock means taking a thorough look at the kinds of information searches that will be helpful in solving your dilemma. The following section introduces a way to make your search efficient and effective.

ASAP: A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO SEARCHING FOR INFORMATION

This search process can loom as a difficult job if you lack a systematic approach. In this section, you will learn a simple way to break down your search into four steps: ask, search, analyze, and plan (see Figure 1.1). This systematic, sequential process allows you to extract the meaning of the information you need based on your personal situation.

First, you ask the right questions. Subsequent chapters will guide you in identifying the important questions for each of the three databases. Second, you search for the information,
CASE 1.6

The Value of the ASAP Approach

Yanique used the ASAP approach when she decided to conduct some research to “find out if everyday people like me can be entrepreneurs and whether they need a lot of money to start a business. I elected to do this particular kind of research because one day I want to be an entrepreneur. After doing some research, I learned that more and more people are opening their own businesses and becoming successful entrepreneurs. You just need to be determined to make your dreams come true. I also learned that you don’t need to be a millionaire to be an entrepreneur, but you can be an entrepreneur and become a millionaire.”

She reflected, “I will approach any future dilemmas differently than I have in the past. By breaking the problem down into step-by-step form, I can develop questions designed to help me focus on my dilemma. By doing so, I can research the answers and make a decision based on the information and what’s best for me. The career advancement technique I would employ would definitely be the ASAP information search.”

—YANIQUE B.

Your career will unfold in a rapidly changing, interconnected world

While the focus of this chapter and this book is on you, you must make career and education decisions with your eyes open to the external forces of globalization and the rapid technological change that will affect your future. Likewise, the enhanced communication channels that the Internet and smart phones have created make networking both easier and more essential than it has ever been. Building a solid career network is a must for success in today’s world.

Globalization and Technology

You can’t ignore the fact that your career will unfold in what journalist Thomas Friedman has dubbed a “world without walls.” The globally integrated economy is changing the opportunities you’ll have in the future.

Companies recruit talent from everywhere—think about professional basketball teams with players from Africa, baseball teams with players from Japan and the Dominican Republic, and golfers on the LPGA Tour from Korea and elsewhere. In the same way, today the competition for jobs comes from around the world and is tougher than ever before.
But the global economy is also opening up new options. Some futurists predict that more U.S.-born managers, especially those with second languages such as Mandarin or Spanish, will spend part of their careers overseas because that is where they see greater career opportunities. New occupations are emerging: for example, multicultural marketing specialists use their foreign language skills and understanding of other cultures to successfully promote products or services. A lot is at stake as products are sold globally, and many well-known companies have made costly mistakes when trying to sell their products in other countries. For example, to come up with the phonetic equivalent in Chinese of their famous brand name, Coca-Cola attempted to group Chinese characters and came up with a word that was pronounced ke-kou-ke-la. So far, so good, but unfortunately, the word meant “bite the wax tadpole” or “wax-flattened mare.” Coke then researched 40,000 characters to find a phonetic equivalent—ko-kou-ko-le—that translates into “happiness in the mouth.” Companies want to avoid the initial mistakes that Coca-Cola made and see marketing managers with multicultural expertise as vital to doing businesses on a global scale.

Technology is another big driver of change in career opportunities. Technical advances mean that many business functions that were once the basis for plentiful jobs in the United States can now be done anywhere there is an educated, English-speaking population. (Think computer technical support teams in India, Hong Kong, and the Philippines.) But technology also creates new opportunities. The Internet has created more than a million new jobs in the United States, including work building and maintaining the Internet’s infrastructure, as well as the marketing and selling of products and services via the Internet. For example, search engine optimization analysts work to lure customers to their companies’ websites, and corporate bloggers share information and opinions with company employees and the public. Virtual goods (e.g., digital representations of real products like birthday cakes, flowers, swords, and squash seeds) that people use as online gifts or for online games are generating $1 billion in sales in the United States for a variety of companies.

Recent trends, even troublesome ones like the problem of obesity, offer new possibilities for businesses. Full Yield, a start-up company that partners with big companies to provide healthy meals to its employees, hopes to make money by getting employees to eat right and save the employers the costs of health care associated with obesity-linked diseases like diabetes. A coffin-making company, Goliath, realized that there is a business opportunity in the obesity trend and began to market plus-size coffins. These two companies capitalized on the same recent trend to build or increase their profits.

To seize new opportunities in an era of rapid change and avoid losing your job because it is moved elsewhere or becomes obsolete, you need to become aware of the influence of economic, social, and technological trends on the career fields you find interesting. You need to keep asking yourself: What is the jobs outlook for the future in this career field? Where can I acquire the skills and mind-set that will be important for success?

You may be surprised to learn that scholars from the University of Southern California (USC) believe that gamers who play multiplayer online games are developing key skill sets and dispositions for the twenty-first-century workplace. In their view, gamers are oriented to the bottom line and continually measure their results in points, rankings, and titles as they seek to improve. In the gaming world, the most skillful players (not the richest or the members of a certain class) get the most points, rewards, titles, and so on. Gamers understand that a diverse team is essential to winning. They thrive on change and see learning as fun. They look for innovative solutions to problems. Gamers develop into employees who are “flexible, resourceful, improvisational, eager for a quest, believers in meritocracy, and foes of
bureaucracy.” The USC scholars believe these skills and dispositions will be crucial for career success in the twenty-first-century workplace.11

Throughout the book, we will look at how rapid technological change and the global marketplace are affecting your career future. You'll come to understand what it takes to choose wisely and manage your career in this environment.

Your Career Network: Vital Connections for Your Career Success

You will also see how your personal connections—to your family, friends, schoolmates, work colleagues, and community members—are vital to helping you solve your career dilemma. You’ll become acquainted with the value of a strong career network. You'll learn how to call on your network to provide invaluable information about your career options and obtain career-building internships, projects, and jobs. You'll see how to tap the power of your network through informational interviewing. Chapter 13 will teach you how to network to build your career.

Getting started on taking charge of your career is a three-part process. First, describe your career path and education path dilemmas completely and specifically. Next, take stock of your information needs, using the personal profile, career, and education databases. Then search for information using the four-step Ask–Search–Analyze–Plan (ASAP) approach. Although you may want a quick and easy solution to your career dilemma, as you begin to work with this text, you'll see how advantageous it is to widen your search and look at many possibilities. Turning Points will show you how to identify a variety of career and educational prospects and open the doors to success.

In Chapter 2 we begin with the personal profile database (information about yourself) for two reasons. First, this information will enable you to recognize occupations in which you will experience personal satisfaction. Second, it will enable you to recognize personal qualities and skills that are prized by others in the workplace. Chapter 2 will put you on a path to discovering an array of suitable possibilities. Reading it and completing its activities will discourage you from dismissing your dreams as unrealistic and impractical before you have even begun to uncover ways to make them come true.

KEY POINTS

- Career dilemma is the term this book uses to describe the tangled set of interrelated career issues you face. Two major categories of dilemmas are:
  - Career path dilemmas
  - Education path dilemmas
- Describe your career dilemma clearly and specifically.
  - Write it down and talk it over with others.
  - Be truthful.
  - Be specific about your life situation.
- A complete description of your career dilemma includes the relevant aspects of your life situation and a list of the internal and external obstacles you face.
- The kinds of information you need to solve your dilemma will fit into three databases:
  - The personal profile database includes information about your personality, values, interests, and skills.
The career database contains information about the nature of a given line of work, the entry requirements, the rewards and benefits, and the outlook for the future.

The education database contains information about academic offerings, admission requirements, the school’s profile and student body, and costs and financial aid.

In taking stock of your situation, you identify which databases to search and the factors to consider.

Use the four-step ASAP method to structure your search for information:

• Ask the right questions.
• Search for the information.
• Analyze your findings.
• Plan your next move.

Your career opportunities will be affected by the global economy and rapid technological change. These external forces will create opportunities in some areas, while reducing or eliminating opportunities in others. Turning Points will help you choose your career options wisely and manage your career in this environment.

You can tap your connections with other people to help you with your career dilemmas. You will see that your career network is an invaluable source of information about career fields and job leads as well as a source of support, advice, and mentoring.

You may want a short, easy answer to your career dilemma. However, at the beginning of your search, your best approach is to explore many options. This approach offers the best hope that you won’t dismiss your dreams as unrealistic and impractical before you have begun to uncover ways to make them come true.

**ACTIVITY 1.1**

**Define Your Career Dilemma and Take Stock of Your Need for Information**

This self-assessment activity lays the groundwork for solving your career dilemma. To begin, following the instructions in Task 1, below, compose a three-paragraph description of your career dilemma. Then fill out the brief questionnaire below to discover the kind of information that you need to solve your dilemma, identify which of the three databases to focus on, and reflect on your learning.

**TASK 1 Describe Your Career Dilemma**

Use the bullet points below to structure each part of a three-paragraph description of your career dilemma.

• Describe your career and/or education path dilemma in detail. Identify each of the career and educational options you are currently considering. What decisions lie ahead about your career and/or education? What questions do you have about your future career and educational options? What issues concern you?
• Describe your life situation. Explain how your commitment to various roles (e.g., parent, caregiver to elderly parents, single father, and self-supporting student) might influence the upcoming career and education decisions you are facing. Life situation factors include your family situation

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(e.g., your marital status, any relevant information about parents or children, where you want to work and live, and familial obligations).

- Identify your internal obstacles (e.g., shyness and procrastination) and external obstacles (e.g., financial pressures and work obligations).

The process of writing things down helps to stimulate your thinking and clarify the important issues.

Note: If you are using a downloaded copy of this activity, insert your name and three-paragraph description here. If not, attach a separate sheet of paper with your description.

**TASK 2  Complete Your Assessment**

Consider your career dilemma carefully. In order to solve it, you may want to get to know yourself better. You may want to get a better idea of your interests, values, and skills. You may require information about several career fields, job opportunities, or the current job market. You may want to get a better idea of possibilities for transfer to a four-year college or for graduate training or other ways to further your education. You will probably want to obtain more information in several areas. The questionnaire below will help you understand where to place your focus.

**Personal Assessment Questionnaire**

Keeping your career dilemma in mind, choose the best response to each option. On a paper copy of this activity, circle the best response. If you downloaded a copy of the activity, highlight with a color or boldface your response to each item.

\[ T = \text{True} \quad F = \text{False} \quad ? = \text{Uncertain} \]

**Personal Profile Database**

1. In order to solve this dilemma, I need to know more about my personality. \[ T \quad F \quad ? \]
2. In order to solve this dilemma, I need to know more about my values. \[ T \quad F \quad ? \]
3. In order to solve this dilemma, I need to know more about my career interests. \[ T \quad F \quad ? \]
4. In order to solve this dilemma, I need to know more about my skills. \[ T \quad F \quad ? \]
5. In order to solve this dilemma, I need to know more about the kind of life that I want and the kind of person that I would like to be in the future. \[ T \quad F \quad ? \]
6. In order to solve this dilemma, I need to know more about career management skills, such as how to set priorities, avoid procrastination, and take action. \[ T \quad F \quad ? \]

**Career Database**

7. In order to solve this dilemma, I need more information about my career field. \[ T \quad F \quad ? \]
8. In order to solve this dilemma, I need more information about several career fields. \[ T \quad F \quad ? \]
9. In order to solve this dilemma, I need more information about the nature of the work in certain careers. \[ T \quad F \quad ? \]
10. In order to solve this dilemma, I need more information about the entry requirements in certain careers. \[ T \quad F \quad ? \]
11. In order to solve this dilemma, I need more information about the rewards and benefits in certain careers. \[ T \quad F \quad ? \]
12. In order to solve this dilemma, I need more information about the job market and the outlook for the future in certain careers. \[ T \quad F \quad ? \]

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Education Database

13. In order to solve this dilemma, I need more information about transfer to a four-year college.  T  F  ?
14. In order to solve this dilemma, I need more information about graduate programs.  T  F  ?
15. In order to solve this dilemma, I need more information about which majors are appropriate for my goals.  T  F  ?
16. In order to solve this dilemma, I need more information about which academic programs are offered in the colleges or graduate schools I am considering.  T  F  ?
17. In order to solve this dilemma, I need more information about the schools’ admission requirements.  T  F  ?
18. In order to solve this dilemma, I need more information about the types of students who attend these schools.  T  F  ?
19. In order to solve this dilemma, I need more information about the cost of further education and the possibilities for financial aid.  T  F  ?
20. In order to solve this dilemma, I need more information about other ways to further my education.  T  F  ?

TASK 3 Identify the Information That You Need and Reflect on Your Findings

21. List the databases from which you need further information.

If for items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6 you selected “True” or “Uncertain,” you need more information about yourself. You need to conduct a self-assessment of your values, personality, interests, and skills. You need more information from your Personal Profile Database.

If for items 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, or 12 you selected “True” or “Uncertain,” you need more information about careers. You need more information from the Career Database.

If for items 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, or 20 you selected “True” or “Uncertain,” you need more information about colleges, graduate schools, or other types of further education.

Congratulations! Describing your career dilemma and taking stock of your situation require you to be honest with yourself. This process is not always easy. It is tempting to find excuses and avoid looking at our career dilemmas. Reaching this point means that you have made important progress in planning for your career.

It is not uncommon for students to check the need for information in all or most of the areas. Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5 are designed to help you get the information you need to make a good career or education decision.

22. Briefly reflect on your learning from this activity.