**Career Development - What is It and What Factors Influence It**

Career development, a significant part of human development, is the process that forms a person's work identity. It spans over his or her entire lifetime, beginning when the individual first becomes aware of how people make a living. For example, when a child notices that some people are doctors, others are firefighters and some are carpenters, it signals the start of this process. It continues as that person begins to explore occupations and ultimately [decides what](https://www.thebalance.com/steps-to-choosing-career-525506) career to pursue him- or herself.

Career development doesn't end there. After you choose a profession, you must then get the required education and training, apply for and find employment, and ultimately advance in your career. For most people, it will also include changing careers and jobs at least once during their work lives, but probably more often than that.

It is important to note that, for most individuals, career development occurs without any intervention from other people. There also isn't a set age for when it will begin—some people will start to think about occupational choices very early in life, while others won't give this subject much thought until they are relatively close to having to decide how they will earn money.

While many individuals go through this process independently, almost everyone can benefit greatly from getting expert career guidance. Getting help from a career counselor or other similarly trained specialist, or taking a class in school that helps with career development, allows you forge a more satisfying and successful career path.

This type of intervention can begin as early as elementary school, and it should continue throughout adulthood. Many people find themselves in need of professional advice as they encounter problems or must make decisions about their careers, for instance when they are thinking of looking for a new job or changing occupations.

**Factors and Barriers that Influence Career Development**

Several factors and the interactions between them influence career development and some may be barriers to it. These factors are:

* **Personal Characteristics:** When you are in the process of choosing a career, you should do a thorough self-assessment. It will allow you to learn what your personality type, interests, aptitudes and work-related values are. These traits, taken in combination, play a major role in career development and will help you find careers, as well as workplaces, that are suitable for you.
* **Socio-Economic Factors:** Socio-economic factors can be a barrier to career development. They can significantly influence your ability to pursue a career that is otherwise a good match for you. For example, your financial situation may threaten to keep you from getting the necessary education. Fortunately, there are ways of overcoming barriers such as limited financial resources, namely student loans, financial aid and scholarships.
* **Physical and Mental Abilities:** Some of us are better suited to some careers than we are to others due to our physical and mental abilities, and limitations. For example, you may want to become a doctor but don't have the intellectual ability to get into medical school. You should, if possible, find a related occupation that makes the best use your strengths while accommodating your limitations.
* **Chance Factors:** Chance factors are life events over which we have little or no control. They can influence what careers we choose and how we progress in them. An example would be an individual not being able to advance in his career because he is a caregiver for a relative.