

80,000 Hours career guide

Career planning template

80,000
HOURS

This template is where we tie everything together from our career guide and help you make a career plan you can feel confident in.

If you fill it out, you'll have drafted a complete career plan, have clear questions to get feedback on, and have a list of next steps to put into action.

[Click here to make your own copy](#)

How to use this template

This template is designed to be used after reading our [career guide](#), which introduces all the concepts used, though you can also dive into it directly.

If you've already worked through the exercises in the guide, the template will be quick to complete, since it mainly recaps the most important exercises and puts them into the format of a career plan.

We start with what to aim for longer-term and then show how to translate that into concrete next steps.

If you're facing an immediate decision where you need to compare several options, it'll be quicker to use our [career decision process](#) instead. (Or if you'd like something much more in-depth, see the [8-part planning](#) guide.)

We recommend you start by making a rough guess at all the answers over an afternoon, then identifying the areas that seem most useful to investigate further and consider spending more time on those. Another option is to work through one section each week. Just bear in mind, your answers to later sections might change the earlier ones.

It can be very useful to make a copy of your answers and share it with friends for comments or to work through it with a friend.

We've made this template a Google Doc so that you can copy, edit, print, and/or share it for your own purposes. Make whatever changes seem helpful.

1. Your key criteria for a fulfilling career

We argue there are six ingredients to aim to find in a dream job long-term: work that helps others, that you're good at, and that's engaging, done with supportive colleagues, meets your basic needs, and which fits enough with your personal life.

But it's useful to further personalise these, so now write out the 4-8 factors that are most important to **you** in a dream job.

If you're not sure, ask yourself:

- *What have you found most / least fulfilling in the past?*
- *What did those situations have in common?*
- *If you were going to die in ten years, how would you spend your time?*
- *What does your ideal work day look like, hour-by-hour?*

And see the additional exercises in the article on [what makes for a dream job](#).

2. Optional: Your starting position

2.1. Optional: What's the most valuable career capital you already have?

The aim is to get good at something that helps others, so it's helpful to pause on what you might already have to offer.

Consider your:

- Skills and knowledge
- Connections
- Credentials (e.g. degrees, achievements, public projects)
- Character (e.g. conscientiousness)
- Runway (i.e. how long you could live without income)

List the top 5 most valuable elements of your career capital

If you're stuck, list out the five achievements you're most proud of and ask what they have in common.

2.2. Optional: What might you be able to get good at?

Write down any further thoughts you have about what skills or roles you have the potential to be best at based on your reflections and life experience so far. If you'd like to reflect in more depth, see the article on [personal fit](#) and our [article on finding your strengths](#).

3. Global problems

3.1. Which global problems do you think are most pressing?

Given what you've learned so far, write out your current list of the 2–5 [most pressing global problems](#) for you to work on. Don't worry if you feel very uncertain — especially early in your career, it's fine to focus mainly on building skills and figure out how to deploy them later. Though, it's worth thinking seriously about this question at some point, especially before making big commitments.

Example: great power conflict, nuclear war, pandemics, risks from advanced AI.

If you'd like to think about this further, there are two broad approaches:

1. Find someone whose judgement you trust and use their views as a starting point (adjusting based on your values). If that's us (!), see [our list](#).
2. Do your own research. We have [a short guide](#).

4. Longer-term career paths to aim towards

The aim of this section is to have a shortlist of longer-term career roles you'd most like to aim towards. When combined with your list of problems, this comprises your 'vision.'

4.1. Make a long list of ideas

Start by making a long list of ideas. These could range from broad skillsets (e.g. economist or software engineer), or specific jobs (e.g. think tank researcher working on the impacts of AI) — generally getting more specific later in your career. Typically, they're options you'll aim towards over 3–20 years.

Here are some prompts to help generate ideas:

1. For each category of impactful career, try to generate 1–2 options within each you might pursue: building organisations, communication and community building, government and policy, earning to give, research, etc. Also, see our list of career reviews and note down any other ideas there.
2. For the global problems you listed earlier, what do they most need (you see some thinking about this question in our problem profiles)? Can you think of any career paths you might be able to take that could help address those needs?
3. Given what you wrote in section two, which paths or skillsets do you think you might be able to get good at?
4. Which paths might best meet your criteria for a satisfying job from section one? If money were no object, what would you do?
5. Might you be able to combine any of the above to get the best of both worlds?
6. What would a wise friend say you should do? (Maybe ask one.)

List your ideas for longer-term career paths

4.2. Make a rough guess at which 2–7 longer-term paths are most promising

Given what you know now, weigh them up on the balance of impact, potential personal fit, and your other criteria for a fulfilling career. Again, it's OK if you feel very uncertain — we'll come back to how to further investigate your options later, and it's even possible to push ahead without this list.



5. Next steps

The previous sections have focused on what to aim for longer term. This section is about the immediate next step you need to take, typically over 1–3 years.

5.1. Which career stage is the best match for you?

Select the priority that seems most important right now:

1. Exploring to find your fit
2. Building career capital towards a particular longer-term path (but with a back-up plan)
3. Deploying your existing career capital
4. Other (e.g. building transferable career capital with the intention to clarify your plan later)

Write your current career stage, and why you chose it

5.2. Generate options for your next step

First, clarify the next step you need to take. Then again, the aim is to generate a long list of options for that step. Here are some questions to use:

1. *Work backwards: given what you'd most like to do longer term, which next steps would most accelerate you on that path? Or how could you test out that option?*
2. *Work forwards: are you aware of any opportunities that could be interesting, or where you might excel, even if you're not sure where they'll lead?*
3. *What jobs could you take that would generally boost your career capital? See [our list of categories](#).*
4. *Skim over [our job board](#), and note any interesting opportunities.*

List your ideas here (try to get to at least 10, the more the better)

See [more tips on coming up with next steps](#).

5.3. Which next steps seem most promising?

Make an initial guess at the 5–10 most promising next steps, based on the balance of career capital, exploration value, personal fit, and impact (prioritising these factors based on your career stage).

Give extra weight to options that offer high potential upsides but have limited downsides (we'd generally recommend eliminating any options that might have [big downsides](#), burn you out, or do [significant direct harm](#), even if they seem like they might let you have a greater impact).

List 5–10 most promising next steps

If you'd like to compare your ideas for next steps in more depth, use [our career decision-making process](#).

6. Sketch your A/B/Z plan

Now, let's make an initial guess at how to tie everything together. In the next section, we'll cover how and whether to further investigate your plan.

6.1. Your Plan A

Your [Plan A](#) is the plan you'd most like to pursue. Typically, it'll be a combination of a longer-term role (+ problem(s) it'll help with) you'd like to aim towards and the best next step towards that. (Though, it could also be a plan to try out several longer-term paths to find your fit or build transferable career capital.)

6.2. Your Plan B

Your options for [Plan B](#) are promising alternatives to your Plan A that you can switch into if Plan A doesn't work out.

6.2.1. Why is Plan A most likely to not work out?

6.2.2. What are some good Plan B options you could take in that case?

6.3. Your Plan Z

If all of the above goes wrong, what will you do? Writing this in advance makes it easier to take risks — e.g. could you move in with your family or go back to your old job?

Write out 1–3 Plan Z options

If your plan Z isn't acceptable, consider changing your plan A to focus on putting yourself in a better position.

6.4. Optional: more risk management

- *What's the realistic worst case scenario if you pursue the plan above?*
- *How can you make that less likely to happen?*
- *If it does happen, how will you cope?*



OK, you've done the hard work. There's just a little more to finish off. Before we go on, take a break...

7. Investigate your plan

7.1. Rank your key uncertainties

Go through each section above, especially your lists of problems, longer-term paths, and next steps, and think about the key uncertainties in each of these lists. Roughly rank them in terms of (i) which are easiest to resolve and (ii) which would most change your plan if resolved.

Example: if you require a certain level of pay, can you eliminate jobs that pay less than that?

7.2. Step back and reflect on your plan

Now's a good time to consider your plan as a whole and see if you can spot further issues or uncertainties.

7.2.1. How do you feel about your plan?

Although you shouldn't 'go with your gut,' if your gut feels uneasy, it's very important to understand why.

7.2.2. How are you most likely to be wrong about your plan?

Asking yourself (and ideally other people) this question is one of the most powerful ways to reduce bias in your thinking.

7.3. Make a plan to investigate your key uncertainties

Start with the cheapest ways to gain information. For example, you could start by reading relevant career reviews or problem profiles and then decide to talk to people in an area. If you want to invest more, you could test out a project. Often the best way forward is just to apply to lots of jobs and see what offers you get.

Does it seem worth further investigating any of these uncertainties, or should you just take a bet on your current plan? Career decisions often affect years of your life, so they are worth spending at least a few weeks researching. But, if you can't see cheap ways to investigate more, it might be time to just try something for a few years.

List actions you will take to investigate your key uncertainties

7.4. Get some feedback

Now is an especially good time to run your plan past someone else. One option is to send a copy of your whole plan to several friends and ask for them to comment. Another option is to approach people about specific uncertainties you've listed above.

Now's also a great time to go and meet some people in [our community](#) and talk to them about your plan (and if you haven't yet applied to [speak to our team one-on-one](#), you could do that now).

7.5. Update your plan and make an overall best guess

Based on what you learn from investigation and feedback, update your earlier answers. You may not ever feel especially certain about your plan — but stop investigating when your best guess next steps stop changing dramatically.

7.6. Set a review point

Is there an event coming up where you'll gain a lot of information about your plan (e.g. exam results)? If not, by default we recommend reviewing it roughly once a year (with the exact frequency depending on how much you're learning and how fast the situation is changing).

Write when you'll review your plan

dd/mm/yyyy



Also, set a reminder in your calendar.

8. Put your plan into action

8.1. Define next actions

What are the three most important steps to take in order to get into your top options?

Try to be as specific as possible. Some good examples: follow up with my boss at my last internship; write 10 applications; meet three people in the industry; find someone to job hunt with. The key steps probably involve speaking to people.

When are you going to do each of these? Many studies have shown that writing down *when* you'll do a task makes it much more likely you'll actually do it — it's called an "implementation intention."

Next actions	When you'll do them

And so on...



For anything you can't do right away, add a reminder in your calendar.

8.2. Succeed in your role

See our advice on [how to get a job](#), and [how to be more successful in a role](#).

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Congratulations on making your plan!

Although you may still feel uncertain about what to do, if you've worked through everything, you can feel satisfied knowing you probably haven't missed something obvious — you've now probably put more thought into your plan than 98%+ of people! **Thank you for taking this time and for trying to do good. We're rooting for you!**