

# I've Helped My Child Identify Interests - What's Next?

Talk with your child about how his or her interests relate to careers. If your child has an interest in outdoor work, help him or her explore careers, from gardening to oceanography. If your child wants to help people, explore careers from teaching to medicine.

If your child has a list of careers based on his or her interest assessments, help your child explore those careers, as well as similar careers. For example, if computer programming is a career listed on your child's interest assessment, help your child also explore information about web development, video game development, network technology, and computer-support occupations.

Information about careers and the interests that relate to careers is available from a variety of resources.

Contact your state's Career Resource Network office. Most Career Resource Network offices have career information systems that you and your child can access from home. A list of offices is available at: <http://www.acrnetwork.org/network>.

For more information:

Alabama Career and Technical Education at: <http://www.alcareertech.org>

Free Application For Federal Student Aid: <http://www.FAFSA.gov>

America's Career InfoNet is available on the Internet at: <http://www.acinet.org/acinet>

The U.S. Department of Labor publishes the Occupational Outlook Handbook, available at your local library, or online at: <http://www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm>.

Alabama Career Information Network System (ACINS) at: <http://www.alcareerinfo.org>

Your local library has career information books and publications, as well as Internet access to explore online career information.

# What Are Some Activities That Can Help Nurture My Child's Interests?

**If your child has an interest in animals, he or she might like to:**

- Join a 4-H club.
- Volunteer at a local veterinary clinic or zoo.
- Walk or care for a neighbor's dog.

**If your child has an interest in art, he or she might like to:**

- Design a personal website.
- Make birthday or holiday cards for relatives and friends.
- Create graphics for the school newsletter.

**If your child likes to help people, he or she might like to:**

- Be a summer camp counselor.
- Assist at a day care center.
- Teach a younger child to read.

**If your child likes to build or repair things, he or she might like to:**

- Build a radio or computer from a kit.
- Take apart an old appliance and put it back together.
- Design and build a bird house.

**If your child likes sports, he or she might like to:**

- Play on a sports team.
- Assist a coach.
- Umpire or referee community games.



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Joseph B. Morton, State Superintendent of Education  
Sherry A. Key, Director, Career and Technical Education

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# Helping Your Child Identify Interests

How Parents can Help their Children Find Satisfactory Careers





## How do I Help my Child Choose a Satisfying Career?

People choose careers for a variety of reasons.

- Some people focus on what they have grown up around and choose the same career as their parents.
- Some choose a career based on salary.
- Others “fall into” a career because they start working for a company and decide to stay there.

Think about your own career search. Did you choose your career based on what you like to do? If not, do you wish you had?

Research shows that your child will be more satisfied with his or her career choice if that choice is based on your child's interests and the activities that he or she enjoys most.

### How to help your child identify interests.

Discuss with your child what he or she likes to do most. Here are some questions that will help you and your child think about interests:

- What is your favorite school subject?
- What extracurricular activities do you enjoy the most?
- What are your hobbies?
- What do you like to do with friends?
- What special skills do you think you possess?
- What have you done that you are most proud of?
- What do you like to do with your free time?
- What interests you the most?



## How can my Child use Formal Interest Assessments?

Many middle and high schools offer interest assessments for students. There are also some free interest assessments available on the Internet. You should encourage your child to take a number of interest assessments and to share the results of those assessments with you. Your child can try a free Internet assessment at: <http://66.95.33.49/youth.cfm#1>

Here are some important facts about interest assessments that you and your child should keep in mind:

- Interest assessments are only meant to be a starting point for career exploration. *They are not meant to force your child to pick a career.*
- When your child takes interest assessments, let him or her know that there are no right or wrong answers.
- Because the assessments do not actually test, but rather ask questions that are left to interpretation by your child, it is important for your child to take many different interest assessments and compare the results to see if each assessment has similar results.
- Your child's interests may change as he or she moves through school and tries new things. *Interest assessments should be taken each year to assist career exploration as your child matures.*

### Where can I find interest assessments for my child?

The guidance counselor at your child's school has access to many different interest assessments and knows how to help your child go through the process and understand the results.



## What if my Child Doesn't Seem to Have any Interests?

There are many ways to help your child explore the world to find what interests him or her.

Here are some examples:

- Pay attention to the activities your child likes, the books he or she chooses to read, the television shows he or she watches, the websites he or she visits, and the way your child spends his or her free time. Discuss what your child likes or dislikes about each activity.
- Take your child to museums, art galleries, zoos, musical and theatrical performances, and community and sporting events.
- Let your child try various after-school or extracurricular activities, such as art classes, computer classes, or a sports team.
- Encourage your child to start a collection, and decide what will be in that collection.

As you and your child discover his or her interests, provide more opportunities for your child to learn about and develop those interests.

- Take your child to the library and encourage your child to check out books of interest to him or her.
- Provide magazines and books that can help your child learn more about his or her interests.
- Allow your child to join a club that relates to his or her interests.
- Help your child find community service activities related to his or her interests that will allow hands-on exploration.