



The Perfect Job

When you think about after-school jobs, you certainly like some better than others. Why is that? In this exercise, you will get a chance to think about what you want out of a job and what would make the “perfect” after-school job.

Step 1. Thinking About Your Values

On Your Own. What is important to you in terms of an after-school job? What do you want to accomplish or achieve? For example, you might want to interact with interesting people, or you might want to make money or train for a future career. You might want your job to prepare you for college, or you might want it not to interfere with after-school sports. In the list below write down things that are important to you in the context of a job. At this point, you should focus on **values** that matter to you (what you care about, or what you want to get from the job) rather than on specific characteristics of the job itself. In Step 2 you will get a chance to design a job whose characteristics match the list of values you make here.

Value List. Things that are important to me:

In Your Group. In your group, compare your value lists. Did someone else write down a value that you think should be on your list? Feel free to modify your list as you look at those of other students; sometimes it helps us to talk with other people when we are trying to figure out exactly what is important to us and how to express it. Just be sure that the items you put on your

- **CONTEXT**
- **VALUES**
- UNCERTAINTY
- CONSEQUENCES
- INFORMATION
- **ALTERNATIVES**
- TRADEOFFS
- NEGOTIATION

list really are important to *you*. Do not include something from a friend's list unless it really is important to you.

Step 2. Creating the Perfect Job

On Your Own. Now that you have thought about what is important, let's try to build the perfect job for you. What would a perfect job be like? What would be its most important characteristics?

Start by looking at your list of values from Step 1. For each item in the list of values, write down a job characteristic that would help you achieve that value. For example, if you value interaction with other people, then a job that stresses sales or interpersonal contact would be appropriate. If you want to be well prepared for college, you might like a job that really challenges you in key skill areas. On the other hand, if you want to make money, then you might like a job with a high salary or commissions. For each value on your value list above, write down a corresponding characteristic of the job that you would include in your description of the perfect after-school job.

- **CONTEXT**
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My perfect job would include:

In Your Group. Take turns telling your classmates about your perfect job. Each of you probably will have described a different job alternative, based on differences in your values and in the associated job characteristics that you created. Explain why you designed your job alternative the way you did.

After everyone in the group has had a chance to present his or her perfect job, see if you can create a single job that satisfies everyone in your group. To do this, pick one member's job. Then, working as a group, try to modify it so that it is "nearly perfect" for everyone in the group. What can you change, and how can you change it? Can you build in new features that satisfy additional group members without losing anything of value from the initial job description?

Think of creative ways to change the job so that it can serve other group members' values as well as those of the original designer. Try to get everyone in the group to agree on the characteristics of the "nearly perfect" job, but realize that you may not be able to get total agreement because different people have different values. Appoint one person to write down a description of your group's job on a piece of paper. Be prepared to share this with the class.

- **CONTEXT**
- **VALUES**
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- CONSEQUENCES
- INFORMATION
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Teaching Note: The Perfect Job

This exercise is a companion to Module #10, "Generating a Great Project," and is largely self-explanatory. It is important to make the distinction between **values** (what matters to the student in the context of a job) and **characteristics** of the job itself. This may require a little discussion, and it might even be helpful to intervene in the first set of group discussions to help students get this distinction straight. For instance, a student may state "high salary" as a value. However, this is a characteristic of a job. To get the student to find the underlying value, ask the question, "Why is a high salary important to you?" Students are likely to hem and haw as they think about this, but with some gentle probing, you should get a response like, "The more money I get per hour the higher is the status of the job" or "I want to be able to go skiing, and lift tickets are expensive" or some other reason that really expresses the value and explains why having a high salary is important.

Most people start with the characteristics of an item or activity and never really think about *why* the characteristics are important. We are asking the students to think a little more deeply in order to recognize the underlying values that matter to them. In the example, salary may matter because it can lead to a better job status, more fun, or some other objective.

In Step 2 the students use their values to design their perfect after-school job. After working alone, each student presents his or her job to other group members, explaining why the job is designed the way it is. In this activity, students are getting important practice in expressing their own preferences and explaining those preferences in terms of their underlying values. Differences in the various "perfect jobs" will correspond to differences in students' underlying values; students can see that they may prefer different jobs because their values differ. In collaborating to create a "nearly perfect job" for all group members, the students should be encouraged to be as creative as possible: there should be no artificial constraints on their "perfect" after-school jobs.

- **CONTEXT**
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For each group, one person should be chosen to serve as a recorder. Encourage each group to:

- (1) distinguish between characteristics and values
- (2) be sure that all group members contribute
- (3) use a range of values and characteristics to define the "nearly perfect job."

Vocabulary: values, characteristics

Examples of Values:

having fun
contributing to society
helping other people
experiencing a thrill
being loved
being respected

Examples of Characteristics:

pays \$8/hour
close to home
convenient hours
other students work there
requires a uniform
access to medical plan

Note: As an alternative to creating the perfect job, students could create a perfect school class or a great idea for a school project (see Module #10). The basic objective remains the same: to encourage students to explore their own values and use this knowledge as a mechanism for generating satisfying alternatives.

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