

Chapter 33



Reading Advantage

Describe how this chapter relates to what you have learned in another class. Make a list of the similarities and differences.

Career IQ

Before reading the chapter, see what you already know about the topic by taking the chapter pretest.

A Career for You in Early Childhood Education

Objectives

After studying this chapter, you will be able to

- **explain** how interests, abilities, and values affect career choices.
- **compile** your résumé.
- **write** a cover letter.
- **list** various methods for seeking employment.
- **list** questions to ask during an interview.
- **explain** the basic interviewing process.
- **prepare** a teaching portfolio.
- **describe** illegal questions and how to respond to them.
- **describe** the rights and responsibilities of employees and employers.
- **summarize** the importance of finding balance among family, work, and community roles.

Content Terms

self-assessment	networking
values	networking letter
professional priorities	teaching portfolio
résumé	attitude
cover letter	confidentiality
placement service	role
hidden job market	role strain

Academic Terms

bolster
candidacy
punctual



While studying, look for the activity icon  to:

- **Practice** terms with e-flash cards, matching activities, and vocabulary games.
- **Reinforce** what you learn by completing the *Recall and Review* questions and e-mailing them to your instructor.
- **Assess** what you learn by completing the posttest.

www.g-wlearning.com/earlychildhoodeducation/

Preparing for your future is both rewarding and exciting; and choosing a career is an important, challenging task. To be successful, choosing a career and job searching must be approached in a thoughtful manner. Successful candidates often treat job hunting as a full-time job. They commit themselves to the process 100 percent and approach the search with a plan.

Many early childhood teachers find success using several job-searching techniques. Some teachers apply directly to an employer or center director. This contact may be in the form of an e-mail request for an application, a visit to the center, or a telephone call. Usually, people make these contacts just before completing courses to meet state licensing guidelines or early childhood certification.

Answering Internet or newspaper ads is another way to seek employment. Check want ads and online job boards on a daily basis. If you notice an appealing position, contact the center director at once. For online positions, you may be asked to e-mail or electronically submit a response. If a telephone number is listed, make a call. Many times, child care positions need to be filled immediately. Therefore, do not waste any time in making a contact.

Choosing a Career

Choosing your life's work is a challenging responsibility. As you begin the process of selecting a career, you may be thinking, "What do I want to do with my life?" Only a few people seem to know from an early age what career they will pursue; therefore, most people find this a difficult question to answer. Choosing a career takes much care and thought (Figure 33.1). People often begin choosing a career by doing a self-assessment.

Self-assessment is the process of examining your interests, abilities, values, and professional priorities. As you consider these factors, you will gain important self-knowledge for choosing a career. You will ask yourself many questions, and your answers will help you determine whether a career working with young children is for you.



33.1 Many teens spend a great deal of time reflecting on the future and what careers they will pursue.

Examining Your Interests

Interests play a large role in career choices. For the most part, people seek to prepare themselves for a career they will enjoy. The Chinese philosopher Confucius offered important advice concerning career decisions: He said that if you choose a job you love, you will never need to work a day in your life. You will feel fulfilled and believe you are doing something worthwhile.

Determining what work you will enjoy can be challenging. Begin this process by analyzing your interests. Start by asking yourself the following basic questions:

- How do you spend your time? What are your hobbies?
- Do you enjoy learning? Which courses in school have you found most interesting?

- Do you prefer working independently or working with others?
- Do you prefer working with people, information, or objects?
- Which career fields do you find most exciting?

Gaining experience in a career field can help you make or confirm a career decision. For example, volunteering, working part-time, or doing an internship can help you explore early childhood education as a career option. As a result of this experience, you might decide you are not suited to be an early childhood education teacher. On the other hand, you may feel more strongly than ever that working with young children is the best career option for you.

You can also assess your interests by learning more about other careers. Research a few careers you are considering. What are the responsibilities of each job? Are these tasks you would enjoy? Interview a professional employed in the field to learn more. You might be able to arrange a job-shadowing experience where you can spend an entire day with an employee at his or her job. This experience can give you an overview of the job duties and rewards.

Analyzing Your Abilities

A second part of self-assessment is analyzing your abilities. Abilities have a direct influence on job performance—you are more likely to succeed in a job you can do well. Having interests and abilities in similar areas is not uncommon. You are more likely to be interested in tasks you are good at, and you may work harder to develop abilities in areas that interest you. On the other hand, you may have some abilities that differ from your interests.

When choosing a career, analyze your abilities. These may be areas in which you have always excelled. Natural abilities are called *aptitudes*. You might discover other abilities through ability tests given by a guidance or career counselor or online. Common names for these tests are *aptitude tests* and *skills assessments*. Taking these tests can help you identify careers for which you might be suited and assess if you have personal aptitudes and abilities needed in the child care profession.

You can also ask close friends and trusted adults for their insight. They may comment “You’re so good with children,” “You relate to people so easily,” or “You solve problems well.” These comments can help you identify areas of strength.

Developing a solid foundation of basic skills will help you in any career. These basic skills include skills in human relations, teamwork, leadership, communication (writing, speaking, and listening), computers, mathematics, problem solving, decision making, time management, stress management, and planning. With these basic skills, chances are you will become a successful employee in your chosen career (Figure 33.2).

In addition to basic skills, you will need some career-specific abilities, which relate more closely to the demands of a particular job. Effective early childhood teachers need abilities that will help them carry out their responsibilities as described in earlier chapters of this book. Some of these abilities include the following:

- planning developmentally appropriate curriculum, lessons, activity areas, schedules, and routines
- leading group activities and assisting children in activity areas as needed



33.2 Developing basic skills will make you a more valuable employee in almost any career you choose.

- matching guidance and communication techniques to children's developmental ages
- setting and enforcing needed limits for children's health, safety, and healthy development
- providing comfort, nurturance, affection, and effective praise
- offering constant supervision to all children throughout all daily activities
- demonstrating appropriate physical care techniques (such as diapering, feeding, dressing, toileting, and hand washing) to keep children safe and healthy

Abilities needed by professionals in other child-related careers may differ somewhat from those that teachers need. For example, a child care director needs budgeting, record keeping, planning, organizing, leading, and supervising abilities. Learning more about particular careers will help you find out what career-specific abilities are needed.

Once you know your abilities, you should compare your abilities to those required of a chosen career. You may have many of the needed abilities already, but there may be others you still need to develop. If a career deeply interests you, it may be worthwhile to identify ways to build the needed skills. Taking additional classes to learn more about the subject can help. Ask a teacher, guidance counselor, supervisor, or other trusted adult to help you identify other ways to develop the needed abilities.

Determining Your Values

After you understand your interests and abilities, you should take a look at your **values**. These are your beliefs, feelings, and ideas about what is important. Values influence your decisions and actions. Each person is an individual with unique thoughts, feelings, experiences, and beliefs. These differences are often reflected in the values people hold. For example, some people desire popularity, wealth, and material possessions most. Others find education, career, family life, or friendships more meaningful. Each person can value any combination of priorities in any order

of importance. That is what makes values truly personal.

As you examine your values, you will better understand the importance of various people, objects, and ideas in your life. Choosing a career that aligns with your values greatly increases your chances of happiness and career success. Such a career will enhance your life by allowing you to focus on what matters most to you.

Closely related to values are **professional priorities**. These are global aspects of work that are important to a person's satisfaction. Professional priorities might include the following:

- helping or providing service to others
- feeling a sense of accomplishment
- working as a team member
- having a leadership role
- gaining recognition
- earning a high salary
- being competitive
- working independently
- making a contribution to society through your work

In identifying professional priorities, ask yourself what comes to mind when you think of a fulfilling career. List these priorities and compare your list with those commonly found among workers in your chosen career field. **Figure 33.3** shows professional priorities commonly shared by successful child care teachers.

Professionals in child-related careers other than teaching may have different professional priorities. For example, successful directors are likely to list managing, organizing, and leading among their priorities.

Examining your values and professional priorities will help you determine whether working with young children will be a satisfying career choice for you. This part of self-assessment can also help you propose specific short-term career goals and long-term career goals. Then you can seek the needed education, training, and experiences to qualify you to work in the career of your choice.

Figure 33.3 Professional Priorities of Child Care Teachers

Successful child care teachers commonly share the following professional priorities:

- **Independence:** working on their own
- **Creativity:** trying out their own ideas
- **Responsibility:** making their own decisions and solving problems
- **Achievement:** gaining a feeling of accomplishment
- **Relationships:** providing service to others and working with coworkers in a friendly, noncompetitive environment
- **Sharing knowledge:** teaching and guiding young children to learn new concepts

Preparing a Résumé

To prepare for your job search, first prepare a résumé. A **résumé** is a brief summary of your qualifications, skills, and experience. It should be tailored to the type of job for which you are applying. The purpose of a résumé is to inform a potential employer of your qualifications and experience and secure an interview. If your résumé is effective, you will receive invitations to interview from potential employers.

Résumés also serve many other purposes. A résumé may serve as your own self-inventory. Having an objective list of your background and skills can be quite helpful when looking for a job. It can also serve as a starting point in an interview. A well-written résumé will give the employer information on which to base the interview. After the interview, your résumé will help the employer recall your experiences as well as the interview.

Writing a Résumé

A well-prepared résumé plays an important role in your job search. First, it instantly creates a favorable impression of you. Second, it creates a desire in the employer to meet you. In many cases, it is your ticket to a job interview.

All résumés contain key information about the applicant: name, current address, e-mail address, and a telephone number or cell phone

number are always included. If you are applying for jobs outside your hometown, include the area code with your telephone or cell phone number.

Remember, your résumé represents you. Be accurate and neat. Use simple words and write in a clear, concise manner. Include your educational background, employment objective, paid and volunteer work experience, professional activities, interests, and references. Always be descriptive. For instance, if you want to share that you are a hard worker, create a statement that will deliver that message: “Worked 20 hours per week during the past two semesters.” An example of a résumé is shown in [Figure 33.4](#).

Use your résumé to present yourself as an active, well-rounded person. The résumé should have an easy-to-read format. Also be sure to correct all misspellings, grammar errors, and typing errors. Poor computer or writing skills and grammatical errors will always reflect badly on the applicant. Basic mistakes may cripple your job search. In fact, some highly qualified applicants have failed to obtain interviews because of poor writing skills. It is always wise to ask a friend who has outstanding writing skills to proofread any résumés before you send them to an employer.

SAFETY FIRST

Online Résumé Safety

When applying for jobs online or via e-mail, take care to protect your personal information. To keep your information out of the hands of cyber criminals, remember the following tips:

- Avoid using your home address and telephone number. Instead, use your e-mail address and a prepaid cell phone for initial contacts from employers.
- Never put your social security number on your résumé. Once an employer wants to hire you, you may need to provide this information at that time.
- Consider using a separate e-mail address only for your job search.
- Read privacy policies for online job boards carefully. Some reserve the right to sell your identifiable information.

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Objective

To obtain a position teaching two-, three-, or four-year-old children.

Education

University of Wisconsin-Stout

- Graduating June, 20XX with a Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education.
- 3.83 (out of 4.0) cumulative grade point average.
- Dean's List: 20XX–present.

Valders High School

- Graduated June, 20XX.
- Activities: member of National Honor Society and school band; captain of women's volleyball team.

Experiences

Wee Care Child Care Center, Atlanta, Georgia, June, 20XX–September, 20XX

- Assisted head teacher with all program activities during the summer session.
- Created new teaching aids for art, science, music, and social studies activities.
- Supervised adult volunteers.

Course Assistant, Early Childhood Department at University of Wisconsin-Stout, September, 20XX–June, 20XX

- Coordinated teacher education resource room: maintained files, ordered materials, and designed room layout.

Valders Public Schools, September, 20XX–June, 20XX

- Assisted kindergarten teacher with special activities: coordinated and supervised holiday parties, prepared teaching aids, and maintained classroom centers.

Activities

International Relations Council, University of Wisconsin-Stout

- Delegate to State Model United Nations.

Dean's Student Advisory Council, University of Wisconsin-Stout

- Advised Dean on students' activities. Coordinated special school events including Parents' Weekend.

Student Ambassador, University of Wisconsin-Stout

- Visited community high schools to recruit students for the University of Wisconsin-Stout.

Interests

Alpine and cross-country skiing, reading, gourmet cooking.

References available upon request.

33.4 Résumés should be neatly organized and evenly spaced.

Students who are recent graduates have a special challenge in writing résumés due to limited work experience. Those who face this challenge should take care not to overlook any previous unpaid work experience. Any practice teaching, lab work, or volunteer work in your field of study can be included on your résumé. Any involvement in professional organizations related to your field of study such as an affiliate of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) may also be included. You may wish to explain any leadership roles you assumed or any skills you developed that will help you on the job.

What Employers Do with Résumés

Directors will quickly look at a résumé to find out if you have the educational background and experience to qualify for the position. If your experience appears to meet the requirements of the job description, the résumé is read more closely. At this time, most employers will look for gaps in your employment, the amount of space given to earlier jobs, and the emphasis on education.

Employment gaps may make directors wary of problems in your job history. Gaps may signal that you were unemployed between jobs. On the other hand, you may have chosen to leave out a job on your résumé because it did not apply to the position you seek. Perhaps you were unemployed for a legitimate reason, such as returning to school. Be sure to explain such gaps in your cover letter (Figure 33.5).

When you give the time of your employment, be sure to specify the month and year of the starting and ending date of each job. Listing only years can be confusing to directors. Such a listing can also give the impression that gaps in employment are being concealed. Be honest in your résumé. Center directors and employers are experienced at dissecting résumés. Avoid omitting facts.

A good résumé should reflect progress in a career over the years. Directors tend to be more interested in an applicant's most recent



33.5 If you aren't sure how to explain gaps in your employment or need help writing an effective résumé, you can visit individuals who specialize in helping job seekers. Some of these individuals might be college and career counselors or writing experts.

accomplishments; therefore, the most recent job experience should be emphasized. Some résumé writers devote more space to an earlier teaching position. Center directors will interpret this as either poor judgment or a hasty résumé update. Overall, these errors convey a lack of ambition and poor planning on the part of the applicant. These errors may not always rule out an applicant from an interview. They do, however, signal that the applicant needs to be closely reviewed during this process.

Directors will also review a résumé to see if there is too much stress on education and nonjob factors. When an applicant has been out of school for several years, the résumé should stress work experience. Applicants who stress postsecondary honors may be focusing too much on the past. If the applicant stresses too many nonjob factors, this may indicate where his or her real interests lie.

Electronic Résumés

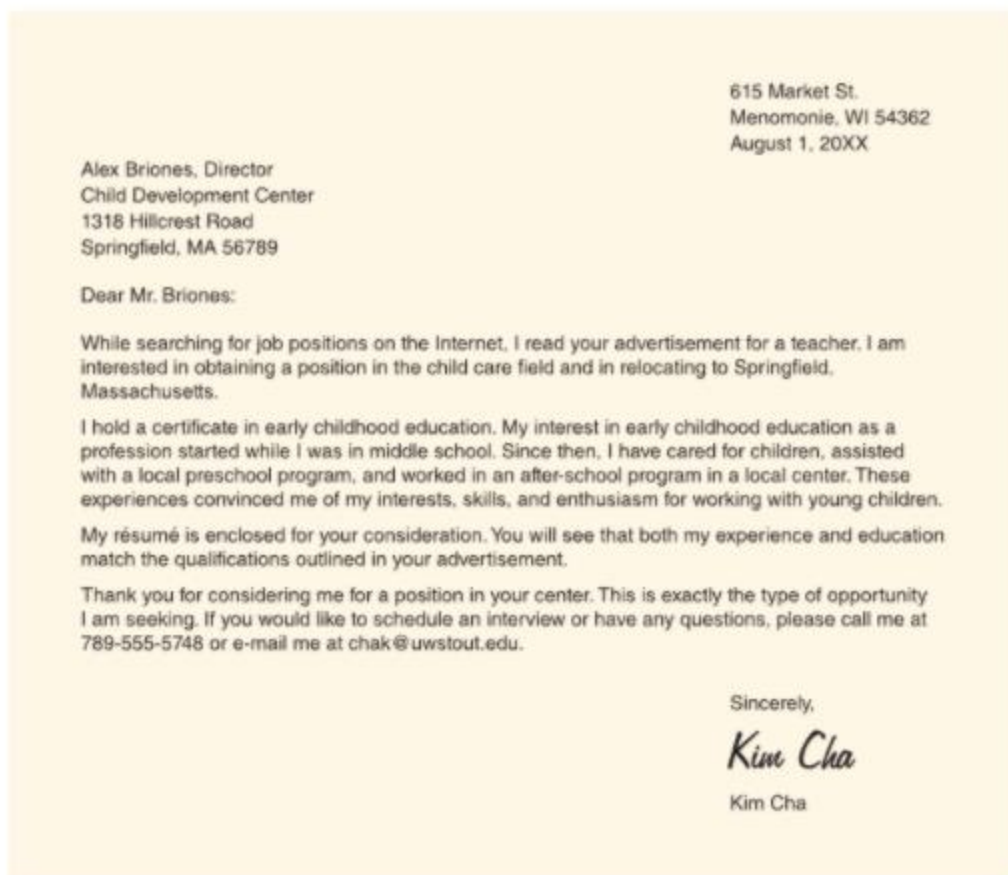
Many employers now request that electronic résumés be e-mailed in response to want ads. Employers then search the electronic résumés they receive for key words they use to identify an ideal candidate. This helps employers filter through applicants more quickly, as they can eliminate any résumés that do not include the key words. Therefore, you should be sure that your résumé is worded carefully and tailored to a job description.

To create an electronic résumé, save your résumé as “text only” without any formatting. Then review the text-only résumé to make sure

lines and headers break properly. Be sure to save this in a separate file from your formatted résumé. Electronic résumés will also come in handy if you join online groups for employment.

Cover Letters

A **cover letter** is a letter of introduction that is usually included when sending a résumé. The main purposes of a cover letter are to capture the employer’s attention and to request an interview. This letter is important and should be carefully written. An example of a cover letter is shown in [Figure 33.6](#).



33.6 Include a cover letter with your résumé when responding to ads.

When writing a cover letter, follow a business letter format. As with the résumé, use proper grammar and punctuation. Write each cover letter separately. Avoid writing one generic cover letter that can be used to apply for any job. This gives the impression that you are not interested enough to write a tailored letter. It also fails to stand out to the reader.

Keep in mind no one in the early childhood community is called *Sir, Madam, or Whom It May Concern*. If necessary, call to obtain the name of the center director or the person responsible for hiring. Address the cover letter to this person.

Your cover letter should be brief, simple, and easy to read. Writing quality is more important than quantity. Your cover letter is an opportunity to “sell yourself” to the employer. Your objective is to stand out from the other people applying for the position and to earn the employer’s attention. A cover letter should not be a summary of your résumé. It should convince the person hiring to read and consider your résumé.

Keep the length of your cover letter to a few paragraphs. Describe how you learned about the job opening or how you are familiar with the center. Be sure to include key words from the job description or ad in your letter. Explain why you want to be considered for the position and describe your interests, aptitudes, and abilities related to the job. End the letter by telling the employer what action—for instance, a phone call or interview—you would like him or her to take. Be polite in your request and thank the person for reviewing your cover letter and résumé. Sign the letter *Yours truly*, or *Sincerely*, and your name.

Reread your letter several times for content, typing, and grammatical errors. Have several other people proofread the letter for you, too. In one study, seventy-six percent of recruiters said they would not consider an applicant whose résumé or cover letter contained errors. A mistake could make a poor impression of you.

Avenues for Seeking Employment

Early childhood job seekers may use a number of methods to find employment. These

methods include mailing cover letters with résumés and placing or answering ads on the Internet. Career fairs and networking provide other opportunities to search for positions. Successful applicants also do not overlook the hidden job market.

Internet and Newspaper Ads

Answering Internet or newspaper ads can be helpful when looking for work. As a job seeker, make a habit of reading ads every day (Figure 33.7). Newspaper ads are alphabetized. Ads for child care center staff may be listed under different areas. Internet ads may be listed alphabetically, by position, or by region. Study a wide range of ads. Examples of titles related to child care include *child care teacher, infant teacher, toddler teacher, preschool teacher, early childhood teacher, assistant teacher, school-age child care teacher, program coordinator, curriculum specialist, and activities director*. If you are looking for an administrative position, look closely for descriptions such as *director, administrator, or coordinator*.



33.7 Many new child care teachers find their first jobs through Internet or newspaper ads.

When searching the Internet for postings, visit numerous sites and job boards. Some sites will let you indicate the distance you want to travel or allow you to upload your résumé so employers can find you. Salary estimates may also be included on some sites. Joining a chat room or discussion group in your field is another way to find a job. Some professional associations sponsor list servers or message boards and use net news groups.

If an ad appeals to you, respond according to the instructions given in the ad. Some ads contain telephone numbers. In this case, do not wait; call right away. Telephone numbers are most often included when a position must be filled as soon as possible.

If an address or post office box is listed, mail your résumé with a cover letter. If you are instructed to e-mail your résumé or post it to the employer's job site, use your electronic résumé.

If an advertisement does not ask for your salary requirements, do not mention them in your letter. By including a salary figure, you could be screened out and not have the chance to interview. Some ads state the exact salary or range they will pay. For instance, an ad might note the exact dollar figure per hour or a range of several thousand dollars (Figure 33.8). Many times when a range is provided, the ad might state that salary is open "based on experience" or "based on educational background."

You can also place newspaper ads, ads in professional journals, or ads on the Internet to make your availability known. These are quite

helpful if you are moving to another area. For example, you may want to work as a child care teacher in New York City after graduation, but you live in Chicago. You could place an ad in the *New York Times* in the positions wanted section of the paper.

Before placing an ad, write, e-mail, or call to find out the cost. The cost of placing an ad varies depending on the city, circulation of the paper, size of the ad, and the number of days it will run. Often, charges are either on a per word or per line basis. Depending on your budget and the costs of advertising, you may have to limit the length of your ad.

Placing a position-wanted ad is a passive job-search technique. It requires employers to seek you out. However, most employers will actively pursue only the most qualified candidates. Therefore, this method works best for those people who are experienced. It is best to use active job-search techniques.

College or School Placement Offices

Most early childhood certificate and degree programs provide a **placement service**. The purpose of this service is to find positions for graduates. Placement offices are usually located on campus. Employers are encouraged to call in, send, or e-mail job information for the office to post (Figure 33.9). Likewise, employers are given help finding qualified graduates when they contact the office.

As a student, chances are you will be asked to prepare a portfolio. This portfolio will include samples of materials on paper or as an electronic file. Regardless of the format used, this file will usually include a standard form prepared by the college or school placement service. The form lists your current address, schools attended, degree earned, and past work experiences. In addition, your file will contain your résumé and letters of recommendation from faculty and previous employers.

The Hidden Job Market

Many job candidates are most successful when they focus their efforts on the **hidden job market**

» Apply Now

Head Teacher at the Sheboygan Early Childhood Center. Applicant must hold a two-year certificate from an accredited institution of higher learning. Salary range from \$2,400–\$3,600 per month.

Call 1-414-555-4598

apply online or e-mail: eccenter@sheboygan.edu

33.8 Internet job postings and ads give a short summary of the open position.

Position:

Head Teacher, Child Care Program
 Full-Time Position
 Yearly contract renewal for a maximum of three years

Date Available:

August, 20XX

Job Responsibilities:

Head Teacher in early childhood center. Plan and implement a developmentally appropriate curriculum for three- and four-year-old children. Supervise a teacher's aide and volunteers from a local community college. Assist Director in applying for accreditation. Plan and implement parent meetings, conferences, and related activities.

Qualifications:

- B.S. degree in Early Childhood Education is required, graduate work preferred.
- Must be certified to teach preschool in Texas.
- Experience in assessment, curriculum development, and program evaluation.
- Demonstrated excellence in teaching young children for a minimum of three years.
- Demonstrated ability to interact positively with people and work cooperatively with other staff members, parents, students, volunteers, and children.
- Must be able to organize and coordinate activities with volunteers.
- Must be able to motivate children in a creative environment.
- Must be able to demonstrate initiative and continuous professional development.

33.9 Notices posted in school placement offices often give a comprehensive summary of the open position.

These are jobs advertised informally through personal contacts. Many child care positions are never listed in help-wanted ads, in early childhood journals, or with placement offices. Rather, these jobs are filled through word of mouth. To find out about such openings, you as a job seeker should contact center directors personally. This can be done through a letter, a telephone call, or e-mail. Some candidates have met with success by arranging a visit to the center and then asking about job openings. Even if no position is open at the time of the visit, some applicants have been called later when jobs become available.

Get to know early childhood staff workers in the community. One way to do this is to join the local chapter of the NAEYC. When you attend meetings, try to meet as many people as possible. Always let them know of your job search and when you will be available. In addition, become active in the organization. Volunteer

for committees. Show the membership you are willing to work and are professionally motivated.

Networking

Networking is the job seeker's most powerful tool. Almost 80 percent of positions are found through some type of networking with others.

Networking is a process of building relationships with people who can help you. It is an important skill to develop.

Workplace Connections

Ask your guidance counselor to provide you with an aptitude test.

1. What aptitudes do you need in an early child education profession?
2. How do your aptitudes compare with your interests and abilities?

One way to have your résumé considered is to have recommendations from respected people in the field. To find these people, you need to go where they are. Attend meetings of early childhood organizations, workshops, conferences, seminars, open houses, job fairs, and center tours. Since networking is a process, it usually takes several contacts to build a relationship. These contacts may be person-to-person meetings, phone conversations, e-mail contacts, voice mail, letters, and notes.

You might also consider writing a networking letter. Like a cover letter, a **networking letter** should be carefully written. It should be sent to an assortment of people in the field of early childhood education whom you know personally or who are referred to you. The purpose of the networking letter is to inform them you are available for employment. After receiving the letter, these individuals could pass your name on to the appropriate people. They could also provide you with valuable insight into possible employment opportunities.

Maintaining a Filing System

During your job search, keep a file of all the centers or schools you have contacted (Figure 33.10). Make a photocopy of each cover letter you send or maintain copies on a computer. You may also prepare index cards or a file on your computer for each contact. If you get a call from a director, you should quickly be able to retrieve the information and refresh your memory on the open position. To assist in this process, always keep a record of the school's name, address, telephone number, contact person, and date the contact letter was mailed.

If you have answered an ad, you may want to attach a copy of the ad to your cover letter or index card. When you receive a response (whether negative or positive), record this on your cover letter or index card. Make notes of interviews, thank-you notes, and other contacts on each letter or card as well.

The Interview

Job interviews are the single most important aspect of a job search; they are opportunities to convey information about yourself.



33.10 Keeping your job search information organized and up-to-date is important.

Preparing for an Interview

When preparing for an interview, think positively. Picture yourself walking into the interview confident and relaxed. Get in the habit of being enthusiastic. Remember, enthusiasm is catching. It indicates appreciation and interest. Often, if you are enthusiastic, the interviewer will also share this feeling.

Employers want to hire self-directed people with a wide range of skills. They want people who are dependable, enthusiastic, and committed to the child care profession. They also want people who work hard and learn fast. They want people who manage their time well and who look for extra work when their work is done. In order to run a quality center, directors need to hire people who are resourceful.

Figure 33.11 outlines traits employers seek when hiring people to work in early childhood centers. In preparation for an interview, read the statements and check those that match qualities you would be able to bring to a position. Completing this task will *bolster* (strengthen) your own self-image. The exercise will help you get a clear picture of your skills. It will also prepare you to make a persuasive presentation during an interview.

In nearly all interviews, applicants are given the opportunity to ask questions. Smart applicants always prepare questions for an interview. As you prepare questions, learn everything you can about the center. You might form questions by talking to teachers who have taught at the center or asking questions of parents who have children attending the center. You can get general information about the center from the local Chamber of Commerce. Some questions you may wish to ask during an interview include the following:

- What is the educational philosophy of your center?

- To what extent may I implement my own ideas?
- Is the staff encouraged to attend conferences? If so, how often may a staff member attend, and who pays the fees?
- What audiovisual equipment is provided by the school?
- How often are parent conferences scheduled?
- Does the center send home a weekly parent letter or monthly newsletter? If so, who is responsible for writing and editing them?

Asking questions tells the interviewer you are serious about a job. Take time to practice your questions, eye contact, and posture (**Figure 33.12**).

Prospective employers usually decide before the interview what information they need to share with you about a job. Job expectations, duties, and benefits are often included. Specific questions that you may be asked are also recorded. In preparation for an interview, think about your answers to some of the common questions asked during an interview. You may even want to write your answers. Common questions are listed in **Figure 33.13**.

Figure 33.11 Positive Traits of Early Childhood Teachers

• Flexible	• Dependable
• Energetic	• Effective planner
• Self-confident	• Committed to teaching
• Enthusiastic	• Open to new ideas
• Mature	• Self-disciplined
• Willing to do extra work	• Dedicated to hard work
• Patient	• Motivated
• Cooperative	• Self-reliant
• Easy to get along with	• Thorough
• Fast learner	• Self-directed
• Excellent time manager	• Friendly
• Creative	• Nurturing
• Cheerful	• Possessing a good sense of humor
• Positive	• Possessing strong interpersonal skills
• Resourceful	



33.12 In preparation for an interview, practice good eye contact and posture.

Figure 33.13 Common Questions Asked During an Interview

- Please share your educational background.
- What type of course work did you have?
- Do you have previous job experience? If so, describe your positions.
- Why do you want this job?
- What are the most important characteristics of a teacher of young children?
- Use three words to describe your personality.
- What are some of your negative qualities? What is the biggest mistake you ever made?
- How do people describe you?
- How would you describe your teaching style?
- Where do you see yourself professionally five years from today? Describe that job.
- Why are you interested in this job?
- What is the value of children's play?
- How would you handle a child who is always hitting others?
- How would you plan a developmentally appropriate curriculum?
- How do you think your references described you when they were contacted?
- What do you know about us?
- Why should we hire you?
- How would you handle transitions?
- How would you relate to parents?
- On what basis do you plan curriculum for young children?
- What would you do if a child kicked you and said "I don't like you"?
- What disappointments did you face in your last teaching position?
- In what areas did your supervisor criticize you?
- In what areas did your supervisor compliment you?
- For what things did you need guidance or help from your supervisor?
- Why did you select teaching young children as a career?
- Why did you apply for this job?
- What are you looking for in this position that you have not had in past positions?

During the Interview

When you go to a job interview, arrive on time. Remember to take your driver's license or state ID card, Social Security card, résumé, portfolio, and list of questions for the interviewer. Give special thought to your appearance. You want to make a good impression. Make sure your hair is well groomed and attractively styled. Choose conservative jewelry, accessories, and shoes. Avoid displaying tattoos or multiple piercings. For females, makeup should be applied lightly. Be sure your clothes are clean and neat. Choose clothes that are one step above those you would wear on the job. Avoid overdressing, but do not wear a T-shirt, shorts, or jeans, either. Let your appearance tell the interviewer you are professional and can fit into the workplace.

At the interview, use body language to show interest. Make eye contact, smile, and greet

the employer with a firm handshake. Many interviewers begin an interview simply by introducing themselves and welcoming you to the center. This is usually followed by small talk that might include the weather or a center activity.

Workplace Connections

Conduct a survey among students and teachers to discover the most difficult-to-answer questions from their own job interview experiences.

1. What were the most difficult-to-answer questions?
2. How would you answer these questions in an interview? Keep in mind that sometimes questions have no relation to the job because the interviewer is just trying to determine how the applicant will react under pressure.

After this, you will probably be told information about the job. The interviewer may then ask you structured questions concerning your education or experience. Be enthusiastic; smile, nod and give nonverbal feedback to the interviewer. Provide full, focused answers and use the interviewer's name from time to time as you speak. Avoid answering a question with yes or no. Instead say "no, but" and "yes, and." After all questions have been answered, the interviewer will ask you if you have any questions. At this point, you can ask those questions you prepared beforehand. Avoid asking questions about vacation time, benefits, and breaks. The interviewer may think your main concern is with nonwork functions.

Follow the lead of the interviewer. Throughout the interview, listen with an intelligent, intent look on your face. When necessary, ask questions that will help you better understand the job. Other tips for successful interviewing are listed in Figure 33.14.

Figure 33.14 Tips for a Successful Interview

- Be on time.
- Present your best appearance.
- Extend your hand to greet the interviewer with a firm handshake.
- Use the interviewer's name and smile as you speak.
- Bring your résumé and teaching portfolio with you.
- Remain relaxed and friendly.
- Listen carefully.
- Convey a positive attitude.
- Show your enthusiasm.
- Stress your strengths.
- Use active verbs while speaking.
- Personalize your questions.
- Respond to questions carefully.
- Be truthful: if you do not know an answer, say so.
- Provide more than a "yes" or "no" response to questions, but be concise.
- Thank the interviewer for his or her consideration at the end of the interview.
- Send a thank-you note.

Be careful not to volunteer negative information about your former employer or yourself. Employers are seeking positive people to work for them. If you were not happy in a previous job or jobs, you may not be happy with this job either. Therefore, it is vital not to mention anything negative. Focus on the position.

Throughout the interviewing process, you will need to sell your positive qualities. When asked what you did during your practicum, student teaching, or last job, do not recite the daily schedule or curriculum. Instead, state specific things you did to improve the center or classroom. For example, you might tell about how you made protective education part of the curriculum. Perhaps you revised the format for parent letters and reorganized the children's library.

During the interview, an interviewer may ask "What are your weaknesses?" If this happens, sit quietly for a moment. It is always a mistake to quickly answer a question off the top of your head. Give each question some thought, then form a response in your mind. Then respond carefully and positively. Do not put yourself down while answering this question. Rather, share your growth by saying something like "I have really developed skills in classroom control" or "My parent interaction skills grew during the last few weeks of my student teaching." You might also express your weaknesses in a positive way: "I care too much about the children," "I take my work too seriously," or "I try too many new ideas."

Workplace Connections

Review the items listed for a teaching portfolio in Figure 33.15 and answer the following questions:

1. What items do you already have in your portfolio? What items will you still need to acquire?
2. What items are not on the list but should be included in your portfolio because they help demonstrate your skills, abilities, attitudes, and philosophies?

Often, the interviewer may end the interview with a final question. You may be asked, “Was there anything that you were afraid that I was going to ask?” If this occurs, remain calm. Sometimes interviewees will share a question that they feared. Then an interviewer could raise the question.

Sharing Your Teaching Portfolio

Bring along your teaching portfolio to demonstrate your growth and success. Your **teaching portfolio** tells a story. It should serve as a professional snapshot of your efforts, progress, and achievements. Your portfolio should contain evidence of your competence. **Figure 33.15** outlines the typical contents of a teaching portfolio.

Offer to share your teaching portfolio. You may say “I brought along my teaching portfolio. I would like to share the contents with you.” While sharing the contents, use descriptions to support your materials. Explain why you chose each piece to include in the portfolio.

Figure 33.15 Teaching Portfolio

Table of contents
Résumé
Official transcripts
Copies of certifications, licenses, or CDA
Credential certificate
Statement of educational philosophy and teaching goals
Extracurricular activities
Letters of recommendation
Curriculum units and themes you have developed
Sample lesson plans, block plans, and parent letters
Videos of a good teaching lesson
Teacher-made materials
Photographs of activities with descriptions
Photographs of bulletin boards and room arrangements you designed
Anecdotal records
Critical incident journals
Teachers' evaluations

Exercise care so your portfolio does not take the form of a scrapbook. This type of portfolio should include your philosophy of teaching. One way to organize a portfolio is to have a table of contents with two major subheadings. The first subheading could be labeled *Background Information*. Your résumé and background information about your teaching experience could be included. Also include information about your teaching goals, letters of recommendation, and teachers' evaluations of your work.

The second subheading could be labeled *Teaching Artifacts*. This section of the portfolio should focus on the actual process and outcomes of teaching. Lesson plans, unit and theme plans, videos, anecdotal records, photographs, parent letters, and examples of teacher-made materials could be included.

Legal Problems in Interviewing

At both the state and federal level, there are laws to protect against discrimination. It is illegal to discriminate on the basis of age, sex, national origin, race, or religion. Most employers do not intend to use information obtained from an interview in order to discriminate. However, such information could affect the hiring decision. Therefore, it is illegal for an employer to ask questions about an applicant's race, national origin, or religion.

Learn More About

Finalizing Your Portfolio

If you haven't already filed evaluations of your teaching from the early childhood lab in your portfolio, select those evaluations that best represent your skills and abilities. If you have mastered a skill or improved a weakness from an earlier lesson, you may consider filing evaluations that demonstrate this. If you have participated in an early childhood internship or work program, be sure to include evaluations from those activities. Remember to be selective in the content of your portfolio and to demonstrate your strengths and minimize your weaknesses.

Interviewers are limited in the questions that can be asked. For example, a parent of small children cannot be asked how the children will be cared for while he or she is working. Likewise, a parent cannot be asked about a spouse's employment or salary.

Women cannot be asked if they are planning to have a family or are currently pregnant. Interviewers are also forbidden to ask applicants their marital status or the number of children they have. **Figure 33.16** lists questions that may and may not be asked. To prevent discrimination, all applicants for a job should be asked the same questions during an interview.

Despite the fact that they are illegal, you may still find yourself being asked some of these questions. Some prospective employers may purposely ask such questions to discriminate. Others, however, may simply ask them in an effort to get to know you better or make you feel at ease. These interviewers may not even know that the questions they ask are illegal.

If you are ever asked an illegal question, it is up to you to decide what the intent of the interviewer was. Based on your judgment, use discretion and tact to handle the situation. You may decide to simply answer the question. If you believe the person's intent was to discriminate, and then you are offered the job, you may ask why the question was asked. If the person's answer concerns you, you may decide to decline the job offer.

You may also choose to not answer the question. Do not accuse the person of discrimination. Instead, you may say simply and calmly, "I am sorry, but I am not required to answer that question."

Ending the Interview

An interview can be ended with words or through actions. Verbally, the interviewer may thank you for coming to signal the end of the interview. Nonverbally, the interviewer may sit up straight or stand up. This gesture means the interview is over. At this point, the interviewer

Figure 33.16 Legal Interview Questions

Subject	Legal Inquiries
Age	Only a question to determine if you meet state licensing requirements related to age Date of birth
Arrest record	No questions
Marital status	No questions
Convictions	Only convictions that would affect the job position
Education	Only questions related to training and experience related to the position
Family	Only questions related to meeting work schedule
Disabilities	Only questions related to the ability to perform the job
National origin	Only questions about ability to read, speak, and write the language the job requires
Organizations	Only questions about participation in professional organizations related to your ability to perform the job
Pregnancy	Only questions about anticipated absences from work
Religion	Only questions about anticipated absences from work

has obtained all the information from you that is needed. Respond by thanking the interviewer for his or her time (Figure 33.17).

It is likely that you will interview for several jobs before you are hired. Many people are disappointed when they learn they were not successful in getting a position. If you feel this way, do not think something is wrong with you. It is not unusual to feel depressed or feel a slip in your self-esteem. These feelings will pass.

Thank-You Letters

Always write a brief letter thanking the people who interviewed you. Sending a thank-you letter establishes good will and strengthens your *candidacy* (eligibility). This simple courtesy is observed by as few as 10 percent of job seekers. Your letter will serve as a reminder to those you met. Even if you are not hired for that position, the interviewer may remember you for future openings. He or she may even pass your name to someone else who is searching for an early childhood employee.

More people now send thank-you letters to interviewers by e-mail. This is quite acceptable



33.17 Be sure to leave the interviewer with a positive impression of you.

to most employers. Whether you use e-mail or regular mail, the key is to be prompt. Always send your thank-you letter within two days of the interview. Better yet, send it the same day to show your interest.

These letters should be sent to everyone who was involved in the interview process. In addition to thanking them, you can restate your interest in the position and re-emphasize your qualifications. Point out the match between the job requirements and your experience. Also provide any important information that you did not share in the cover letter, résumé, or interview.

Employee Rights and Responsibilities

As an employee, you have certain rights that are protected by law. You also have other rights that are granted by your employer through personnel policies. Rights come with responsibilities, however. Some of an early childhood teacher's responsibilities are defined by law. Others have been set by NAEYC in the Code of Ethical Conduct. (See Appendix A for more information about the Code of Ethical Conduct.)

Knowing your employee rights will help you ensure that those rights are respected. Employees desire a work environment in which their rights are honored. Similarly, being aware of your responsibilities helps you be the best employee possible. When you understand what is expected of you, you can comply with all program policies and state child care licensing requirements. Following these guidelines will ensure that your work contributes to the quality of the program and builds the program's reputation.

In many ways, your employee rights parallel responsibilities your employer has to you. For example, it is your employer's responsibility to make sure your right to a safe workplace is met in accordance with federal and state laws. Likewise, your employer has the right to receive a full day's work in exchange for a full day's pay. It is your responsibility as an employee to provide this work in a manner that meets the employer's expectations.

Employee Rights

Employers have an ethical responsibility to create a quality workplace. The employer should strive to offer a supportive early childhood environment where both children and adults can reach their potential. This type of environment will encourage you to focus on your work and find satisfaction in it (Figure 33.18).

In addition, your employer's policies may grant you other rights. When you begin a new position, ask for a copy of the employee handbook or other personnel papers. This information should outline your employee rights and responsibilities as defined by the employer. These are in addition to any rights and responsibilities protected by law.

Most importantly, you are entitled to be treated fairly by your employer as outlined in the handbook. All employees should be treated equally according to the terms set forth by the employer. Make it a point to familiarize yourself with the handbook. This will help you obtain all the benefits to which you are entitled and adhere to the employer's rules and expectations.



33.18 Early childhood teachers are happiest and most effective in a quality work environment.

Workplace Connections

Investigate how child care workers are licensed in your state. During your investigation, answer the following questions:

1. Does your state require child care workers and educators in licensed facilities to obtain continuing education credit each year? If so, how many hours are required?
2. Are licensed centers required to offer classes or workshops for their employees? Are they required to pay for the employees to attend continuing education?

Early childhood programs have an ethical responsibility to provide a job orientation program for new hires. *Job orientation programs* are activities designed to acquaint you with the workplace. You should receive an overview of the program, its policies and procedures, and your employer's expectations of you. Any other training needed for your position should be part of the orientation period.

Another ethical practice is supportive supervision for employees. Your supervisor should assist you by answering questions, solving problems, and recommending areas for improvement. Early childhood programs should provide ongoing training to meet licensing requirements and improve the quality of the program. Workshops or classes that may be offered include curriculum, technology, child guidance strategies, parent engagement, health, safety, and communication skills. Supervision and ongoing training promote professional growth and job satisfaction.

In addition to employer-granted rights, many employee rights are protected by federal and state laws (Figure 33.19). Employers have an obligation to understand and adhere to these laws. Your employer has a legal responsibility to observe all federal and state labor laws. In addition, all applicable federal and state payroll, wage, and income tax laws must be followed. You have legal rights regarding some aspects of employee benefits and insurance. Federal laws give you the right to work in an environment free from

discrimination and sexual harassment. You have the right to a safe work environment.

In specified medical and family situations, your employer must allow you to take up to 12 weeks unpaid leave per year and hold your job (or an equivalent job) until your leave ends. These are only a few examples—you have many other employee rights that are protected by law.

Employee Responsibilities

When you accept an early childhood teaching position, you agree to fulfill certain responsibilities. You agree to do the job for which your employer is paying you. First and foremost, you are responsible for complying with all center policies and state child care licensing requirements. You must also adhere to the ethical standards of the profession, as set forth in NAEYC's Code of Ethical Conduct.

An early childhood teacher's role is to provide the children with developmentally appropriate, responsive care. Your employer has a responsibility to create a quality work environment. You have a responsibility to maintain and contribute to the quality of the program. To do this, you must have good attendance and be punctual. You should also have a professional appearance, model a positive attitude, and maintain confidentiality. When necessary, you are also responsible for seeking help from your supervisor.

Figure 33.19 Employee Rights Protected by Law

- Labor, pay, tax, and benefit administration procedures in accordance with laws
- Equal pay for equal work regardless of gender
- Freedom from workplace discrimination
- Freedom from sexual harassment
- Safe work environment
- Reasonable workplace accommodations for workers with disabilities
- Right to take specified unpaid leave to attend to covered family and medical conditions

Workplace Connections

If possible, obtain a copy of an employee handbook from a local child care facility. Examine it for rights and responsibilities of both employee and employer. If a handbook cannot be obtained, list the rights you would expect as an employee of a child care center.

1. What do you believe are the rights and responsibilities of employers?
2. How can knowing these provide the basis for a respectful and productive employee-employer relationship?

Attendance and Punctuality

Your employer has the right to expect a full day's work from you in exchange for the pay you earn. You have a responsibility to maintain good work attendance and be *punctual* (on time). The director, staff members, and parents count on you to be at work every day. You should arrive a few minutes early each day or at least be on time.

Being even a few minutes late causes extra work and stress for your coworkers and director. State licensing rules and regulations specify required adult-child ratios at all times. This means the director must make other arrangements to cover your classroom if you are absent or late. If no one can cover for you, this places your program at risk for noncompliance. The center can receive a licensing violation for being understaffed. Legally, the center can also be at risk if a child is seriously injured when required ratios are not met. Repeated violations can cause a center to lose its license. In addition to legal responsibilities, you have an ethical obligation to the families and children you serve, as well as to your coworkers and director.

For these reasons, repeated absenteeism or tardiness is a serious performance problem. Many programs have attendance and tardiness policies. If you fail to follow these policies, you are likely to be fired from your job. Even if no written attendance policies are in place, you can lose your job as a result of repeated attendance problems.

Professional Appearance

You have an ethical obligation to your employer to maintain a professional appearance and represent your program in a professional manner. Parents, children, visitors, and coworkers may base their initial impressions of you on your appearance. For example, parents may feel that a teacher wearing a casual two-piece outfit is more intelligent and nurturing than a teacher wearing jeans. People may equate your grooming and dress with how seriously you take your work. These assessments may not be accurate, but they occur nevertheless.

Looking professional requires good grooming and avoiding extremes in hairstyles and clothing. Being well groomed involves both cleanliness and neatness (Figure 33.20). Follow good hygiene



33.20 Facility directors should present a neat, clean appearance with their dress and grooming.

practices, such as showering or bathing daily. Keep your hair clean, groomed, and simply styled. If you have long hair, try to keep it out of your face. Tying your hair back while working with young children will prevent children from pulling it. This also prevents loose hair from falling into the children's faces.

When you work with young children, you will need comfortable, washable clothing that allows for easy movement. Avoid tight or restrictive clothing in which it is difficult to move. Your clothes should be clean and neat. Clothing should not be wrinkled, frayed, stained, or ripped.

Male and female teachers alike often prefer washable slacks because these are comfortable yet convey a professional appearance. Most early childhood programs consider sweatpants, shorts, and spandex leggings unacceptable. Females can wear skirts or dresses, but these can be less comfortable for playing with children outside or on the floor.

FOCUS ON HEALTH

Employee Health Appraisals

As part of protecting the health and safety of young children, all early childhood staff members who work 40 hours or more per month should have regular health appraisals. The first screening takes place prior to working with children. Additional screenings take place every two years. These health appraisals include

- a complete health history
- physical, dental, vision, and hearing exams
- tuberculosis test
- a review of immunization status with immunization boosters given as needed
- a review of occupational health concerns as related to functioning on the job, such as back problems that might interfere in caring for children

In addition to regular health appraisals, it is strongly recommended that early childhood teachers have yearly influenza vaccinations.

Sweaters or shirts should be washable, casual business attire. T-shirts are often considered inappropriate, especially those with crude sayings or graphics. Tube, halter, sleeveless, cropped, and low-cut tops are always inappropriate for the early childhood workplace. Avoid displaying tattoos or wearing jewelry in multiple piercings. Jewelry of any sort can be grabbed and pulled by young children.

For directors, more dressy business attire may be appropriate, depending on the program. Directors interact more with parents, visitors, and teachers than directly with children. Male directors might wear dress slacks, shirt, and tie, with a jacket for more formal occasions. Female directors might wear dresses, skirts, and pantsuits.

Positive Attitude

Much of your success as a child care professional will depend on your attitude. Your

attitude is your outlook on life—the ways in which you think about or act toward others. Finding great pleasure in teaching requires a positive attitude, which enables you to see the potential in any child, parent, staff member, situation, or idea. Instead of seeing limitations, a person with a positive attitude seeks opportunities (Figure 33.21).

People with a positive attitude want to do well. They take responsibility for their decisions. Teachers who have a positive attitude view working with young children as a chance for continuous learning. They seek knowledge about child development, guidance, and curriculum. These teachers are easy to recognize on the job. They welcome suggestions on improving their skills for working with young children. Employers enjoy workers who demonstrate a positive attitude.



33.21 Maintaining a positive attitude will make you an asset to your center and can promote your relationships with coworkers.

Confidentiality

As a teacher of young children, you will have access to a wide range of privileged information. You may see personal records and learn private information about others. For example, you may know which children do and do not receive child care tuition assistance. Daniel's parents may share with you personal information about their divorce to help you work with Daniel in the most understanding way. You may know that Juana's mother has cancer, and Kevin may tell you about his father leaving the family.

In most cases, you must keep sensitive personal information private. This is called keeping **confidentiality**. It means not sharing this information with others beyond what is required by your work. Keeping confidentiality protects and shows respect for children, families, coworkers, and the program itself.

Confidentiality does have some limits. For example, you can and should share information about children and families with certain coworkers for reasons relevant to the job. You should inform other staff members who work with a child about the child's special medical, physical, or learning needs. This information helps the staff provide appropriate care and learning experiences. Likewise, you may need to inform your director about the unethical practices of a coworker after you have tried unsuccessfully to resolve the matter with that person. This information helps the director keep the children healthy and safe.

Child abuse and neglect present another exception to confidentiality. The law requires that cases of abuse and neglect be reported to the proper state agency. If you suspect neglect or abuse, follow your program's policy for making this report. Your legal responsibility as a mandated reporter outweighs your responsibility to keep private information. In this case, you are required by law to break confidentiality.

In most other cases, it is unacceptable to break confidentiality. For example, you should not

Workplace Connections

Imagine the following situation: While in the grocery store checkout lane, you overhear two of your coworkers discussing the family situation of a little girl in their class. The girl's father is in jail, and the family is now on public assistance.

1. What is your responsibility concerning the situation?
2. Why should you be concerned with what child care coworkers do on their own time?

gossip with your coworkers, friends, or family members about the children and families at the center. Avoid discussing the personal matters of coworkers or talking to parents about other families. These practices are unethical. If parents learn you have broken confidentiality, they may feel betrayed. Their resulting suspicion could cause long-term damage to the reputations of you and your program. Broken trust can strain coworker relationships and undermine teamwork.

Some centers ask their employees to sign confidentiality agreements. These agreements protect the confidentiality of a program's families, children, and fellow employees. A confidentiality agreement should specify with whom various types of information can and cannot be shared. If an employee violates this agreement, the employee loses his or her job.

At times, knowing which information to keep private can be challenging. It is always best to err on the side of caution. When considering whether to share personal or private information about other people, always ask yourself the questions in [Figure 33.22](#). Base your decision on your answers to these questions.

Terminating Employment

You will have many jobs during the course of your lifetime. Job changes are common today, and employee turnover is high for all age groups.

Figure 33.22 Deciding When to Share Private Information

- What is my purpose for sharing the information? Does my disclosure help the child or family in any important way?
- With whom am I sharing the information? Does this person have a need or right to know?
- Whose privacy is involved? How might this person feel about me sharing this information with others? If I am unsure, have I asked him or her?
- How would my supervisor feel about me sharing this information? If I am unsure, have I asked him or her?
- How might sharing this information negatively affect my current position and my career? Is the disclosure legally or ethically important enough to take these risks?

There are many reasons why people leave their jobs. Some of these reasons include the following:

- offered a better job
- desire for better pay or fringe benefits
- desire for better working conditions or hours
- seeking more opportunities for advancement
- looking for new challenges and responsibilities
- making better use of personal skills and abilities
- a conflict with supervisors or coworkers at current job
- transportation problems

A change in personal lifestyle can lead to a job change. For example, a person may need to change jobs if a spouse is transferred to another city. A family move can lead to a job change. Marriage, divorce, death, or the birth of children can create new job requirements. Others leave their jobs to further their education. Sometimes health problems can dictate a job or environment change.

Before a job change is made, it is important to think through your options. Carefully weigh

the pros and cons of leaving your current job for another job. If you decide a job change is needed, resist the urge to leave your old job immediately. Instead, start looking for a new job before leaving your current job, if at all possible. Be sure you have enough money set aside to carry you over to your next paycheck. If you do not have enough money in savings, you may want to keep your current job until you find a better one.

There is a right way to leave your job. You want to leave under the best possible circumstances. Inform your employer before you tell your coworkers. Do so at least two weeks prior to your leaving. This allows your employer time to find your replacement.

Give notice to your employer in person, but also provide a written letter of resignation. This letter should state your last day of work and why you are leaving. It can be brief, but it should be positive. Thank your employer for the opportunity to work there. Describe how you have benefited from your job. You might offer to train your replacement, if appropriate.

Before you leave, continue to do your job as you always have. If you work directly with children, prepare them for your departure. Be pleasant to your coworkers as you may work with them again in a different job. Do not complain about your current job, nor brag about your new one. Thank coworkers for their help and friendship.

Balancing Multiple Roles

One of the most challenging tasks for workers is to balance their many roles. A **role** is a set of responsibilities that accompanies a position you hold in life. Each person has several roles. For example, some of these roles include wage earner, spouse, parent, son or daughter (and other family relationships), friend, citizen, and volunteer. Every role has demands and responsibilities. Achieving harmony among various roles is challenging but important.

Many adults feel **role strain**, a type of stress created by being unable to successfully balance

multiple roles. Anyone can feel role strain, but it is most common in single-parent and dual-career families. In these families, parents arrive home from a day's work and must assume home-care and parenting tasks in the evenings (Figure 33.23). Errands must also be squeezed into evening and weekend hours. Working parents often feel they are juggling too many responsibilities with too little time to devote to them. Too many times, their personal and relationship needs go unmet. Having unmet needs adds to the level of stress they feel.

Even as a young person, you have several roles. You are a son or daughter, student, friend, community member, and perhaps also a worker or volunteer. As a family member, you may be expected to help with family tasks, attend family events, and spend quality time with the family (such as evening meals). As a student, you have homework, tests, and projects to complete. Extracurricular activities, such as clubs or sports, bring additional roles. Friends will want you to

spend time with them. Volunteer or part-time work creates even more demands on your time.

Making time for all these roles can be an enormous challenge. Learning to manage your time is a valuable tool. Planning can help you meet your most important duties. Although you might like to, you will not always be able to say yes to everything. Setting priorities will help you decide which activities to let go. Learning to say no in a positive, unapologetic way will be useful, too.

Staying healthy will help you meet your many obligations. Getting adequate rest, nutrition, and physical activity will allow you to feel your best. You also need personal time to relax, think, and plan. Strengthening relationships with family and friends will promote your social and emotional development.

To succeed in a child care career, you will need to strike a balance among your many roles. The way in which you do this will likely be as unique as you are. However, finding this balance matters more than exactly how you achieve it.



33.23 When working parents come home, they often find their children are eager to spend time with them.

Chapter 33 Review

Summary

Choosing a career involves a process of self-assessment. Your answers to many important questions can help you decide if you are well suited to a career in teaching.

Searching for an early childhood career is a rewarding but sometimes frustrating experience. While each person's search differs, there are some general guidelines to follow. Start with a résumé. Include a cover letter. Use your résumé when you meet with or talk to prospective employers.

When you obtain an interview, be prepared. Bring your teaching portfolio. Conduct yourself in a professional manner and show your enthusiasm for working with young children.

Knowing your rights as an employee helps you receive the full benefits to which you are entitled. Understanding your responsibilities allows you to do your work as your employer expects. Achieving a healthy role balance will promote your success as an early education professional.

Check Your Career IQ

Now that you have read the chapter, check your comprehension by taking the chapter posttest.

Recall and Review

1. Why are interests and abilities important considerations in choosing a career?
2. Explain the differences between values and professional priorities.
3. What should be included on a résumé?
4. Why is it important to proofread your résumé before sending it?
5. Explain how a recent graduate could stress job experience on his or her résumé.
6. Why is it important to include key words from a job description on an electronic résumé?
7. What is the *hidden job market*?
8. Why should you prepare questions to ask at a job interview?

9. What should you do if an interviewer asks you what your weaknesses are?
10. What is the function of a teaching portfolio?
11. List three types of questions that are illegal for an employer to ask during an interview.
12. Why should you write a thank-you letter to your interviewer following a job interview?
13. How do employee rights relate to employer responsibilities?
14. Explain why keeping confidentiality is important for professionals in early childhood.
15. What does it mean to balance multiple roles?

Vocabulary Activity

16. With a partner, use the internet to locate photos or graphics that depict the terms. Print the graphics or use presentation software to show your graphics to the class, describing how they depict the meanings of the terms.

Critical Thinking

17. **Analyze.** Why is professionalism important in early childhood education? How are professional ethics related to professionalism?
18. **Draw Conclusions.** Prepare a résumé according to the instructions in this chapter. When you finish, form small groups and discuss your classmates' résumés. Draw conclusions about how you might improve each résumé.
19. **Identify.** In small groups, research online job boards for early childhood education. Identify at least seven job databases and make a list of titles for early childhood education positions. What are the typical key words used? What are typical job descriptions?
20. **Determine.** Write a brief description of your teaching style from your experiences. Look at evaluations from teachers and supervisors and include remarks that show what others think about your teaching style. Determine what comments and examples you would include in a portfolio to demonstrate your style and approach to education.

21. **Analyze.** Prepare a teaching portfolio and practice describing the contents to a classmate. Afterward, discuss with a classmate to analyze how each component of your portfolio demonstrates your skills, interests, or abilities. Based on your classmate's analysis, are there any components you would add or replace?
22. **Evaluate.** Review your school or work attendance records for the last several years, paying particular attention to absences and tardiness. Write a paragraph about your understanding of the relationship between good attendance and successful job performance.

Core Skills

23. **Writing.** Choose one job description and write a cover letter tailored to that job. Be sure to include key words from the description and to explain why you are the best candidate for the position.
24. **Math.** Using the Internet, research salaries for early childhood and child care teachers in at least three different regions and then compile your data into a graph representation of the statistics. Present your graph to the class and discuss factors that might contribute to teacher salaries in various regions.
25. **Speaking.** Choose a partner and then role-play a job interview for an early childhood education job you have seen posted. Prepare questions as both an interviewer and interviewee. Finally, interview each other. Give each other feedback on how to improve interviewing skills.
26. **Social Studies and Writing.** Using reliable online or print resources, research information about Federal Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) laws that protect workers' rights. What areas of discrimination fall under the jurisdiction of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)? What current initiatives of the EEOC are helping to promote and provide employment for youth, people with disabilities, and displaced workers? After compiling your information, write a short essay summarizing your findings and citing your sources.
27. **Reading and Writing.** Locate and then read an article about confidentiality in the child care center. Write a short review of the article and compare the information in the article to the information covered in this text.
28. **Writing.** Make lists of your short-term and long-term career goals. Write a summary explaining how your short-term goals will help you attain your long-term goals. Include how these career decisions will affect your caregiving qualities.
29. **Listening.** Attend a meeting of a local chapter of NAEYC. Talk with a variety of members to learn about their work.
30. **CTE Career Readiness Practice.** Locate and then attend a local job fair where early childhood organizations will be present. Before the job fair, research the organizations present and prepare a list of questions you want to ask. Talk with representatives to learn about their work and ask your questions. Ask representatives for advice on choosing and searching for a career in early childhood education.

Portfolio Project

31. Review all the courses you are enrolled in. Evaluate each course as it relates to a future career in early childhood education or other work associated with children. Write next to each course how it contributes to a career with children. Look over the portfolio you have assembled for this course and make note of all the projects and samples that are related to English, math, social studies, science, art, music, health, and physical education.