

Are You up to the Test?

A look at employment tests, following directions, and teamwork

Lesson Author

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Lesson Description

Students explore the hiring process employers use to select strong candidates from a larger pool of candidates. They will hear firsthand what employers are looking for by watching short video clips from the *Maximum Employment Matters* webinar series. Students will discuss why earning income is important and why they should constantly work on increasing their human capital. Finally, students simulate an employment test and show they can follow detailed instructions and work in teams by creating a chain using different colored construction paper.

Grade Level

6–8, 9–12

Concepts

| | | |
|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Earning income | Career path | Division of labor |
| Teamwork | Career cluster | Specialization |
| Job versus career | Soft skills | Human capital |
| Skills mismatch | Productivity | Employment tests |

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Relate how staying in school and learning new skills increase human capital and productivity.
- Identify non-income factors that influence career and job choice.
- Determine the correlation of personal preference, education, and training to the demands of the workforce.
- Demonstrate appropriate workplace behaviors and strategies for increased productivity.

Time required

60 minutes

Materials

[PowerPoint slides \(“Are You up to the Test?”\)](https://atlfed.org/3Je0Kv5) (<https://atlfed.org/3Je0Kv5>)

Two different colors of construction paper

Scissors, ruler, and tape for each student

Technology to stream a video clip

Optional: computer to incorporate PowerPoint slides



Procedures

Instructions for using the PowerPoint are in italics below.

1. *Display slide 1.* Explain to students that once they have completed school, most of them will start the process of looking for a job. Having a career is an important part of **earning income** and becoming independent. People choose jobs or careers for which they are qualified based on the income they expect to earn and the benefits, such as health insurance coverage or a retirement plan, they expect to receive.
2. *Display slide 2.* Ask the students, “What is the difference between a **job and a career**?” Students will most likely have several answers, but careers are based on working at jobs in the same occupation or profession for many years.
3. *Display slide 3.* Inform the students that by going to school, they are developing **human capital**. Human capital is the skills, knowledge, and training people possess, measured by their economic value. (Note: a human capital infographic is available for free at <https://www.atlantafed.org/education/teach/infographic-posters/human-capital>.) Staying in school and learning new job skills can increase a person’s human capital and **productivity**. Explain to students productivity is a measure of the efficiency of a person, machine, or factory in converting input into useful outputs. Ask the students, “What is a skill you have learned that has made you more productive?” Possible answers may include learning how to drive a car versus riding a bike or walking, or using a computer versus writing on paper. These are skills that increase your productivity and will help you get a job.
4. *Display slide 4.* Explain to students that **career paths** are groups of jobs within a **career cluster**. Career clusters contain several career paths. You can start in a lower-level job in a career path and, with more education and experience, move up within that path. People choose career paths for which they are qualified based on many reasons. Some are based on potential income. Ask the students, “What other factors would lead someone toward a specific career path?” Possible responses may include choices based on non-income factors such as job satisfaction, independence, risk, family, or location.
5. *Display slide 5.* Tell students that teaching was the career path you chose. Ask them to identify some of the human capital you had to develop to be qualified to teach. (Help students understand the correlation between personal preference, education, and the training they will need to be successful in the workforce.)
 - Guide the conversation by sharing why you became a teacher and perhaps by offering the idea that helping people learn has always been rewarding for you and becoming a teacher was a good fit.
 - Your personal preference of wanting to be a teacher required a minimum of an undergraduate degree. Teachers not only have to be proficient in content, they must also learn effective teaching strategies to be successful in this career path.
 - Additional training outside of college was necessary as well. Successful teachers are patient, have strong communication skills, and are able to juggle several responsibilities at one time.
 - Ask, does a teacher need to have high productivity?
 - o Discuss grading papers, administrative tasks, and so forth.
 - Why would an employer want to hire someone who continuously develops their human capital and has high productivity?



- o Answers may vary, but essentially employers want to hire the best candidate for the job. Hiring someone who is knowledgeable or has the best skills makes the business or organization stronger. These characteristics also show employers you will most likely be able to keep up with changing industry trends.
6. Now we are going to listen to an industry expert talk about what employers are looking for in strong job candidates.

Maximum Employment Matters on manufacturing

<https://atlfed.org/3LJMqfA>

- Play part of clip 8 (23:11–29:30): What are manufacturers looking for in an employee? Discuss the following questions.
 - *Display slide 6.* What are some of the characteristics of successful hires?
 - o Work well in teams
 - o Show mutual respect for coworkers
 - o Follows directions
 - o Learn new processes (therefore, continuously developing human capital)
 - *Display slide 7.* What are staffing agencies and why would a business use one?
 - o Staffing agencies help match workers looking for a job with companies that want to hire. The staffing agency takes on the recruiting and screening responsibilities. Companies may use this as a way to bring on new workers on a trial basis to make sure they are a good fit. If it is a good fit, the companies may eventually bring the worker on full-time.
 - What does **skills mismatch** mean?
 - o Skills mismatch is defined as the gap between an individual’s job skills and the demands of the job market.
 - This clip focused on jobs in manufacturing. What are some of the careers mentioned other than “skilled labor” jobs?
 - o Accounting, budgeting, procurement
 - o Marketing, public relations
 - o Information technology
 - o Supply chain management
- Play part of clip 10 (43:01–44:44): What is important for educators to teach our high school students who want to work in the manufacturing industry?
 - *Display slide 8.* What are soft skills?
 - o Soft skills are a combination of people skills, social skills, communication skills, character traits, attitudes, career attributes, social intelligence, and emotional intelligence that enable people to navigate their environment, work well with others, perform well, and achieve their goals with complementing hard skills.

- What is a process or employment test?
 - o According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, employers often use tests and other selection procedures to screen applicants for hire and employees for promotion. There are many different types of tests and selection procedures, including cognitive tests, personality tests, medical exams, credit checks, and criminal background checks.

Assessment

Display slide 9. In this section, students will participate in a formative assessment to simulate an employment test. Inform the students they are all candidates for a job. They have been called into the staffing agency to participate in an employment test. The students will use construction paper and tape to create a paper chain. Note: You will want to choose construction paper colors that will complement each other. You will need a primary and accent colored paper. You may want to use school colors or holiday themed colors and hang the chains in your classroom or outside in the hallway.

Give the following instructions to the students.

- *Display slide 10.* You will have 10 minutes to create a chain using the PowerPoint instructions.
 - o You should have two sheets of a primary color and two sheets of an accent colored paper.
 - o Fold the paper in half so the top and bottom of the page meet.
 - o Using a ruler, measure and mark two-inch columns across the paper.
 - o Cut the paper into two-inch strips for a total of four strips. Then cut the strips in the center where it was folded for a total of eight strips per piece of paper.
 - o To assemble the chain, take a strip of paper and join the ends with tape, creating a circle. Take the next strip and insert it through the middle of the circle and join the ends with tape. Continue this process using the following sequence.
 1. Six strips of primary
 2. Four strips of accent
 3. Two strips of primary
 4. Six strips of accent
 5. Four strips of primary
 6. Two strips of accent
- After the 10-minute time limit, ask if any of the candidates completed the task. If no one completed the task, who came the closest? Recognize the student(s) and inform the class there is one more component to the test.
- *Display slide 11.* Students will now work in teams of four to complete their chains and join the four chains together. Inform the group that **teamwork** is a crucial part of a business. It is often necessary for colleagues to work well together. Students will have another 10 minutes to work as a team to create the longest chain. They must keep the original sequence listed above. You may want to provide additional construction paper, if needed.
- Once the 10 minutes have elapsed, determine which team(s) has the longest chain. Congratulate the group. They are all hired!

Are You up to the Test? (Updated 2020)

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7. *Display slide 12.* Inform students some jobs allow you to work as an individual and others require teamwork. There are unique skills required to work as a team.

- Ask the students:
 - o What are some of the differences between working by yourself and working with your team?
 - o What are some of the advantages of working with a team?
 - o Ask the group that won how they divided up the tasks.

Most likely, tasks were divided into cutting strips or assembling the chain. Explain to the students that **division of labor** is the assignment of different parts of a process to different people who may **specialize**. The student cutting the strips was specializing in that process. Through specialization, workers become more efficient and productive. The person who was cutting may have realized he or she could maximize efficiency by cutting more than one piece of paper at a time. This ultimately makes the team and the business more productive.

Display slide 13.

- What are some of the soft skills you used?
- Was communication important when working with your team?
- What are some of the things your team talked about?
- Did you see an increase in productivity?

Closure

Display slide 14. As closure, have each group write down three things they learned about developing human capital and/or productivity, two things they have questions about when it comes to determining a career path, and one thing students felt was most valuable from this lesson. This will be their exit ticket at the end of class.