



Tips for Discussing Career Plans with Family¹

It will be important to discuss your education and career plans with your parents or other important adults in your life, especially if you want their advice or support.

This isn't always easy. Even if you have a great relationship with them, you may be looking at a career path they haven't thought about. Preparing for the conversation shows you've really thought things through.

Consider these tips that will help you have a more productive conversation.



Identify your goal for the conversation

Having a goal for your talk can help you keep it on track. You may want your parents to do one or more of these things:

- Listen to your plans without offering advice
- Give advice
- Provide emotional or financial support

Knowing what your goal is will allow you to say what you need when you propose the talk. For example:

- "Auntie, I don't want to do a business degree, even though that's how you started. I need you to just listen while I tell you about my reasons and what I want to do instead, OK?"
- "Kookum, I'm thinking of moving out and I need some advice. Can I come by tomorrow?"
- "Mom, dad? I want to tell you about an apprenticeship program I'm interested in. Can we talk?"



Figure out who to talk to

You may need to present your career plan in stages if you need to talk to more than one adult. If you have a great relationship with both parents, sit them down together. But if you're worried about a negative reaction from one of them, you may want to talk to the other adult first. This parent can support you when you speak to them together. You may also want to ask another trusted adult, such as a grandparent or family friend, to sit in on the discussion.



Pick the right time to talk

Asking for tuition while your dad is struggling to pay for emergency house repairs may not get you the goal you want. Make sure none of you are tired or hungry. Choose a time when you think everyone can concentrate on what you're saying.

- Start with "Can we talk?" or "Do you have time for a chat?" If they suggest a different time, clear your schedule. They'll be better prepared to listen if they choose the time.
- Going for a walk or a drive means you don't need to make eye contact. Some people find this an easier way to talk.

¹ The information in this worksheet is adapted from the article [How to Discuss Career Plans With Your Family](#) from Alberta Alis.





Talk so they will listen

- **Choose the right tone.** The way you talk can influence how well others listen, understand, and respond to you. By being respectful and enthusiastic, you increase the chances of achieving your goals.
- **Be clear and direct.** Since you've already done some career planning, you'll have details to give them. Try to think about the questions they might ask and find the answers before you meet. But don't worry about having every last detail in place. Your parents may have suggestions, especially if you're asking for advice.
- **Listen to what they have to say.** Just as you want your parents to hear you, you have to respect them by hearing them out. This is especially true if you don't agree with what they're saying. By listening with an open mind, you may find that some of their points are valid. Or you may be able to offer information that can lay their worries to rest.



Consider their point of view

Most of the important adults in your life are motivated by their love and concern for you. Think about issues they may raise and find respectful ways to present solutions. For example:

"Mom, I know that living here while I study will save money. And I know you're worried about my safety because you love me. Do you want to go over the budget I've drawn up to see where I can make it better? And I've pulled up the safety and security suggestions for the campus residence. What else should we add to this list?"

Consider their career plans and choices. What did they want to be when they were your age? Are they happy with what they decided? They will be thinking about their own experiences when you have your conversation, so be prepared for those memories to shape their responses.

The nature of work for your generation may look different from what they experienced. You'll probably have many occupations during your career. If you can show them that the skills you want to develop will qualify you for different occupations, they may feel relieved. Your plan will prepare you for this changing economy.



Plan for obstacles

You may not achieve your goals on the first try. Your parents may have had other ideas for you. Give them time if they need it.

You should also think about your options if your parents can't or don't support you, even after some time has gone by. When you research your career and educational goals, think about alternatives. Look into different ways you can pay for your own education.

You are giving your family a lot to think about. They may or may not be as enthusiastic as you are about your career plan. By showing them you understand the choice you're making, you'll be able to have a better conversation about it.

