

# Career skills

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# Making chocolate teapots: Striving for ‘good’ youth work Career skills

**Policy brief, November 2021**  
Ilke Grosemans and Nele De Cuyper

## TOP TIPS FOR CAREER MANAGEMENT

**Societal changes, such as digitalisation or globalisation, are leading to changes in the labour market and jobs.**

While important for everyone, investing in one’s employability to adapt to these changes is particularly valuable for young adults at the early stages of their careers.

Our research on education-to-work transitions identified three elements that are important when entering the labour market.



### ✓ Invest in developing career-related competencies

Many career competencies or skills have been identified in the past. In general, three categories are considered: (a) knowing-how relates to the skills and expertise you have that are relevant for your (future) job, (b) knowing-why refers to your motivation and values, for example what you find important in your future job, and (c) knowing-whom refers to the depth and breadth of your professional network. Our research indicates that young people who have stronger career competencies before entering the labour market are more likely to start in a job that fits their prior education, stressing the value of these competencies in the early career (Grosemans & De Cuyper, 2021).

### ✓ Go beyond formal learning for career-enhancing activities

To develop key skills, people often think in terms of taking additional courses or attending seminars and presentations. These activities are certainly valuable, but we encourage young people to learn informally too as this may be especially useful for developing career-related competencies. An example is to ask for feedback or to “learn by watching”, which can be very helpful in gaining insight into your own strengths before entering the labour market (Grosemans, Smet, Houben, De Cuyper, & Kyndt, 2020).

### ✓ Make a deliberate choice when entering the labour market

Finding a job can be a difficult process and it is tempting to quickly accept a job offer, even if this job does not fit your educational background. However, our research has shown that underemployment at the beginning of one’s career can have effects in the long-term, creating additional future career boundaries (Grosemans, Vangrieken, Coertjens, & Kyndt, 2020).

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