TEN STEPS TO A CAREER IN THE ARTS
Mississippi Arts Commission
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(601) 359-6030/phone
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(800) 582-2233 TDD (Mississippi Relay Service)
www.arts.state.ms.us
1. Knowing what’s right for you

- Career considerations
  a. Structure vs. free-style
  b. How much time, energy, and money are you willing to devote to prepare yourself for a career in the arts?
  c. Can you handle disappointments and rejections – they can be a part of pursing a career in the arts. Learn to turn these negatives into positive aspects of growth.
  d. How motivated and enthusiastic are you?
  e. Are you willing to start at an entry level? Can your lifestyle and expenses handle sporadic income streams? Or are you dependent on long-term job security?
  f. Are you willing to work long hours?
  g. Are you persistent?
  h. How well do you work under pressure? Can you handle stress?
  i. Are you willing to travel as part of your work? Would you be willing to move to find work?
2. The self-assessment process - Be totally honest with yourself about your skills, interests, values, and personality.
   a. Skills
      What do you do best?
      What are your strengths and weaknesses?
      What skills do you want to use on the job?
      What skills might you still need to acquire?
   b. Interests (See Appendix A)
      What are some of your interests?
      What tasks, jobs, academic courses, and other activities have you enjoyed the most?
      What kinds of people would you like to work with?
      What kinds of job settings would you enjoy?
      Do you have a marketable hobby?
   c. Values (See Appendix B)
      What satisfaction do you seek from a career?
      In what ways must you be challenged and rewarded on the job?
      In what types of work environments would you be happiest?
      What do you value most? (See Appendix B)
   d. Personality
      What personal qualities do you possess that will help on the job?
      (e.g., patience, compassion, competitiveness)
      What personal qualities do you possess that might cause problems?
      (e.g., shyness, impatience, disorganization)
   e. Getting additional guidance on self-evaluation (See Appendix C)
3. Identifying and researching your options and designing a course of action
   a. Read books by professionals in your chosen field to learn; read biographies about people in those careers. (Example: For Visual Artists, *Living the Artist’s Way* by Paul Dorrell – a practical and realistic resource for artists, designers, writers, and others who believe in the value of their vision – it is a guide to growing, persevering, and succeeding in the art world)
   b. Seek out several people with careers that interest you. Network! (Example: The Craftsmen’s Guild of Mississippi conducts craft demonstrations throughout the year. This is a wonderful opportunity to learn about the art form, as well as talk to the artist about how they earn their living. (www.mscraftsmensguild.org)
   c. Explore local community programs through youth organizations, parks and recreation departments, community college classes, adult enrichment courses.
   d. Investigate internships, apprenticeship opportunities, and job shadowing.
   e. Apply for a part-time job or volunteer for an organization that works in the field that you are interested in to see if a career in this area is right for you. Summer art camps offer great learning experiences in the arts. (check with local arts councils)
   f. Explore the Internet. It can make a tremendous impact on an artist’s work.

*(See Appendix D for Career Opportunities)*
- Career opportunities in the Literary Arts
- Career opportunities in the Performing Arts
- Career opportunities for Visual Artists
- Career opportunities in Arts Services
4. Getting more education and professional experience (*See Appendix E*)
   - Competitions and contests
   - Finding a professional mentor (and what to expect from a mentor)
   - Internships, apprenticeships and other informal training
   - Vocational and rehabilitation services
   - Choose an appropriate college or university program (college and university arts programs; performing and visual arts college fairs)

5. Getting financial aid for education
   - Loans
   - Scholarships
   - Resources for finding financial aid and scholarships
   - Assistance for individuals with disabilities
6. Making a good first impression *(See Appendix F)*
   - Interview basics
   - Marketing yourself and your talent
   - Resume’ basics for performing, visual and literary artists
   - For people with disabilities: Know your rights as an interviewee

7. Job search basics
   - Places to begin your job search
   - One-stop career centers
   - The art of networking
   - Creating a one-of-a-kind position: The employer proposal

8. The self-employment option *(See Appendix G)*
   - Possible barriers to self-employment
   - Resources for self-employed people and entrepreneurs
   - Steps towards self-employment
   - Tips for preparing a business plan *(see Appendix H)*
9. Mapping the road to success
   - Launching a successful career in Literary, Performing or Visual Arts
   - Talent agents, managers, auditions, portfolios, demo video/audiotapes, websites, headshots, postcards and flyers, e-mail address, professional membership organizations, artists’ statement, bio (vitae)
   - Bookkeeping, appointment books, taxes
   - Trade papers and talent directories
   - Network and talk to other artists
   - Pricing your work
   - Working with galleries
   - Juried exhibitions, artist registries, fellowships, residencies, grants, competitions and contests

10. Internship, apprenticeship and mentor opportunities in the arts:
    Contact arts organizations, arts councils and community groups to find out about opportunities to train and learn from professionals.

Finally, don’t be afraid to pick up the paint brush of your life and write a new page in the performance of your life.
Appendix A - Example of Interests

Helping others solve problems     Working with your mind
Leading or organizing others     Working with your hands
Doing structured activities     Working by yourself
Solving difficult problems     Working in teams
Managing events     Working with numbers

Appendix B – Values

Beauty     Fame     Helping Others     Recreation
Being Loved     Family     Integrity     Status
Civic Duty     Freedom     Learning     Success
Commitment     Friendship     Love     Wealth
Creativity     Happiness     Personal Growth     Wisdom/Intelligence
Excellence     Health     Power     Work
Appendix C – Getting Additional Guidance on Self-Assessment

The following places can provide counseling and advice, as well as administer vocational tests, to help you further clarify your career options:

- High school counselor’s office
- College or university career counseling department
- Local vocational rehabilitation office
- Professional career or vocational rehabilitation counselor’s office
- The U.S. Department of Labor “One Stop Shops,”
  (http://www.dol.gov/dol/accomplishments/ms.htm)

One Stop Career Centers: One Stop Career Centers are the focal point of America's workforce investment system, supporting the employment needs of job seekers and the human resource needs of business. At One Stop Centers, workers, job seekers, and other participants can receive training and education, build their skills, and access federal assistance programs, while employers use One Stop Centers to help recruit workers they need for their businesses.

Self-Assessment and career exploration resources:

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<tr>
<th>Books</th>
<th>Website</th>
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<tr>
<td>By Richard Nelson Bolles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ten Speed Press, 1999</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Pathfinder: How to Choose or Change Your Career for a Lifetime of Satisfaction and Success</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>By Nicholas Lore, Fireside, 1999</td>
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Appendix D – Careers in the Arts

Career Opportunities in the Literary Arts

- Advertising (Advertising Copywriter)
- Creative Writing (Author, Greeting Card Writer, Playwright, Poet, Screenwriter)
- Journalism (Critic, Journalist/Reporter, Editorial Writer, Feature Writer, Public Relations Officer)
- Editing (Book Publisher Editor, Copy Editor, Newspaper Editor, Proofreader)
- Library Work (Librarian)
- Business (Corporate Communications Manager, Literary Agent, Technical Writer, Technology Documentation Specialist, Translater)
- Other Careers in Literary Arts (Abstracter, Fact Checker, Indexer, Website Text Developer)

Career Opportunities in the Performing Arts

The Performing Arts include Theatre, Film, Television, Music and other recording arts, and dance. People interested in the performing arts can work in a variety of settings, including ballet companies, churches, circuses, dance companies, film companies, law firms, opera companies, orchestras, radio stations, recording studios, schools, social service organizations, symphony orchestras, television studios, and theatre. They can also freelance.

Performance
Actor
Back-up Musician
Comedian
Dancer
Disc Jockey
Game Show Host

Business
Booking Manager
Business Manager
Theater Membership or Visitor Services
Theater Store Retailer/Buyer
Theater Agent
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Singer</th>
<th>Circus Work</th>
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<tr>
<td>Talk Show Host</td>
<td>Animal Trainer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Television/Host Broadcaster</td>
<td>Clown</td>
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<td>Voiceover Artist</td>
<td>Circus Performer</td>
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<tr>
<th>Production and Direction</th>
<th>Miscellaneous Performing Arts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arranger</td>
<td>Arts and Entertainment Attorney</td>
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<td>Artistic Director</td>
<td>Audience Development Specialists</td>
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<tr>
<td>Casting Director</td>
<td>Audio Describer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Choral Director or Conductor</td>
<td>Children’s Theater Specialist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Choreographer</td>
<td>Company Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cinematographer</td>
<td>Dance Educator or Theater Educator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Director of New Play Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orchestral Music Librarian</td>
<td>Dramaturge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Producer</td>
<td>Sound Effects or Special Effects Artist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Production Manager</td>
<td>House Manager (Theater)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recording Engineer</td>
<td>Juggler, Magician, Puppeteer or Puppet Maker</td>
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<tr>
<td>Record Producer</td>
<td>Seamstress</td>
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<tr>
<td>Running Crew: Stage, Rigging</td>
<td>Performance Artist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stage or Production Manager</td>
<td>Set Decorator</td>
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<td>Technical Director</td>
<td>Stage Combat Trainer</td>
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<td>Stunt Artist</td>
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<td>Theater Access Manager, Theatre Tour Manager</td>
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<td>Theater Historian</td>
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<td>Theater Special Events Coordinator</td>
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<td>Theater Volunteer and/or Intern Coordinator</td>
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<td>Voice Dialect Coach</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Wig Master</td>
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<th>Design</th>
<th>Education and Services</th>
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<tr>
<td>Theatre Educator</td>
<td>Dance/Movement Therapist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Costume Designer</td>
<td>Instrument Repair</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lighting Designer</td>
<td>Restoration Specialist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Makeup Artist/Designer</td>
<td>Sign Language Interpreter</td>
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<td>Milliner</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scene Designer/Scenographer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sound Designer/Operator/Engineer</td>
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Career Opportunities for Visual Artists

**Fine Arts**
- Cartoonist
- Ceramicist
- Illustrator
- Painter
- Photographer
- Potter
- Printmaker
- Sculptor
- Taxidermist

**Design**
- Fashion Designer
- Fiber Arts and Textile Designer
- Floral Designer
- Framer
- Graphic Designer
- Jewelry Designer
- Merchandiser/Retail Display Designer
- Multimedia Designer
- Web Site Designer

**Museum/Gallery Work**
- Appraiser
- Archivist
- Art Handler
- Collections Manager
- Conservator
- Curator
- Education Director/Assistant/Associate
- Exhibition Designer
- Gallery Director/Manager
- Librarian
- Membership or Visitor Services
- Preparator
- Retailer/Buyer

**Advertising**
- Advertising Manager

**Business**
- Art Consultant
- Business Manager

**Education and Services**
- Art Educator
- Art Therapist

**Film**
- Animator

**Environmental and Product Designer**
- Architect
- Landscape Architect
- Interior Designer
Other Careers in Visual Arts
Aerial Photographer    Engraver    Environmental Designer    Museum or Gallery Access
Airbrush Artist    Etcher    Fashion Illustrator    Museum Special Events Coordinator
Architectural Model Builder    Furniture Designer    Museum Tour Manager
Architectural Renderer    Glass Blower    Museum Volunteer/Intern Coordinator
Art Director    Greeting Card Artist    Newspaper Illustrator
Art Historian    Industrial Designer    Presenter
Arts & Entertainment Attorney    Kitchenware Designer    Printer
Audience Development Specialist    Label Designer    Quick Sketch Artist
Billboard Artist    Letter Designer    Record Album Designer
Book Designer    Lithographer    Scientific Illustrator
Book Illustrator    Magazine Designer    Sign Maker
Business Form Designer    Mannequin Decorator    Silhouette Artist
Calligrapher    Medical Illustrator    Silkscreen Artist
Cartographer    Model Maker    Stained Glass Artist
Catalog Illustrator    Mural Artist    Stencil Cutter
Courtroom Artist    Mosaic Tile Artist    Toy Designer
Direct Mail Designer    Museum Administrator    Trademark Designer
Display Designer    Museum Artist    Urban Designer
Display Painter    Museum Coordinator    Video Game Designer
Drafter

Career Opportunities in Arts Services
Fundraiser
Grants Manager/Grant Writer
Nonprofit Arts Consultant
Public Relations Specialist
Researcher/Research Assistant
Local Arts Council
    Administrative Assistant
    Arts Administrator
    Program Manager
Appendix E – Vocational/Rehabilitation Services

Financial assistance
Guidance counseling
Job search and placement services
Supported employment
Testing and assessment, training, including on the job training

Appendix F – Jumpstarting Your Career

Be prepared
Present yourself well
Stand out from the crowd
Know your audience
Resumes (Note the difference in visual arts, performing arts, and a literary artist resume)
Portfolios
Promotional materials

*Individuals with disabilities: Know your rights!*
Appendix G – Self-Employment

Advantages
Being in charge of your own destiny
Using creativity to do work you enjoy while earning money
Having the freedom to set your own goals and limits
Having the potential for unlimited income and profit
Being free to set your own schedule and work hours
Being able to constantly challenge yourself
Belief that you have something unique to offer because of the personal touch you offer

Disadvantages
Unorganized
Lack of direction/focus/goals
No strategic plan, no benchmarks on what you present
Looking at life from a competitive perspective

Avenues of Successful
Be a self-starter
Develop your people skills
Be accountable to clients and customers
Learn your responsibility as a taxpayer
Learn to be decisive: How good are you at making decisions quickly?
How much can you count on the support of your family?
Do you have a friend or associate that can honestly evaluate your artistic presentation?
Appendix H – Preparing a Business Plan

According to the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), the final step before developing your business plan is to go through a pre-business checklist. You should answer these questions:

- What kind of business are you interested in starting?
- What services or products will you sell?
- Where will your business be located?
- What skills and experience do you bring to the business?
- What will be your legal structure (e.g., sole proprietorship, partnership, corporation)?
- What will you name your business?
- What insurance coverage will be needed? Liability, theft, life and health?
- What financing will you need?
- What are your resources (e.g., financial resources, human resources)?
- How will you compensate yourself?

The following outline is a guide for developing your business plan. While some components may not pertain to your field, most business plans contain most of these elements?

1. Cover sheet
2. Statement of purpose
3. Table of contents
   I. The Business
      A. Description of business
      B. Marketing
      C. Competition
      D. Operation procedures
E. Personnel  
F. Business insurance  
G. Financial data  

II. Financial Data  
A. Loan applications  
B. Capital equipment and supply list  
C. Balance sheet  
D. Breakeven analysis  
E. Pro forma income projections (profit and loss statements)  
   - Three-year summary  
   - Detail by months, first year  
   - Detail by quarters, second and third years  
   - Assumptions upon which projections were based  
F. Pro forma cash flow  

III. Supporting Documents  
A. Tax returns of principals for last three years  
B. Personal financial statement (all banks have these forms)  
C. In the case of a franchise business, a copy of the franchise contract and all supporting documents provided by the franchiser  
   - Copy of proposed lease or purchase agreement for building space  
   - Copies of licenses and other legal documents  
   - Copies of resumes of all principals  
   - Copies of Letters of Intent from suppliers and others  

For more information, please refer to the SBA Website (www.sba.gov)

This information has been adapted from another resource. For a complete review on this topic, please refer to Putting Creativity to Work – Careers in the Arts for People with Disabilities, Published by National Social Security Administration and VSA arts.