

A2 Achieve: Early Career Alignment Check

Choosing the *Right Place* to Start Your Career

This exercise is designed for recent college graduates who are deciding where they want to work, not just what job to take. Early career decisions shape your habits, confidence, skills, and momentum, but they don't have to lock you into a single path.

The goal of this exercise is to help you:

- Understand what kind of work environment helps you do your best work
- Identify what you need vs. what you're simply used to
- Create a simple filter for evaluating job offers, industries, and employers

There are no right or wrong answers. This is about clarity, not perfection.

Step 1: What Matters Most Right Now

Before comparing jobs or companies, pause and name what matters *at this stage of life*. List your top 3 priorities right now:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

(Examples: learning, stability, income, flexibility, mentorship, location, purpose, work-life balance)

Step 2: Your Time & Energy Reality Check

You only have so much time and energy. Different jobs ask for different amounts of each. How do you **WANT** to spend your time and energy?

Assign a percentage to each category. Total must equal 100%.

Category	Ideal %
Work / Job Responsibilities	_____
Learning & Skill Development	_____
Health & Energy (sleep, exercise, mental health)	_____
Social Life & Relationships	_____
Personal Interests / Hobbies	_____
Rest / Recovery	_____
Total	100%

How would a typical entry-level job actually use your time?

(Fill this out based on the kinds of jobs you're considering.)

Category	Expected %
Work / Job Responsibilities	___
Learning & Skill Development	___
Health & Energy	___
Social Life & Relationships	___
Personal Interests / Hobbies	___
Rest / Recovery	___
Total	100%

Now, circle the two biggest gaps between Ideal vs. Expected.

Step 3: Reflection Questions

Answer honestly—this is for you.

1. What part of my life do I not want my job to crowd out?
2. What kind of environment helps me learn best?
3. Do I need structure, flexibility, or a mix of both?
4. Do I want to be stretched fast, or supported steadily?
5. What would make me excited (not anxious) to start Monday?

Step 4: Workplace Fit Check

Use this section to compare companies, not just job titles.

Answer Yes / No / Depends for each job or company you're considering.

- Does this workplace support learning and growth for new grads?
- Will I have access to mentorship or feedback?
- Is the pace sustainable for me right now?
- Do I feel comfortable asking questions here?
- Does the culture match how I work best (collaborative, independent, structured, flexible)?

Step 5: Early-Career Non-Negotiables

These are not “dream job” wishes—they are minimum conditions you need to succeed.

List 3–5 non-negotiables for your first role:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

(Examples: supportive manager, reasonable hours, location, benefits, training, team culture)

Step 6: Turn This Into a Decision Filter

Finish this sentence:

“My first job should be in a place where...”

Use this sentence when:

- Comparing job offers
- Evaluating company culture
- Deciding whether to stay, leave, or keep looking

If a job doesn’t support this statement, it’s probably not the right *place*, even if the title looks good.