Family guide

How to use the cards, how to listen well, and where to find reliable information.

Why talk about the future at home

Families have a big say in how young people see their future. Australian research found that parental influence is a critical driver of young people's educational and occupational aspirations, and that parents are often the first people young people ask about their options.

Influence works both ways. In an international OECD study, one in three 15-year-olds said they feel pressure from their families to follow a specific path. The cards are designed for talking and listening together, not for steering.

How to use the cards

You need about ten minutes, one or more young people, and at least one adult. Any family can play: parents, carers, grandparents, aunts, uncles, older brothers and sisters, or a trusted family friend.

- Pick an age group and one or two themes, or use the whole deck.
- Take turns to draw a card and read it out. The person who draws can answer first or ask someone else.
- Cards marked "Everyone answers" are for the adults too. Young people often enjoy hearing your story.
- Anyone can pass. A card can go back in the pile for another day.
- Stop while it is still enjoyable. Two or three good conversations are better than ten rushed ones.
- Car trips, meal times and walks work well. Sitting side by side can feel easier than face to face.

Choosing cards by age

- Primary school (Foundation to Year 6): keep it playful. Interests, strengths and values cards work best. Talk about what people do, not about choosing a job.
- Early secondary (Years 7 to 9): explore widely. Subject choices start to matter, so the study and work options cards help.
- Senior secondary (Years 10 to 12): decisions get real. Worries and money cards can open conversations that are hard to start.

- School leavers: listen more than you advise. Plans change, and a plan B is a sensible idea, not a failure.

Tips for listening

- Listen more than you talk. Count to five before you reply.
- Ask "What do you like about that?" or "Tell me more" instead of giving your view straight away.
- Notice strengths and effort, and say what you noticed.
- Keep your hopes for them to yourself for a while. Ask what they hope for first.
- Avoid comparing them with brothers, sisters, cousins or friends.
- It is fine to say "I do not know. Let us find out together."
- Come back to it. One conversation will not settle a future, and it does not need to.

When worries come up

Some cards may bring up stress about school, money or the future. Thank them for telling you and stay calm. You do not need to solve it on the spot.

If a young person seems very worried or unhappy for a while, talk with their school, a school counsellor or your doctor.

Where to find reliable information

When a question comes up that neither of you can answer, look it up together. These are good places to start:

- Your Career (yourcareer.gov.au): the Australian Government careers website, with information on jobs, study and training.
- Your school careers adviser, who knows the subjects and pathways at your school.
- Career Calling Schools (schools.careercalling.com.au/parents): a guide for parents and carers, with questions worth asking.
- Career Calling Advice (advice.careercalling.com.au/for-families): support for families, and a family decision checklist.

In your language

Talking in the language you are most comfortable with helps everyone say what they mean. Mix languages if that is how your family talks.

Need to talk to someone?

Kids Helpline (for young people, and parents and carers): 1800 55 1800, any time.
Lifeline: 13 11 14, any time.

Questions? Call 1800 266 160 or email info@caqa.com.au (in English).

Sources

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