

CAREER VALUES & NON-NEGOTIABLES WORKSHEET

Use the following sections to **identify, prioritize, and apply** your personal and professional values. These defined “must-haves” and “deal-breakers” will guide you through job searches, interviews, and everyday decisions—ensuring you choose a healthier, more fulfilling work environment.

1. BRAINSTORM CORE VALUES

1. Reflect on Past Experiences

- **Positive Memories:** List 2–3 past job experiences or projects you really enjoyed. What **values** were honored in those situations? (e.g., collaboration, creativity, autonomy, integrity)
- **Negative Memories:** Recall 2–3 instances where you felt conflicted, drained, or resentful. What values were violated or missing? (e.g., honesty, fairness, respect, personal time)

2. Identify Common Themes

- Write down recurring themes or words you see across your positive/negative memories.
- Examples: “Supportive leadership,” “Balance,” “Trust,” “Innovation,” “Growth,” “Respect.”

3. Core Values Brainstorm

- **Possible Values** (check any that resonate):
 - Respect for boundaries
 - Work-life balance
 - Continuous learning
 - Creativity & innovation
 - Diversity & inclusion
 - Financial stability
 - Ethical leadership
 - Collaboration & teamwork
 - Freedom / Autonomy
 - Recognition & feedback
 - Growth opportunities
 - Mission-driven / Social impact

Feel free to add your own if they're not listed.

Narrow It Down: Circle or highlight your **top 5** values that you absolutely need in your next job.

2. DEFINE YOUR NON-NEGOTIABLES

A **non-negotiable** is a **must-have** or **deal-breaker** you will not compromise on. This helps you avoid drifting into a toxic workplace or one that doesn't honor your well-being.

2A. Must-Have Conditions (3–5)

1. **Example:** "Respectful and communicative leadership."
 - Why It Matters to Me: "I thrive when my manager trusts me and gives constructive, respectful feedback."
2. **Example:** "Reasonable work-life boundaries."
 - Why It Matters to Me: "I need evenings/weekends free from work to maintain mental health and family time."
3. **Example:** "Opportunities for professional growth."
 - Why It Matters to Me: "I want to keep learning new skills and evolving in my career."

(Add lines or boxes to list your must-have conditions. Feel free to include the "why" behind each one.)

2B. Never-Again (Deal-Breakers)

1. **Example:** "Micromanagement or constant surveillance."
 - Why It's a Deal-Breaker: "This leads to stress and burnout, preventing me from working creatively or independently."
2. **Example:** "Persistent after-hours contact / 'on-call' culture."
 - Why It's a Deal-Breaker: "I end up never truly resting, fueling burnout and anxiety."
3. **Example:** "Team or boss that disrespects boundaries."
 - Why It's a Deal-Breaker: "Lack of respect for boundaries has previously harmed my well-being."

(Add lines or boxes to list your top non-negotiable deal-breakers. Feel free to include the "why" for clarity.)

3. IDENTIFY TRIGGERS & WARNING SIGNS

1. Emotional/Physical Reactions

- What workplace behaviors immediately put you on edge or spark anxiety? (e.g., unpredictable yelling, unrealistic deadlines, gossip culture)
- Physical signs: tightness in chest, headaches, dread on Sunday nights, insomnia.

2. Behavior Patterns in Toxic Environments

- Micromanagement?
- Excessive overtime or blurred boundaries?
- High turnover, constant gossip, favoritism?

Recognizing triggers and patterns helps confirm which “Never-Again” items are most critical for you.

4. PUTTING VALUES & NON-NEGOTIABLES INTO ACTION

4A. Evaluate Potential Roles

• Company Research

- Glassdoor, LinkedIn, Indeed reviews.
- Check for repeated red flags like “No work-life balance,” “Toxic boss,” or “Favoritism.”

• Ask Culture-Focused Questions

- In interviews, ask about boundaries, leadership style, growth opportunities (see the **Interview Red Flags Checklist**).
- Compare their answers against your must-haves and deal-breakers.

4B. Quick Alignment Test

1. Does This Role Satisfy Your Must-Haves?

- If a job can’t meet your critical conditions, it’s likely not a good fit.

2. Does Anything Violate a Deal-Breaker?

- If you sense or confirm any “Never-Again” scenario, consider walking away.

4C. Decision-Making Prompts

- **Rate the Fit:** On a scale of 1–10, how well does this opportunity align with your values?
- **Gut Check:** Do you feel excited and respected, or uneasy and cautious?
- **Practical Fit:** Does the salary, commute, schedule, or remote/hybrid setup align with your personal and family needs?

5. REVIEW & REVISE

Your values and non-negotiables may evolve over time. Schedule a quarterly or semi-annual review to ensure they still reflect what matters to you.

5A. Ongoing Reflection

- **What Has Changed?**
 - Life stages, financial goals, or newly discovered passions can shift your priorities.
- **Recent Wins or Struggles**
 - Did you accept a role that violated a boundary or discovered a new “must-have” from a positive experience?

5B. Adjustment & Adaptation

- **Update Your Must-Haves**
 - If you discovered a new skill or passion, consider adding “creative freedom” or “mentorship opportunities” to your list.
- **Clarify or Remove Items**
 - If a previous deal-breaker no longer bothers you (or vice versa), revise your worksheet accordingly.

6. SELF-AFFIRMATION & ACCOUNTABILITY

1. Self-Check

- Am I honoring my own boundaries and values in my current role?
- If not, what 1–2 steps can I take this month to realign with them?

2. Accountability Partner

- Identify a friend, mentor, or coach to share your updated “Career Values & Non-Negotiables Worksheet” with.
- Ask them to check in occasionally to ensure you’re staying true to what you’ve listed.

3. Affirmation Example

- “I deserve a workplace that respects my boundaries and supports my growth. My values guide my decisions.”

FINAL NOTE

This worksheet isn't just an exercise—it's your **North Star** whenever you're searching for new opportunities or evaluating your current situation. By **defining** your must-haves and deal-breakers, you're empowering yourself to **make confident decisions** and **avoid** slipping into a toxic environment again.

1. **Print it out** or save a copy on your phone/computer.
2. Revisit it **before interviews** or **periodically** if you sense your workplace drifting away from your values.
3. Adjust it **whenever** your life circumstances change (new family commitments, career pivot, or evolving interests).

Remember: Honoring your non-negotiables is how you protect your well-being and ensure long-term career fulfillment. You've seen how detrimental a toxic workplace can be; now you have a clear roadmap to avoid it. Trust your instincts and let this worksheet guide you to healthier, happier professional horizons!

END OF WORKSHEET

Feel free to expand or customize these sections as needed. May this structured approach help you **stay true** to what matters most in your work and life.