

A matric certificate is not everything - 5 tips to personal career success

By [Kathy Knott](#)

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Once the 2022 matric results are released, there will inevitably be a lot of disappointment and hand-wringing mixed with euphoria (and relief). No doubt much emphasis will be placed on the fact that only around a third of matrics obtained university entrance and therefore supposedly have limited prospects - academic, work or otherwise.



Image source: Andrea Flacquadro from [Pexels](#)

I'm here to tell parents and school-leavers that's nonsense – there is hope beyond a matric certificate. But it does require hard work and a can-do attitude.

From first-hand experience, I can honestly reassure parents that if their child has less-than-perfect matric results, they need not despair. Having witnessed the heartwarming success stories of so many of our graduates who have pushed themselves and gained the self-belief to find their niche, I've seen that anything is possible. Here are five hot tips to give South Africa's matrics the impetus to seize their future with drive and intention.

1. Be kind to yourself

You may be disappointed or even devastated by your exam results. It's completely understandable. Allow yourself to process those feelings but don't let them linger – and don't hammer yourself. Numbers on a matric certificate don't define who you are as a person.

See this as an opportunity to dig into your reserves of resilience, grit and determination and banish any notions of self-criticism. Get up, dust yourself off and realise this is just part of your journey. As Nelson Mandela once said,

“ The greatest glory of living lies not in never falling but in rising every time you fall. ”

Don't be afraid to fall – or fail.

2. Attitude (plus hard work) is everything

Adopt a growth mindset instead of a fixed mindset. Don't close the door and give up. Draw inspiration from “[the power of yet](#)” (a notion popularised by motivational expert Dr Carol Dweck, a professor of psychology at Stanford University) to say, “I'm not good at that – yet” instead of saying, “I can't do that.”

Think of yourself as a work in progress, a masterpiece in development. Having a positive attitude to yourself, your learning trajectory and your growth, coupled with emotional intelligence, is the key to a successful life.



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3. What do *you* want?

In South Africa, we spend so much time focusing on getting a job – any job – that we don't always pause to ask ourselves what we would like to do to add meaning to our lives. Let's face it: every job has its pain points and grudge areas – but if you do something you are passionate about, you are more likely to be secure and productive in your job and enjoy upward mobility.

So, how do you find out what you're good at and what kind of career you'd flourish in? There are some fantastic free online resources out there to set you on the right path. For example, the South African careers website [Gostudy.net](#) offers a free career assessment questionnaire that will suggest a selection of suitable careers and bursaries available in one's field of interest.

It's vital to get some form of career guidance to assess your values, skills and who you are as a person, and determine how this bouquet of attributes would best fit together in the world of work. At GWF, we already weave this into our Bridging Year Academy curriculum, but our aim is to also establish a job centre at each of our six campuses soon where anyone – not just our students – can come in and do research for jobs, bursaries and academic opportunities, without having to worry about data.

4. Do your homework

You may be surprised to learn that once you've identified what you'd like to do with your life, you might not even need a matric certificate for it – or a degree, for that matter. University is not for everyone, and there are ample opportunities if you can't (or don't want to) go that route.

A number of skills-based courses are available through TVET colleges, or you could enrol in a distance-learning course (from bookkeeping and design to beauty therapy and tourism) through an accredited college, with or without a matric certificate. You can also opt to upgrade your matric part-time while you work, take care of family commitments and so on. Furthermore, there are often excellent opportunities to learn on the job in certain professions.

Don't believe those who told you there would be no opportunities without a matric pass in Maths – there are hundreds of alternative career options available to you! So, do your research and find out what skills are in demand – in artisanal fields, for example – and what career paths your matric pass (national senior certificate, higher certificate, diploma or bachelor's pass) gives you access to.

5. Go for it – and keep going!

Get into the driver's seat and start moving! You are the CEO of your own life and it's up to you to take charge of it. Cultivate a love of lifelong learning and you will never be bored or unfulfilled. Keep growing and learning, whether it's on the job or through free online courses. Cultivate networks and develop a 30-second "elevator pitch" should you happen to meet a potential employer. Keep updating your CV with new competencies and skills to ensure you get into the "yes" pile.

Take a look at this handy [employability resource](#) to gain an overview of 60 skills to help you manage your career – and to obtain a free national employability certificate to help you in your job quest.

Finally, while exploring all these exciting opportunities, never lose sight of what you have your heart set on doing! Remember that matric is not the end – it's just the beginning of the next phase of your life.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kathy Knott is a Counselling Psychologist and the programme manager of the Bridging Year Academy programme at Good Work Foundation (GWF), a non-profit bringing wonder-filled education and digital learning opportunities to rural communities in Mpumalanga and the Free State. The academy bridges the gap for school-leavers - preparing them for the 21st-century job market or to stride onto a university or college campus with confidence.

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