

Chapter 2. Know Yourself

Knowing who you are is the first step in the career development process as it is nearly impossible to find satisfying work when you don't know what you want to do. Self-assessment is the foundation of career management and without this knowledge it can be difficult to know what industry, job title, or work environment will bring you satisfaction. A good fit career matches your values, personality, interests, and skills. As you discover more about yourself in each of these areas, you can use these insights to pursue career satisfaction. In addition, factors such as health, life roles, geography, and financial considerations impact each person's "best-fit" career.

It is important to keep in mind that there is more than one "perfect" job for you and there are likely multiple career paths that would bring you satisfaction. However, by taking time to understand yourself, identify your preferences, and be clear about your lifestyle goals you will be able to create a roadmap for your career exploration and focus your search for meaningful work that you enjoy. In addition, you will be better able to articulate what you are looking for as you move forward in Phase 2 of the Career Development Process.



Are You Ready to Start Your Journey of Self Discovery?

Complete at least one of the following two exercises to begin the process of defining your future:



EXERCISE Envision Your Career Future

Sit quietly, close your eyes, and imagine your ideal career. What kind of setting are you in? What tasks are you performing? Are you working alone or with others? What are you wearing? How do you feel about yourself? Describe your vision in as much detail as possible in your notebook.



EXERCISE Positive Experience Stories

1. Identify eight positive experiences (work related or not) that you have had throughout your life (perhaps even going back to childhood). Times when you felt confident in your abilities, proud of the impact you had, fully competent and “in the zone”, or particularly satisfied with what you were doing.
2. Write a brief paragraph describing each experience:
 - What were you doing?
 - What skills were you using?
 - Who were you interacting with?
 - What were the results of your efforts?
 - Why was it meaningful to you?
3. After writing the eight paragraphs look over them and make note of what patterns or themes you see. These can be clues to your “best-fit” careers.

CAREER ASSESSMENTS

Completing career assessments can help you identify occupations and work environments that may be satisfying to you. Assessments will not tell you exactly what job you should do but they can confirm your career thoughts or generate options that you might not have considered. Assessments come in many shapes and sizes. Some are available online, some are provided to you in this guide, and others can be accessed through a career professional who has been trained to properly administer and interpret the assessment. As you work through the assessments presented below, keep in mind that these assessments are not tests. There are no right or wrong answers and the more honestly you answer the questions, the more authentic your results will be.

Clarify Your Work Values

Each of us has a constellation of work values and these often change over time. What was important to you at 17, may be less of a priority at 23, and will likely be different when you are 40. Sometimes our priorities change due to personal growth and sometimes our priorities change because of factors

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An excellent tool for identifying your work values can be found on the California CareerZone: Work Importance Profiler: <https://www.cacareerzone.org/wip/>.

outside of ourselves such as needing to care for an elderly relative, becoming a parent, or changes in our health. Because our values change over time, it is useful to be clear about what your current priorities are so that career decisions can be based on these priorities. Your career values give you a framework for decision-making, act as a filter through which to evaluate options, and can motivate you to pursue a career that honors your priorities.

**EXERCISE**

Log in to your CareerZone account and complete the Work Importance Profiler

Record your Top 10 Values at this point in your career and what they mean to you.

Discover Your Personality Preferences and Personal Strengths

Those who study personality type theory subscribe to the idea that each of us is born with natural preferences, similar to being born right or left-handed. By understanding our preferences and identifying careers that align with these preferences, we can gain greater satisfaction and sustainability in our work. As Paul D. Tieger and Barbara Barron-Tieger state in their book *“Do What You Are: Discover the Perfect Career for You Through the Secrets of Personality Type”*:

“The right job enhances your life. It is personally fulfilling because it nourishes the most important aspects of your personality. It suits the way you like to do things and reflects who you are. It lets you use your innate strengths in ways that come naturally to you, and it doesn’t force you to do things you don’t do well (at least not too often!).”

Common personality and personal strength assessments include the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), the Kiersey Temperament Sorter, Paul Tieger’s Personality Type Assessment, the NERIS Type Explorer, the Truity Personal Strengths Inventory and Gallup’s StrengthsQuest (focused towards college students) and StrengthsFinder. There are a variety of options for exploring your personality preferences and personal strengths.

- Kiersey Temperament Sorter: <http://www.keirsey.com>.
 - PersonalityType.com Assessment: <http://www.personalitytype.com>
 - NERIS Type Explorer: <https://www.16personalities.com/free-personality-test>.
 - The Big Five Personality Test: <https://www.truity.com/test/big-five-personality-test>.
 - Truity Personal Strengths Inventory: <https://www.truity.com/test/personal-strengths-inventory?>
- If you are a current college student check with your campus career center to see if they offer the Myers-Briggs Type (MBTI) assessment or StrengthsQuest free of charge on an individual basis or through a workshop.
- Contact a career development professional who has the required certification to administer and interpret the MBTI. While there would be fees associated with this service, you may find the expert support and interpretation valuable. The National Career Development Association website is the go to source for finding a well trained career counselor: http://www.ncda.org/aws/NCDA/pt/sp/consumer_find.
- Complete the StrengthsQuest Assessment: <http://www.strengthsquest.com/home.aspx> or purchase the StrengthsFinder book: <http://strengths.gallup.com/110440/About-StrengthsFinder-20.aspx>.
- Read *“Do What You Are: Discover the Perfect Career for You Through the Secrets of Personality Type.”*

- To complete a free online assessment visit one of these sites:



EXERCISE Personal Strengths Assessment

Review the results from the personality and/or personal strengths assessment(s) you completed. What are your preferences and how do you want to use them in your career? Use your notebook to record any descriptions, words, or phrases that resonate with you. Write down any “best fit” careers that interest you.

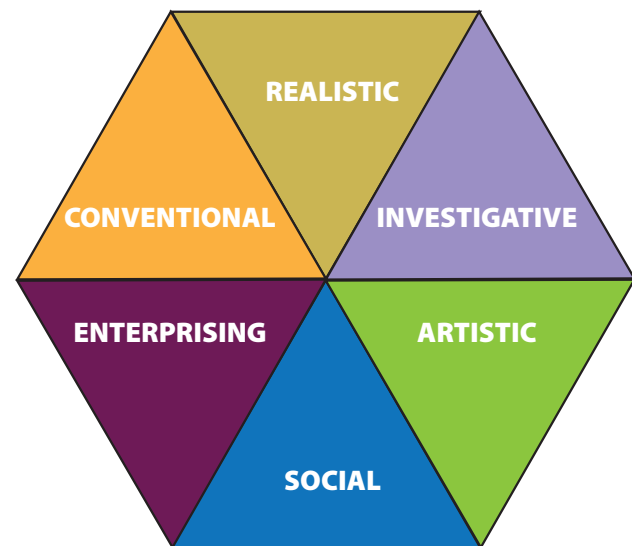
Identify Your Interests

What interests you and how you like to spend your time can provide clues to the type of work you might enjoy. By comparing your likes and dislikes with people who find satisfaction in various careers, you are able to determine if you might find happiness in that career yourself.

John Holland was a psychologist who devoted his career to researching issues related to career choice and satisfaction. He developed a well-known career theory that suggests that people and work environments can be categorized into six occupational themes: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising and Conventional (called the “RIASEC” theory). This model provides a framework for matching interests to the characteristics of these themes.

You can explore these six themes, assess your level of interest in each, and identify careers that correspond to each theme by completing one of these free assessments:

- The Interest Profiler on the California CareerZone: <https://www.cacareerzone.org/ip/>.
- The Holland Code Career Test: <https://www.truity.com/test/holland-code-career-test>.
- The Interest Profiler on MyNextMove: <https://www.mynextmove.org/explore/ip>.



EXERCISE Interest Assessment

Review the results from the Interest Assessment you completed. What are your interests and how do you want to use them in your career? In your notebook write down any “best fit” careers that interest you.

Inventory Your Skills

Completing a skills inventory will help you determine what you are capable of right now, what skills you have an interest in developing, and how those skills relate to specific careers. When evaluating your skillset there are three types of skills to consider:

1. **Job Specific Skills:** These are skills that relate to a specific job such as being able to operate a forklift, process payroll, identify native plants, or complete an individual education plan for a student. List five of your job specific skills in your notebook.
2. **Transferable Skills:** These are skills that can be used across a wide range of jobs and include competencies such as communication, helping, writing, analyzing, repairing, leading groups. List five of your transferable skills in your notebook.
3. **Motivated Skills:** These are the skills, whether job specific or transferable, that you truly enjoy using and want to spend most of your time using as you move forward with your career. List five of your motivated skills in your notebook.

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City Year has developed a helpful resource that shows how skills gained in service translate to careers in business, medicine, technology, law, public policy, communications, education, psychology and counseling, and social work. Details can be found at: www.cityyear.org/join-the-corps/benefits/life-after-city-year



EXERCISE

Log in to your CareerZone account and complete the Skills Profiler <https://www.cacareerzone.org/skills/>

What skills would you most enjoy using in your work (even if you aren't currently proficient in them)? What skills would you like to improve? Record these skills in your notebook.

Passions

Passions can absolutely help guide us towards satisfying work environments and career fields. However, if we only pursue our passion we may grow tired of it, find it becomes more work than enjoyment, or be unable to support ourselves. "Follow Your Passion" is a common piece of advice. However, many expect their passion to reveal itself in the form of a job title, which is highly unlikely. How many would define their passion as pharmaceutical salesperson, curriculum developer, or accounting assistant?



EXERCISE Discover Your Passions Exercise

To help identify your passions complete the following statements:

- I feel really good about myself when:
- I lose track of time whenever I am:
- The types of problems I enjoy solving include:
- The hobbies I enjoy are:
- My special talents and abilities that I really like are:
- I tend to accomplish the following things faster than other people:
- I find myself easily absorbed in:
- The educational and/or training subjects I enjoy most are:

Other Considerations

As you proceed through the self-assessment process, it is important to determine what other areas may also impact your career decisions. Some of these areas might include financial concerns, health issues, learning styles, family roles, and/or geography. Use your notebook to track any other factors you need to consider.



EXERCISE Money Considerations

To get a sense of how much money it will take to meet your lifestyle needs create your budget through “Make Money Choices” on California CareerZone: <https://www.cacareerzone.org/budget/>.



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AmeriCorps Career Webinars:
“Tips for Financial Success”:
<http://www.americorpsalums.org/?CareerWebinars>



EXERCISE Pulling it All Together

Complete “Pulling it All Together Worksheet” in **APPENDIX 1**.

Keep in mind that we are always growing, learning, and having new life experiences that shape our identities so getting to know yourself isn't a one-time exercise. It is a process of continual discovery. When you find yourself seeking greater job satisfaction or needing to make a change, return to these assessments and exercises to reevaluate and refocus your career. When your values and/or interests change, you acquire new skills, or your life circumstances are altered don't be afraid to make a career change- in big ways or small- from what you initially set out to do!

30-Second Introduction

As you begin to get a clearer picture of your values, personality, interests, and skills, you will want to be able to articulate that vision of yourself to others in the form of a 30-Second Introduction. A 30-Second Introduction, also known as an Elevator Pitch because it is just long enough to deliver in a typical elevator ride, is a quick summary of who you are, what you want to do, and how someone can help you. Usually less than one minute in length, this statement can be used in an email, on a phone call, or in-person to share your story and ask for assistance. You will use it when doing informational interviews, networking, at career fairs, when introducing yourself at a meeting or training session, or maybe even when you step into an elevator and find yourself riding to the top floor with someone whose work you've always admired!



“No one else wants exactly what you want so it's worth dreaming big and being picky.”

Helen Horyza, Career Counselor,
President of Elevations, Inc. and
author of Elevations!



Your 30-Second Introduction should include your name, education, key experiences (including what you are doing during your year of service!), top skills, and eventually your career goal. You can also include a personal attribute, activity, or something that makes you unique that might capture someone's interest. Finally, you should include a request for assistance. Here is an example:

"My name is Ellen Fielder. I have two years experience as an office assistant in nonprofit organizations and have taken classes in early childhood education at Santa Monica City College. I have strong customer service, organization, and communication skills. Currently I serve as an AmeriCorps member with the Birth & Beyond program where I make home visits to families and share information and resources with them about proper infant care. In my spare time I am training for a half-marathon."

AND TO BE ADDED ONCE YOU HAVE MORE CLARITY ABOUT YOUR CAREER GOALS:

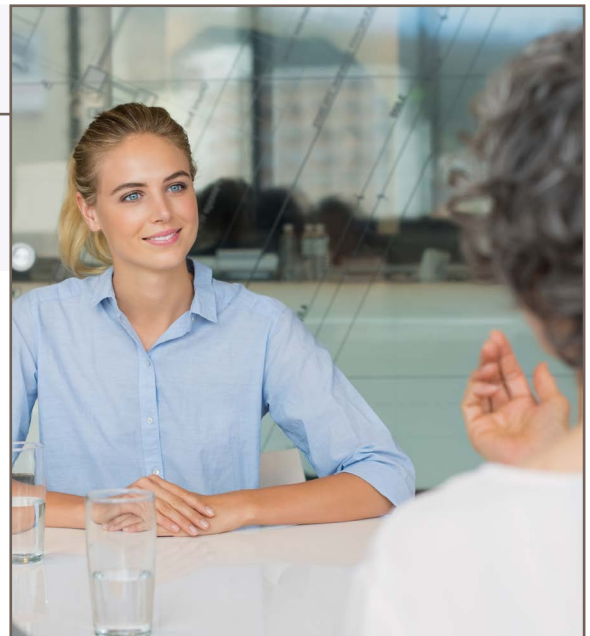
"I will be completing my year of service in 6 weeks and am looking for a program assistant position with a nonprofit organization in the Los Angeles area. I am especially interested in working with elementary aged children. Would you know of anyone in the LA area who might be willing to share information with me about how to find opportunities in that field?"

Because you are always growing and learning about yourself, your 30-Second Introduction will change to reflect that growth. How you introduce yourself during the first few months of your year of service may be quite different from how you introduce yourself at the end of your year of service so be sure you are continually revising and updating your pitch!



EXERCISE 30-Second Introduction

Write and practice your own 30-Second Introduction.





BEFORE YOU MOVE ON...

After completing the self-assessment work, in this chapter you should be more aware of your unique combination of values, personality preferences, interests, motivated skills, and passions. And from the online assessments you should have a list of some occupations that might be a good match for you. However, you still may be unsure about which career is the “best fit.” Don’t worry; it’s normal to be uncertain! Knowing yourself is only one piece of the puzzle. Connecting this new awareness of yourself with information and facts about what’s available in the workplace is the next important step along your career development journey.

As you begin to focus on exploring your career options, three suggestions adapted from the California Conservation Corps’ “Career Development and Transition Program” are valuable to keep in mind:

1. **Do not feel like you are limited to the occupations that may have been suggested to you by the assessments.** You can explore occupations that are not on the list and definitely explore any career that you’ve had a prior interest in even if it didn’t turn up as a match.
2. **Be realistic about your short-term career goals but aim high for the future.** Just because you do not have enough education right now for your ideal occupation does not mean that it should not be a goal. You can look for occupations you can do right now and occupations you would be interested in for the future.
3. **Question what you think you know.** Read through some of the occupational profiles you will be guided to in the next chapter, even though you think you know what those occupations do. You might be surprised by what you find out about a plumber or social worker. Also, if you don’t know what a specific occupation is that came up as a match for you (like an instructional coordinator or a geologist), make sure you take time to use the tools and resources offered in Chapter 3 to find out.