

# Choosing or Changing Majors

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*Minnesota State University, Mankato  
Career Development Center  
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*The Career Development Center (CDC) strives to equip students and graduates with the tools and resources to successfully manage their career and employment paths for a lifetime. We offer a supportive, instructional link between the individual, academics, the workplace, and the global community.*

*Career Development Center  
Guiding · Informing · Supporting · Connecting  
Students and Employers*

# Choosing or Changing Majors

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## Introduction

Are you feeling uncertain about the direction of your life and career? Maybe you have not yet decided on a major in college or maybe you are changing your mind about your current major or career. If so, you are not alone. The typical American worker will likely change careers four or more times in his or her lifetime, and will have even more different jobs. Because of all of these potential changes, planning your life and career is more important than ever. Since you will spend a large part of your life working, planning your career means planning your life. Your career decisions affect your lifestyle, your health, and the happiness of yourself and others around you. It is imperative that you learn to make informed choices and expand your career development skills. This handbook, along with other resources available at Minnesota State University, Mankato, will help you to develop these skills and assist you in your path through life and career planning.

First, let's get an overview of the career development process. This process consists of three stages.

### 1. Self-Assessment \_\_\_\_\_

The foundation for career and life planning is self-awareness. To be self-aware and make career decisions, you need to learn about yourself, your values, your skills, your interests, personality preferences, and motivations. Self-assessment is a way to look at your past experiences and your current self. This step is vital to making decisions and setting goals.

### 2. Exploration of Majors and Careers \_\_\_\_\_

The next step in this process is to brainstorm and find specific information on majors and careers so you can determine your career possibilities. Gathering information on majors and careers will help you to determine which options match your self-assessment criteria from the previous step. It is essential to do some work in this area to ensure a good fit with your career choice.

### 3. Take Action! Setting and achieving goals \_\_\_\_\_

When you get to this step, you are in the home stretch! You will learn to make decisions, set goals, and develop a plan of action. It is also important to periodically review your progress toward your goals and evaluate your plan.

If you work through this handbook, you can use the tools and exercises provided to progress through your career and life planning process and make a decision on your major or career. **The more time and effort you put in to this process, the more rewarding it will be.** Remember, you are learning about the most interesting subject in the world, *YOURSELF*, and you are embarking on a journey that will take you through the rest of your working life.

Now is a good time to take a few minutes to page through this book. On your own, or with a friend, family member, mentor, or career counselor, set a goal for when you would like to have your career decision made. Then set mini goals for working through the sections. **You can write your goal dates on the blanks beside the three steps above.**

**Now, let's get started! Turn to the next page to get started on Step 1, Self-Assessment.**

## Self-Assessment

Get some crayons, markers, colored pencils, or anything you'd like to draw with. Look at the three statements below. Draw or write what represents you for each of the statements. You may decide to write words or paragraphs or to draw pictures or symbols. Take your time.

I was

---

I am

---

I will be

---

What are some themes you can see from your "I was, I am, I will be" exercise on the preceding page? Were any concepts or ideas consistent throughout the three areas? What interests, abilities, values, and personality preferences are evident from your pictures?

What career and life goals might be indicated for you from this exercise?

Now that you have started thinking about who you are, it is time to look at your career development history. Go to a quiet, comfortable place, and spend some quality time on the next few questions. Really think about your answers, and write your responses thoroughly. This is your chance to think about where you have been in the career development process and what you have learned about yourself.

- Ⓢ Have you taken any career assessments or seen a career counselor in the past? If so, what did you learn? Are you willing to try assessments or career counseling again?
  
- Ⓢ What majors and careers have you considered and why? How realistic or appropriate might these careers be for you? Why?
  
- Ⓢ Have you eliminated some majors and careers from consideration? Why?
  
- Ⓢ Have you done any research on careers or talked to people who work in fields in which you have interest? If so, what did you learn?

- Ⓢ What classes have you taken that you have liked? Why might you have liked them?
  
- Ⓢ What jobs and volunteer, school or community involvement have you had? What have you liked and disliked about these experiences?
  
- Ⓢ What do you love to do? (If you have trouble with this question, think about things you do which cause you to lose track of time or things that really make you happy.)
  
- Ⓢ What don't you enjoy doing at all?
  
- Ⓢ Has your family supported your career exploration? What expectations do your family members have for you in terms of your education and career? How do you feel about these expectations?
  
- Ⓢ Have family and friends suggested that you look into certain careers? Which ones and why?

If you could have any job in the world, what would it be? (Don't worry about financial issues or if you have the skill to do this job.)

- Ⓢ What do you want out of your career? (Some examples might be money, prestige, security, helping others, creativity, being a professional, something to get by, or ability to use your gifts.)

- Ⓢ When you picture yourself at work in the future, do you picture yourself working with people? In what way? How about things? Or Data? Or Ideas?
  
- Ⓢ What are your 5 greatest skills? (If you have trouble with this question, think about tasks or activities that come easily to you, classes that don't require as much effort from you, or things that other people ask you for help with. Come on, I KNOW you have at least 5 skills!)
  
- Ⓢ What is the one thing you are most proud of?
  
- Ⓢ What themes do you see from this exercise? Does it give you any ideas on career paths you may want to look into?

## Values

Let's start looking at your values. Values are the things that are most important and meaningful to you. They are an important part of the career decision making process. Your life is given meaning from your values, and consequently the sense of meaning you obtain from your work is directly related to your values.

Values have some very important attributes. Ask yourself these questions about your values.

1. Do I prize and cherish this value?
2. Would I publicly affirm this value?
3. Have I chosen this value after considering other alternatives?
4. Have I accepted the consequences of expressing this value?
5. Have I chosen this value freely?
6. Have I acted on this value?
7. Have I acted consistently or repeatedly regarding this value?

As you can tell from the seven attributes of values above, your values are the things that help you to determine how you live your life and relate strongly to major and career choices. The next few exercises will help you to get in touch with your values and decide how your values relate to your career choices.

## TEN THINGS I LIKE TO DO

Quickly list ten things you **really** like to do. Be as spontaneous as possible in making this list.

Activity	A/P	\$	R	I	PL	T	*	Date	Value
1.									
2.									
3.									
4.									
5.									
6.									
7.									
8.									
9.									
10.									

In the box below are explanations of the headings on your activity list and instructions on how to use them. Follow the instructions for each coding and complete each before proceeding to the next. The purpose of these codes is to help you discover what you value in those things you enjoy doing.

A/P- Place an A after each activity you prefer to do alone. Place a P after each activity you prefer to do with people.

\$- Place a \$ after each activity which costs over \$5 each time you do it.

R- Place an R after each activity you see as containing an emotional, intellectual, or physical risk for yourself.

I- Place an I after each activity you usually initiate.

PL- Place a PL after each activity which requires planning prior to doing it.

T- Place a T after each activity which you would enjoy with more training.

\*- Star the five activities you would least like to give up.

Date- Place the approximate date you last engaged in each activity.

Value- Indicate in one or two words what you like (value) in the activity.

**Incomplete Value Sentences: Complete each of the following:**

1. The greatest joy in my life is...
2. The biggest decision I ever made was...
3. My constant worry is...
4. As a child I dreamed of ...
5. The thing I love most about life is...
6. What I would like to change in my life is...
7. The three things in the world I would change are...
8. I hope some day to...
9. I spend most of my time...
10. The greatest sorrow of my life is...
11. I would prefer to be...
12. A friend is someone who...
13. If in the future I were physically disabled I would...
14. My favorite kind of person is...
15. Money is the most...
16. What I would like to do most is...
17. To me, kids are...
18. The work I do is...
19. The people I work with are...
20. If I were the boss I would...
21. When I retire I am...
22. My favorite place in the world is...
23. The person who influenced me the most taught me to...
24. I daydream the most about...
25. I want to die when I am...
26. The one quality I would most like to develop is...

What are your life values? Rank the following values in the order of their importance to you. There are 20 values listed. If you feel like you have values that are not listed, add them to the list using the blank lines. You may want to use a pencil so you can change your answers later.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Family
- \_\_\_\_\_ Prestige
- \_\_\_\_\_ Independence
- \_\_\_\_\_ Spirituality
- \_\_\_\_\_ Meaningful work
- \_\_\_\_\_ Helping others
- \_\_\_\_\_ Physical health
- \_\_\_\_\_ Leisure
- \_\_\_\_\_ Financial security
- \_\_\_\_\_ Financial wealth
- \_\_\_\_\_ Creativity
- \_\_\_\_\_ Love
- \_\_\_\_\_ Physical beauty
- \_\_\_\_\_ Success in my chosen occupation
- \_\_\_\_\_ Lifelong learning
- \_\_\_\_\_ Adventure
- \_\_\_\_\_ Beautiful surroundings
- \_\_\_\_\_ Honesty
- \_\_\_\_\_ Friendships and social involvement
- \_\_\_\_\_ Happiness
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_

Now write just your top ten values in order on the lines below

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

How would you feel if you could just focus your time, energy, and resources on these top ten values for the rest of your life? Would you feel like there was something missing, or would these ten values cover what is most important to you?

Now take a piece of paper and cover up the last five values on your list (6-10). How would you feel if you could just focus your time, energy, and resources on these five values for the rest of your life?

Now take the same piece of paper and cover up all but values 1-3 on your list. How would you feel if you could just focus your time, energy, and resources on these 3 values for the rest of your life?

After thinking about your top values, feel free to change any of the values on your list until you feel it is an accurate representation of your values.

Look back at the work you've done on the values exercises. What themes keep recurring?

How will your values affect your choice of major and career?

Exercise adapted from one developed by Dr. Anne Blackhurst, Counseling and Student Personnel, Minnesota State University, Mankato

## Skills

How much do you know about your skills and abilities? These are the next piece in the self-assessment puzzle. Fill in the following statement:

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am an expert in \_\_\_\_\_.

Write your responses to the following questions

- ⊕ Was it difficult to come up with something you are an expert in? Why or why not?
  
- ⊕ What if you had to walk up to people you didn't know and say the statement above? How would you feel?
  
- ⊕ What if you had to say that statement during a job interview? Would you feel comfortable and confident saying it?

Skills are an important component of your career development self-assessment. Skills can be thought of as the power to use your talents and knowledge effectively when performing an activity. Most skills are learned to some extent. Your aptitude is your ability to learn a skill. It is important to realize you may be interested in an area or field, but you may not be skilled in it yet. Depending on your aptitude for the components of a skill, you can become a master of it. Surgeons are not born being able to perform brain surgery. They have to learn about human anatomy, surgery skills, and many other things.

Sometimes people find it hard to focus on their skills. They may feel like talking about their skills will seem like bragging. They may also feel that if they are not the absolute best at an activity, they cannot consider it to be a skill. It is important to know what you are skilled in if you want to make choices on a major, or even find a job after graduation. Everyone has a unique combination of skills, and YOUR skills are valuable. The following exercises will help you to pinpoint some of your skills and later we will match these skills with careers.

On the next page, check all of the personal describers that fit who you are. Put a \* by any that you would like to improve on, whether you checked them or not.

## Personal Describers

- Able
- Achiever
- Active
- Adaptable
- Aggressive
- Alert
- Aloof
- Ambitious
- Analytical
- Animated
- Articulate
- Attractive
- Beautiful
- Bold
- Bright
- Calm
- Carefree
- Caring
- Certain
- Challenger
- Cheerful
- Clever
- Cocky
- Competent
- Competitive
- Confident
- Conforming
- Conscientious
- Controlled
- Challenging
- Cooperative
- Courteous
- Creative
- Decisive
- Dependable
- Determined
- Dignified
- Disciplined
- Direct
- Diplomatic
- Discreet
- Do Gooder
- Doer
- Domineering
- Driver
- Effervescent
- Efficient
- Emotional
- Energetic
- Enterprising
- Enthusiastic
- Expressive
- Extrovert
- Fair
- Flexible
- Follows Through
- Follower
- Forceful
- Free
- Friendly
- Gentle
- Giving
- Glib
- Gregarious
- Hard Worker
- Honest
- Honorable
- Humorous
- Imaginative
- Independent
- Ingenious
- Innovative
- Inspiring
- Intellectual
- Intuitive
- Introvert
- Judgmental
- Kind
- Knowledgeable
- Leader
- Lively
- Logical
- Loyal
- Mature
- Methodical
- Meticulous
- Non-committal
- Observant
- Optimist
- Organized
- Original
- Patient
- Perceptive
- Perfectionist
- Personable
- Persuasive
- Pessimist
- Pleasant
- Practical
- Pragmatic
- Precise
- Progressive
- Punctual
- Questioning
- Quiet
- Rambler
- Rational
- Realistic
- Reasonable
- Relaxed
- Reliable
- Respectful
- Responsible
- Secure
- Selfish
- Self-confident
- Self-reliant
- Self-starter
- Sensitive
- Serious
- Shy
- Sincere
- Skillful
- Speaker
- Sociable
- Soft talker
- Sophisticated
- Stable
- Striver
- Superficial
- Supervisor
- Supportive
- Systematic
- Tactful
- Tenacious
- Tolerant
- Traveler
- Trusting
- Tough
- Wise
- Workaholic
- Writer
- Youthful
- Zestful

## Clustering Your Skills

Functional skills are skills which can be used to complete general tasks at a job. Many times you can use your functional skills at a variety of jobs. Functional skills can be grouped together within general skill clusters to allow you to think about the kinds of skill you use most. The following outline lists a variety of functional skills and the general skill clusters to which they belong.

- Draw a circle around all those skills you think you have already.
- √ Place a check by those skills enjoy using.
- \* Put a star by the skills you would like to develop or improve.

Look at the skills you circled. Select your top six **skills clusters** (identified by the bold headings) and rank them in order of importance to you. Look at the skills you put a check mark by. Those might be important to you. Transfer these six to the "Putting it All Together" worksheet on page 31 and list the two or three skills within each cluster that you most enjoy. These are the functional skills which you will want to use in your job.

### **CREATIVE SKILLS:**

Innovating  
Developing  
Creating  
Imagining  
Designing  
Planning  
Conceptualizing  
Synthesizing  
Integrating  
Abstracting  
Generating  
Perceiving  
Memorizing  
Discriminating  
Intuition  
Visualizing  
Sensitivity  
Humor  
Fashioning  
Shaping  
Writing  
Directing  
Painting  
Performing  
Acting  
Playing  
Sharing

### **TEACHING SKILLS:**

Influencing  
Persuading  
Briefing  
Informing  
Encouraging  
Communicating  
Advising  
Guiding  
Coaching  
Instructing  
Explaining  
Enlightening  
Stimulating  
Inventing  
Enthusiasm  
Adapting  
Adopting  
Facilitating  
Coordinating  
Developing  
Enabling  
Clarifying  
Valuing  
Goal Setting  
Deciding  
Initiating

### **DETAIL SKILLS:**

Approving  
Retaining  
Executing  
Dispatching  
Responding  
Following through  
Implementing  
Enforcing  
Responsibility  
Meeting Deadlines  
Arranging  
Time Management  
Routine  
Memory  
Judgment  
Collecting  
Compiling  
Purchasing  
Systematizing  
Tabulating  
Comparing  
Inspecting  
Organizing  
Classifying  
Operating  
Collating  
Copying  
Retrieving  
Recording  
Processing  
Facilitating

**MANAGEMENT SKILLS:**

Developing  
 Planning  
 Organizing  
 Executing  
 Supervising  
 Scheduling  
 Assigning  
 Directing  
 Coordinating  
 Analyzing  
 Prioritizing  
 Delegating  
 Hiring  
 Firing  
 Recommending  
 Evaluating  
 Administering  
 Contracting  
 Producing  
 Controlling  
 Reviewing  
 Trouble-Shooting

**FINANCIAL SKILLS:**

Calculating  
 Computing  
 Planning  
 Managing  
 Budgeting  
 Bookkeeping  
 Accounting  
 Auditing  
 Appraising  
 Researching  
 Analyzing  
 Record Keeping  
 Detail  
 Accuracy  
 Speed  
 Allocating  
 Administering  
 Finger Dexterity  
 Developing  
 Preparing  
 Solving

**COMMUNICATION SKILLS:**

Influencing  
 Persuading  
 Helping  
 Directing  
 Leading  
 Reasoning  
 Selling  
 Developing  
 Recruiting  
 Creating  
 Negotiating  
 Arbitrating  
 Arranging  
 Mediating  
 Reconciling  
 Merging  
 Obtaining  
 Writing  
 Interpreting  
 Enlisting  
 Motivating  
 Manipulating  
 Reading  
 Speaking

**MANUAL SKILLS:**

Operating  
 Tending  
 Controlling  
 Grinding  
 Assembling  
 Setting-up  
 Feeding  
 Cutting  
 Binding  
 Driving  
 Moving  
 Lifting  
 Bending  
 Pulling  
 Shipping  
 Handling  
 Punching  
 Drilling

**RESEARCH SKILLS:**

Recognizing Problems  
 Clarifying  
 Surveying  
 Interviewing  
 Investigating  
 Inspecting  
 Gathering  
 Synthesizing  
 Examining  
 Diagnosing  
 Reviewing  
 Organizing  
 Evaluating  
 Critiquing  
 Perceiving  
 Collecting  
 Writing  
 Interpreting  
 Extrapolating  
 Deciding

**HELPING SKILLS:**

Relating  
 Guiding  
 Leading  
 Adjusting  
 Servicing  
 Referring  
 Rendering  
 Attending  
 Caring  
 Sensitivity  
 Listening  
 Speaking  
 Directing  
 Perception  
 Intuition  
 Understanding  
 Maturity  
 Team Work  
 Mentoring

## Your Career Building Blocks

This page will be a picture of what you are looking for in a career/occupation, as well as what you have to offer an employer. It is important that you spend some time identifying and prioritizing what you want to list here. You may not be ready to complete it at this point. If not, that's OK! Complete as much as you can and be sure to identify the areas where you need to focus your attention- then set aside the time to do it!

### **Skill Cluster #1:**

Skills I have:

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---

---

Skills I want to obtain:

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---

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### **Skill Cluster #2:**

Skills I have:

---

---

---

Skills I want to obtain:

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---

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### **Skill Cluster #3:**

Skills I have:

---

---

---

Skills I want to obtain:

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---

---

### **Skill Cluster #4:**

Skills I have:

---

---

---

Skills I want to obtain:

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### **Skill Cluster #5:**

Skills I have:

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Skills to I want obtain:

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### **Skill Cluster #6:**

Skills I have:

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Skills I want to obtain:

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## Interests

Interests are a very important piece of information needed for your career choice. Interests are the things you enjoy. You may or may not be skilled at something you are interested in. Many times we are interested in things we are good at, for example someone who plays volleyball well and gets recognition for it is likely to enjoy volleyball and be interested in it.

Other times you may be interested in something you haven't yet tried. You may be interested in sky diving but would not consider yourself be a skilled skydiver if you have never jumped. If you are willing to learn, you can become skilled at skydiving, you just need to make the effort.

You may be interested in something but you may not have the aptitude. You might love the opera, but you don't have vocal talent and aren't able to develop the skills needed even with lessons and practice. Instead of singing in the opera, you might listen to the music and enjoy it in that manner.

When you do the following exercises, **do not think about whether you are good at certain activities** or categories. Just think about whether you are interested in them. You can determine later if these interests have any correlation with career options or if these interests are hobbies you should pursue in your leisure time.

## Activity Identification

(Check those activities you enjoy most)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. using hands (R)</li> <li>2. helping others (S)</li> <li>3. being artistic (A)</li> <li>4. using body (R)</li> <li>5. operating tools or machinery (R)</li> <li>6. expressing feelings (S)</li> <li>7. solving a scientific problem (I)</li> <li>8. discovering something (I)</li> <li>9. teaching (S)</li> <li>10. serving others (S)</li> <li>11. using a systematic process (I)</li> <li>12. making others happy (S)</li> <li>13. fixing (R)</li> <li>14. musical activity (A)</li> <li>15. creative writing (A)</li> <li>16. social activity (S)</li> <li>17. repairing (R)</li> <li>18. participating in sports (R)</li> <li>19. detailed examination (I)</li> <li>20. visualizing in third dimension (A)</li> <li>21. creating something (A)</li> <li>22. verbal activity (S)</li> <li>23. benefiting society (S)</li> <li>24. selling something (E)</li> <li>25. following instructions (C)</li> <li>26. belonging to an organization (S)</li> <li>27. physical activity (R)</li> <li>28. effecting social change (S)</li> <li>29. creative cooking (A)</li> <li>30. acting (A)</li> <li>31. inventing (I)</li> <li>32. dancing (A)</li> <li>33. volunteering (S)</li> <li>34. camping or hiking (R)</li> <li>35. restoring something (R)</li> <li>36. using mathematical skills (C)</li> <li>37. keeping records (C)</li> <li>38. relieving other's pain (S)</li> <li>39. collecting (hobbies) (I)</li> <li>40. spiritual activity (S)</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>41. saving the environment (R)</li> <li>42. crafts (A)</li> <li>43. designing (A)</li> <li>44. using imagination (A)</li> <li>45. showing empathy (S)</li> <li>46. observing and collecting data (I)</li> <li>47. diagnosing (I)</li> <li>48. giving love (S)</li> <li>49. needing to understand (I)</li> <li>50. using thought process (I)</li> <li>51. understanding self (S)</li> <li>52. observing (I)</li> <li>53. directing others (E)</li> <li>54. learning (I)</li> <li>55. organizing others (E)</li> <li>56. using persuasion (E)</li> <li>57. using business machines (C)</li> <li>58. completing a task (C)</li> <li>59. intellectual achievement (I)</li> <li>60. being convincing (E)</li> <li>61. leading others (E)</li> <li>62. taking control (E)</li> <li>63. making judgments (I)</li> <li>64. being persistent (C)</li> <li>65. follow-through with task (C)</li> <li>66. starting a business (E)</li> <li>67. making money (E)</li> <li>68. writing reports (C)</li> <li>69. coordinating an activity (E)</li> <li>70. talking to a group (E)</li> <li>71. taking notes (C)</li> <li>72. using office skills (C)</li> <li>73. entertaining others (E)</li> <li>74. managing people (E)</li> <li>75. spelling (C)</li> <li>76. acquiring material goods (E)</li> <li>77. exploiting others (E)</li> <li>78. conforming to others (C)</li> <li>79. seeking status (E)</li> <li>80. taking orders (C)</li> </ol> |
|--|--|

Letter	Frequency of Appearance
R	_____
I	_____
A	_____
S	_____
E	_____
C	_____

Enter below the letter that appears most often (#1), the letter that appears next most often (#2), and finally the letter that appears next most frequently (#3).

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

## Holland's General Occupational Themes

Look at your top three letters from the last exercise. Using those letters, identify your top three themes. Circle or highlight any occupations that interest you.

### REALISTIC (R-THEME)

Realistic people like activities, jobs, and co-workers who represent such interest areas as nature and the outdoors; mechanical, construction, and repair activities; and military activities. They are interested in action rather than thought, and prefer concrete problems to ambiguous, abstract problems.

#### Typical Work Activities

- Doing jobs that produce tangible results
- Operating or designing heavy equipment or huge machines
- Using tools that require fine motor coordination and manual dexterity (e.g., dentist's drill, surgeon's scalpel, jeweler's tweezers)
- Operating precision machinery (e.g., drill press, x-ray machine)
- Fixing, building, repairing

#### Potential Competencies

- Mechanical abilities and ingenuity
- Psychomotor skills
- Mathematical aptitude
- Physical strength

#### Self-concept and Values

- Emotionally stable, reliable
- Practical, thrifty, persistent
- Shy, modest
- Likely to avoid being the center of attention
- Uncomfortable talking about themselves
- Inclined to take physical risks
- Likely to maintain traditional values
- Slow to accept radical new ideas

#### Environments

- The outdoors; small, rural communities
- Situations calling for minimal interaction with others
- Situations permitting casual dress
- Organizations structured with clearly drawn lines of authority (e.g., armed forces, enforcement agencies, protection occupations)
- Manufacturing or industrial firms with tangible products
- Construction industry
- Mining and energy industries
- Transportation fields (e.g., air, trucking, local transit)
- Engineering and technical firms

### Typical Hobbies

- Repairing old things (e.g., cars, machines, appliances)
- Building and rebuilding
- Reading magazines and books about outdoor sports, cars, airplanes, boats
- Hunting, fishing, camping, rock climbing
- Operating powerful recreational vehicles (e.g., speedboats, motorcycles, snowmobiles)
- Physically dangerous activities (e.g., skydiving, mountain climbing, auto racing)

### Realistic Occupations

- R Carpenter
- R Cartographer
- R Rancher
- RI Engineer
- RI Forester
- RI Pilot
- RI Radiology Technologist
- RI Veterinarian
- RI Welder
- RIE Appliance Repairer
- RAS Occupational Therapist
- RS Fire Fighter
- RSE Warehouse Worker
- RSC Exterminator
- RE Construction Worker
- RE Law Enforcement Officer
- RC Farmer
- RC Military Enlisted Personnel
- RCS Vocational Agriculture Teacher
- RCE Truck Driver

### Typical R-Theme Items

- Auto Mechanic
- Electronics Technician
- Agriculture
- Being a Forest Ranger
- Popular Mechanics Magazines

## INVESTIGATIVE (I-THEME)

Investigative people have a strong scientific orientation. They enjoy gathering information, uncovering new facts or theories, and analyzing and interpreting data. They prefer to rely on themselves in their work rather than on others in a group project.

### Typical Work Activities

- Performing ambiguous or abstract tasks
- Solving problems through thinking
- Working independently
- Doing scientific or laboratory work
- Conducting research and analyses
- Collecting and organizing data

### Potential Competencies

- Scientific ability
- Analytical skills
- Mathematical aptitude
- Writing skills

### Self-Concept and Values

- Independent, self-motivated
- Reserved, introspective
- Analytical, curious
- Task-oriented (wrapped up in job)
- Confident of scholarly and intellectual abilities
- Original, creative
- Given to unconventional values and attitudes

### Environments

- Unstructured organizations that allow freedom in work styles
- Achievement- oriented institutions
- Research and design laboratories and firms
- Universities and colleges
- Medical facilities
- Computer- related industries

### Typical Hobbies

- Work (investigative types frequently are consumed by their jobs, working 12 to 14-hour days, as well as weekends, leaving little time for leisure, family, or social activities)
- Complex activities that require learning many facts, details, and principles (e.g., skiing, sailing, scuba diving)
- Computers (evaluating, programming, discussing)
- Reading
- Astronomy
- Chess

## Investigative Occupations

- I Biologist
- I Geographer
- I Mathematician
- IA Economist
- IA Language Interpreter
- IA Scientific Illustrator
- IA Sociologist
- IAS Psychologist
- IS Hospital Supervisor
- IE Pharmacist
- IC Computer Operator
- IR Chemist
- IR Dental Hygienist
- IR Physical Therapist
- IR Physician
- IRS Math-Science Teacher
- IRE Chiropractor
- IRE Food Scientist
- IRC Computer Programmer
- IRC Systems Analyst

## Typical I-Theme Items

- Author of technical books
- College professor
- Psychologist
- Chemistry
- Doing research work

## ARTISTIC (A-THEME)

Artistic people value aesthetic qualities and have a great need for self-expression. This type, more than any other, includes some people who score high more because they enjoy being spectators or observers- in this case, of the arts- than because they actually participate. Artistic types frequently express their artistic interests in leisure or recreational activities as well as in vocational activities or environments.

### Typical work activities

- Composing , writing
- Creating artwork (e.g., painting, sculpting, photography)
- Working independently
- Acting, performing
- Playing musical instruments
- Decorating, designing

### Potential Competencies

- Creativity, imagination
- Verbal- linguistic skills
- Musical ability
- Artistic aptitudes

### Self-Concept and Values

- Independent, nonconforming
- Impulsive, expressive
- Impractical, disorderly
- Intuitive, complicated
- Sensitive, emotional
- Drawn to beauty and aesthetic qualities

### Environments

- Unstructured, flexible organizations that allow self- expression
- Artistic studios (preferably one's own)
- Theaters and concert halls
- Institutions that teach artistic skills (e.g., universities, music and dance schools, art institutes)
- Museums, libraries, and galleries
- Advertising, public relations, and interior- decorating firms

### Typical Hobbies

- Drawing, sketching, painting
- Photography
- Attending dance and musical concerts
- Going to theaters, museums, and galleries

- Reading
- Writing poetry or stories
- Collecting art work
- Playing a musical instrument
- Dancing

#### Artistic occupations

- A Art Museum Director
- A Art Teacher
- A Artistic
- A Author- Reporter
- A Entertainer- Musician
- A Librarian
- A Photographer
- AS English Teacher
- AS Music Teacher
- AE Advertising Executive
- AE Costume Designer
- AE Interior Decorator
- AE Public Relations Director
- AR Landscape Gardener
- AIR Architect
- AIR Sculptor
- AI Anthropologist
- AI Ballet Dancer
- AI Lawyer
- AIS Orchestra Conductor

#### Typical A-Theme Items

- Author of novels
- Interior decorator
- Literature
- Symphony concerts
- Magazines about art and music

## SOCIAL (S-THEME)

Social people, unlike the first three types in the R-I-A-S-E-C hexagon, like to work with people; they enjoy working in groups, sharing responsibilities, and being the center of attention. They like to solve problems through discussions of feelings and interaction with others.

### TYPICAL WORK ACTIVITIES

- Teaching, explaining
- Enlightening, guiding
- Helping
- Selecting and training
- Informing, organizing
- Solving problems, leading discussions

### Potential Competencies

- Social and interpersonal skills
- Verbal ability
- Teaching aptitude
- Listening skills

### Self-concept and values

- Humanistic, idealistic
- Ethical, responsible
- Tactful, cooperative
- Kind, generous
- Understanding, insightful
- Friendly, cheerful
- Concerned for the welfare of others

### Environments

- Social-service agencies
- Schools
- Religious organizations
- Personnel offices
- Medical-service and health-care facilities
- Mental-health clinics

### Typical Hobbies

- Entertaining others
- Attending conventions
- Doing volunteer and community-service work
- Organizing group social events (e.g., hayrides, picnics, excursions, parties, etc.)
- Artistic and realistic activities (frequently Social people, who are engaged in S-Theme occupations, have vocational interests that are in these areas; as much as they enjoy working with people, in their leisure time they feel a need for the solitude of R-Theme and A-Theme activities for their own self-preservation, to prevent burn-out).

### Social Occupations

- S Elementary Teacher
- S Licensed Practical Nurse
- S Playground Director
- S Special Education Teacher
- SE Juvenile Parole Officer
- SE Child Care Center Manager
- SE Community Education Coordinator
- SE Mental Health Worker
- SE School Administrator
- SE Guidance Counselor
- SEC Social Science Teacher
- SEC Rehabilitation Counselor
- SEC Production Coordinator
- SC Ticket Agent
- SR Physical Education Teacher
- SRE Agricultural Extensions Agent
- SRE Recreation Leader
- SI Student Personnel Worker
- SA Social Worker
- SA Speech Pathologist

### Typical S-Theme Items

- High School Teacher
- Social Worker
- Taking responsibility
- Adjusting to difficulties of others
- Leading a Scout Troop

## ENTERPRISING THEME (E-THEME)

Enterprising people seek positions of leadership, power, and status. They enjoy working with other people toward organizational goals and economic success. They like to take financial and interpersonal risks and to participate in competitive activities.

### Typical Work Activities

- Selling, purchasing
- Political maneuvering
- Entertaining clients
- Leading committees, groups, organizations, companies
- Giving speeches, talks, presentations
- Managing people and projects

### Potential Competencies

- Verbal skills suited to public speaking, persuading, and selling
- Social and interpersonal skills
- Leadership skills

### Self-Concept and Values

- Status-conscious
- Ambitious, competitive
- Sociable, talkative
- Witty, argumentative
- Domineering, aggressive
- Adventurous, risk-taking
- Optimistic, energetic, popular
- Attracted to money, power, and material possessions

### Environments

- Industrial and manufacturing firms
- Government and political organizations
- Seats of power and finance (e.g., large corporations, executive offices, brokerage firms)
- Retail and Wholesale firms (e.g., auto dealerships, department stores, real-estate firms)
- Fund-raising organizations
- Small, independently-owned businesses

### Typical Hobbies

- Belonging to clubs and organizations
- Sporting events, as participant or spectator
- Entertaining and partying
- Political activities
- Attending conventions
- Vacationing at expensive resorts

### Enterprising Occupations

- E           Beautician
- E           Chamber of Commerce Executive
- E           Elected Public Official
- E           Life Insurance Agent
- E           Personnel Director
- E           Restaurant Manager
- EC          Appliance Salesperson
- EC          Buyer
- EC          Corporate Executive
- ERC        Agribusiness Manager
- ER          Auctioneer
- ER          Nursery Manager
- EI          Computer Salesperson
- EI          Investments Manager
- EI          Marketing Executive
- EA          Flight Attendant
- ES          Encyclopedia Salesperson
- ES          Home Economics Teacher
- ES          Sales Manager
- ESC        Receptionist

### Typical E-Theme Items

- Auto Salesperson
- Sales Manager
- Stock Broker
- Starting a conversation w/ a stranger
- People who assume leadership

## CONVENTIONAL (C-THEME)

Conventional people, like Enterprising people, work well in large organizations but they prefer subordinate roles rather than leadership positions. They especially like activities that require attention to detail and accuracy.

### Typical Work Activities

- Typing and filing
- Operating office machines
- Organizing office procedures
- Keeping records and financial books
- Writing business reports
- Making charts and graphs

### Potential Competencies

- Manual dexterity
- Mathematical aptitude
- Efficiency, organization
- Perfectionism

### Self-Concept and Values

- Conscientious, preserving
- Practical
- Self-controlled, conservative
- Orderly, systematic
- Precise, accurate
- Careful, inflexible
- Mindful of money and material possessions

### Environments

- Large corporations
- Business offices
- Financial institutions (e.g., banks, credit companies)
- Accounting firms
- Quality-control and inspection departments
- Structured organizations with well-ordered chains of command

### Typical Hobbies

- Collecting (e.g., stamps, coins, etc.)
- Home-improvement projects
- Building models (e.g., airplanes, dollhouses, electric trains, etc.)
- Civic and fraternal organizations
- Games (like Monopoly) with clear-cut rules

### Conventional Occupations

- C Accountant
- C Bookkeeper
- C Dental Assistant
- C Proofreader
- C Secretary
- C Statistician
- CR Key Punch Operator
- CR Telephone Operator
- CRI Timekeeper
- CIS Time-Study Analyst
- CIS Estimator
- CSA Library Assistant
- CS Cashier
- CE Banker
- CE Credit Manager
- CE Store Salesperson
- CE IRS Agent
- CES Business Education Teacher
- CES Court Reporter
- CER Executive Housekeeper

### Typical C-Theme Items

- Bank Cashier
- Private Secretary
- Statistician
- Regular hours for work
- Developing business systems

From an exercise by Becky Boyd, Johnson County Community College and Where Do I Go Next: Using Your Strong Results to Manage Your Career by Fred Borgen and Judith Grutter

## Personality

Have you ever thought about what sort of environment in which you might work best? You may have taken a personality assessment in the past. One popular assessment is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI). If you have taken this assessment and still have your results, you can use them to help you think about your work style and work environment. If you have not taken the MBTI you are encouraged to take it through the Career Development Center at Minnesota State Mankato. Call or stop in to the CDC to make an appointment to take the MBTI if you'd like. In the meantime, you can start thinking about your personality by reading about the preferences described in the MBTI below.

Your personality is a preference. It is a way you find it easy and comfortable to behave. You can behave in other ways if you need to or want to. No type is better than the other. We need all types of people to do all of the available jobs. Read the following and think about what your type might be.

The first preference measured by the MBTI is **Extroversion** and **Introversion**. You may have heard these terms before, but it is good to think of them in a different way. For our purposes, *extroversion* means gaining energy through outside influences, usually through people. People who feel they are extroverts enjoy action and would get energy from an active event with lots of people. *Introversion* means being energized with quiet, private time and using inward reflection. One way to look at it is to think about how you would feel at a convention, party, or job fair where there are lots of people to meet, talk to, and interact with. Would you be tired or psyched up?

The second preference measured is **Sensing** and **iNtuition**. As you might expect, people described as *sensing* like to use their senses to take in information and pay attention to the things they experience. *Intuition* means paying attention to the big picture, and liking to use imagination and solving problems. How do you like to take in information? Do you look at the details or the big picture?

The third preference is **Thinking** and **Feeling** and it relates to how people make decisions. People who prefer *thinking* are concerned with logic and are able to step away from decisions and not personalize them. *Feeling* means valuing harmony and personal feelings and values in decision making. How do you make decisions? Do you think logically or are you concerned more about how people feel?

The final preference is **Judging** and **Perceiving**. People who identify as *judging* may like to have things planned and enjoy having their minds made up and things finalized. Persons who identify as *perceiving* like to be flexible and may enjoy unplanned events. Do you have your weekend plans finalized yet? Do you like knowing what you are going to do from hour to hour?

What do you think your type might be? Circle one letter in each pair below.

**I E   S N   T F   J P**

What might this mean to you in your search for a career or major?

## Putting it all together

Now it is time to look back at your self assessment. Page back through the first part of this book and read through your answers to the exercises you have done so far. Then fill in the summary sheet below.

My top five **values** from page 12 are:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

My top six **skill** clusters from page 18 are:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

My top three Holland Occupational Themes (**interests**) from page 20 are:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Look back at the Holland Occupational Themes sections on pages 21 - 32. Look at the occupations that you highlighted. Choose the ten occupations you feel you might be most interested in, which might be the best fit, or that you might want to learn about. List them below:

- |          |           |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____  |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____  |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____  |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____  |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ |

Are there other occupations you might be interested in that were not listed in that section? You may add those as well.

My self-reported MBTI type (**personality**) from page 33 is

Look at the Occupations you have listed above. Rank them in order of those you would most like to learn about or are most interested in by putting a number at the right side of the occupation name. Your most important occupation would be number 1. That is where we will start with the next section, Career Exploration.

## Career Exploration

Now you have a list of careers you find interesting. That is great, but how do you choose between them? What you need to do is find out all you can about these occupations and decide whether these careers would work for you now that you know all sorts of things about yourself. The first step to this process is to learn about the world of work. As you can probably tell, the world of work includes all of the jobs and careers that are out there. Your list may seem overwhelming, and you may be wondering just how you can learn about all of these careers. There are two basic ways to learn. The first is through research, and the second is through experience including talking to people. It is usually most effective and enjoyable for people to learn about occupations through both methods. Many people choose to do some research in books and on the internet first, and then they talk to people in the fields they are interested in.

**Researching Occupations:** Since you are ready to research careers, the first thing you should do is visit the Career Resource Library at Minnesota State Mankato. Mark some time off on your calendar and come on over. Ask a Library Assistant or staff member to help you. You'll find the information you need in following the resources. Many of these resources are available online as well. They are all linked on the CDC website at <http://www.mnsu.edu/cdc/students/career/exploration.html>. Use the sheet on page 37 as a guide on what information to look for.

**Occupational Outlook Handbook:** This book is updated every two years and has information on over 270 jobs, which covering about 90% of all workers. This is a great resource to start with because it includes the nature of work, working conditions, employment numbers, training needed, job outlook and earnings for these occupations. It also mentions related occupations and sources of additional information. You can find occupations by using the index in the back, or by looking at sections of related occupations. This resource is also available on the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/oco/>.

**O\*NET:** The Occupational Information Network (O\*NET Online) is provided by the US Department of Labor. This resource has extensive information on many careers and is only available on the Internet. Click on "Find Occupations" at <http://online.onetcenter.org/> to access this information.

**What Can I Do With a Major In...?:** This binder and website located at <http://www.mnsu.edu/cdc/students/majors/whatmajor/majors/default.html> has information on many majors and what sorts of careers relate to these majors. This resource also can give you strategies for finding employment in these areas. It is a favorite of students using the Career Resource Library.

**FOCUS Computerized System:** FOCUS is a self-paced, online career and education planning tool for use by students at Minnesota State Mankato. It will enable you to self-assess your career relevant personal qualities and explore career fields and major areas of study that are most compatible with your assessment results. Students who use FOCUS make better decisions about their goals and plans and learn how to self-manage their careers. Use FOCUS to help you - Choose or change your major and also to confirm your preferences or early choice of a career field

**MnCareers:** This resource is updated yearly and includes a wealth of information specific to Minnesota. Hundreds of occupations are sorted into related sections and wages, occupational growth, and employment numbers are included. Visit this site online at <http://www.iseek.org/mncareers/mncareersmap.html>.

**Books and Journals for specific careers and populations:** We have hundreds of books, many of which are specific to occupations. Browse the **CAREER RESOURCE LIBRARY** here - <http://www.librarything.com/catalog/CRL>

Our books are divided into the six colleges at MSU, so it is easy to find resources on related occupations. We have over 500 books in the **CAREER RESOURCE LIBRARY** and you can check most of them out for up to one week with your MavCard. Some popular titles include:

[Cool Careers for Dummies](#)

[150 Careers in the Health Care Field](#)

[Opportunities in Nutrition Careers](#)

[Jobs for English Majors and Other Smart People](#)

[Careers in Marketing](#)

[101 Career Alternatives for Teachers](#)

[Forensic Science Careers](#)

[Opportunities in Psychology Careers](#)

**Hot Jobs:** Students often wonder what jobs are "hot" or expected to grow. This site has information on the jobs expected to grow the fastest from 2008-2018.

[http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep\\_table\\_104.htm](http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_table_104.htm) This information is interesting and can be very helpful in making wise career decisions but be careful. Remember, reports on future employment levels and "hot jobs" are just predictions. Many factors can change unexpectedly, which may make predictions inaccurate. Also, think about what careers you might enjoy and be skilled at. A "Hot Job" isn't very hot if you hate it!

**Graduate School:** If one or more of your career possibilities involves graduate school, we have information in our library to help you accomplish your educational goals.

**Information on Majors at Minnesota State Mankato:** You can look in your Undergraduate Bulletin for information and this information can also be found online at

<http://www.mnsu.edu/supersite/academics/bulletins/undergraduate/>. It is a great idea to go through this bulletin and make a list of all of the majors that look interesting to you.

**Minnesota State Mankato Graduate Follow-Up Study:** Staff from the Career Development Center contact students within one year after graduation to find out if they are employed and where they are working. You can access this information, which includes job titles and employers of graduates by major, in the **CAREER RESOURCE LIBRARY** or at this website -

<http://www.mnsu.edu/cdc/resources/statistics/>

**Career Development and Job Search Links Site:** Check out our website at

<http://www.mnsu.edu/cdc/students/jobsearch/links.html> . We have many links for exploring occupations.

## **Career Exploration Worksheet**

For each occupation that is of interest to you, you will need to answer the following questions. Since you are looking at more than one occupation, you can photocopy this section, or you may just write your answers in a notebook. Answer these questions thoroughly so you have the information you need to make a decision. Use at least two sources to complete this information.

- 1. Occupation name**
- 2. Salary (entry salary and range)**
- 3. Working conditions**
- 4. Outlook (what is predicted for jobs in the future)**
- 5. Education and training requirements**
- 6. Number employed in this occupation**
- 7. Nature of work (what do people in this job do?)**
- 8. Other important information**
- 9. Related occupations**
- 10. After looking at this information, what aspects of this occupation sound appealing to you? Which ones don't? Do you think you could be happy working in this occupation?**

## Informational Interviewing and Job Shadowing

The next step is to talk to people about careers. There are some different ways you can do this.

**Informational Interviewing** is where you talk to one or more people working in careers that are of interest to you. You can find these people in a number of ways. You may already know someone who has an interesting career. Your friends or relatives might know someone who is working in that field. Your professors or classmates may also know some people who would be happy to talk to you.

**Job Shadowing** is when you follow someone around for all or part of his or her work day to find out about an occupation. Some people do this on the same day of their informational interview. It can be time consuming, but is usually very informative.

**Talking to students in a program:** You may want to find out what students experience while they are working toward a particular major. Do remember that students are not in the workforce yet. They may not be able to help you with finding out if you would like a job or career. They can help you to learn about classes in a major and tell you what a program is like.

**Talking to professors in a program:** Professors not only know the subject matter for the classes they teach, but they also know about occupations related to their department. They may also keep in touch with graduates from their departments and can tell you where these grads are working. Professors often have connections to employers at various organizations and can help you to connect with other professionals in their field.

### How do I set up an informational interview?

Asking people if you can have an appointment to interview or job shadow can be intimidating. It can also feel overwhelming to decide what to ask about. These next tips should help you.

Call or e-mail the person and be courteous. Let him or her know how much time they can expect to spend with you. Usually a half hour is a good amount of time for an interview. It is better to visit the person in his or her workspace, but it can still be useful if they only have time for a phone call.

You will also want to find out about the company ahead of time. Check out their website. Find out what the company does.

Prepare for the interview and bring a list of questions with you. Think about what you want to know. The following questions can be a good start for you.

1. What is your job title?
2. How did you get in to this career? What type of education or training did you get? Is this a typical path for this occupation?
3. What is a typical day like for you?
4. Could you estimate the starting salary in this field?
5. What is the best way to find out about openings in this field?
6. What is your favorite thing about this field?
7. What is your biggest challenge in this occupation?
8. What are some misconceptions people have about this occupation?

9. How would you recommend that I get prepared to be successful in this field?
10. What would you recommend that I read or do to learn more about this field?
11. What is the best way to find out about job openings in this field?
12. Can you refer me to anyone else in this field that I should talk to?

Remember, this could be the start of your professional career! You will want to dress professionally, like you would if you were interviewing for a job. Arrive early and be courteous to everyone you see. Bring your resume if you have one. Many times the person you are interviewing will keep your resume on file and refer back to it if he or she hears of opportunities you might enjoy. Be friendly and upbeat, and talk about why you were interested in interviewing the person. You can and should take notes so you have all of the information you need. Save the notes you gather and contact information you obtained from this person in case you want to follow up with him or her later on in your career.

After the interview, send a thank you note. Review the information you gathered, and think about how the information fits with what you want out of a job. Many people like to do more than one interview with different people in the same occupation. Sometimes what a person likes or dislikes about a job is specific to his or her situation, and cannot be assumed that aspect will be in every job in this field.

## Setting and Achieving Goals

First of all, you should be feeling a huge sense of accomplishment. You've completed your self-assessment process, so you know about what special qualities you have that can help you to choose a major or career. You also have learned about the world of work and have researched occupations. You have accomplished a lot, and you are ready to make an intelligent choice. But, you may be wondering how to do that.

Most of you will fall into one of the three categories below:

1. After working through the self-assessment and learning about the world of work, I now know exactly what I want to major in and I am ready to take the next steps.
2. I've done the self-assessment and researched occupations, but there are still too many occupations on my list. I don't know how I can choose between them. I am interested in so many things. I don't want to choose one and leave the perfect career behind!
3. I've assessed myself and researched some occupations, but none of them seem quite right. This decision is important, and I don't want to choose something that isn't perfect.

Circle the number of the category you feel you most fit into. If you fit into category 2 or 3, take a moment to think about why you might fit there. What is the biggest barrier in the way of making in decision?

This section will be helpful to people who fall in all three categories. First you will read about some things people believe about career decision making. Then you will learn about ways to make decisions and set goals. You will also find out about resources available to help you if you are stuck in your decision making process and to help you if you have made a decision. Finally you will find out how to "test" your career choice and get experiences that will help you to become employed in your career of choice and achieve your goals.

## Self Defeating Career Myths—Do you believe any of these?

If you believe any of these career myths, circle them. Then think about how you might change your thinking to overcome these myths.

1. My career must meet all of my needs as a person: social, emotional, creative, financial, security, physical, etc... instead of realizing my career will help to satisfy some of my needs and the rest of my needs can be satisfied with other aspects of my life—family, hobbies, community activities, friends, etc.
2. There is only one major or job out there that is right for me, and I will never be truly happy until I find it...instead of realizing there are a number of jobs with which I could be happy.
3. I have no control over my career opportunities; it is all up to fate and destiny, and my background...instead of believing I can make decisions which determine my career path.
4. If I work hard enough I will learn everything about my self and careers so I can find the one perfect match...instead of realizing I can never know everything about myself and the world of work, so I must make the best decision I can with the knowledge I have right now.
5. I have to please the other people in my life when I make career decisions...instead of knowing it is important to consider myself first when making career decisions.
6. Some careers are more important than others (CEO vs. night watchperson), and a person's worth is determined primarily by his or her job status...instead of knowing all careers are worthwhile and contribute to society and a person's worth cannot be judged solely by what he or she does.
7. Once I decide on a career I am stuck with it for the rest of my life...instead of having the notion that as my interests, needs, and abilities change, as well as the job market, I could be more satisfied by changing careers.
8. If I really had my head together I would know exactly what I want to be when I grow up...instead of the notion that people can make career decisions throughout their lives.

Adapted from 12 Self-Defeating Myths about Career Planning by Deborah Seaburg and Bob Seybold

## Decision Making

Now that you have worked through some of the inaccurate things you may have believed about careers, it is time to look at decision making and goal setting. Think about how you tend to make decisions. What are some decisions you have made in the past. Look at the four headings below and try to list at least 3 decisions that you have made in the following ways.

☛ I decide on these intuitively or by instinct. I somehow just know how to decide.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

☛ I decide on these in a planful, logical manner.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

☛ I let other people decide on these.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

☛ I get confused or paralyzed and can't make a decision on these.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Do you see any patterns in the four categories above? Was it easy to place decisions in some categories and difficult in others? Why?

Are bigger decisions in some categories and smaller ones in others? Why?

Where do you place deciding on a career or major?

Not every decision needs to be made in a precise, logical, and planful manner. You don't need to spend 2 hours deciding whether to have pizza or tacos for supper. For many people, however, it is usually a good idea to be planful about larger decisions, such as deciding on a career or major. Some people do make career decisions intuitively, they just seem to know what they want to do. Personality studies have estimated that 75 percent of the population prefers logical decision making and 25 percent prefer more intuitive, creative approaches. Most of the time, it isn't evident these people really have done the work behind the scenes. They know their skills, abilities,

interests and values, and then they used this knowledge to find a career that “feels right”. They may have been playful but might not have known it.

Some people look to others to decide on a career for them. Remember, you know yourself better than anyone else knows you, so this is a decision you can make for yourself. Other people get confused or paralyzed when making a career decision. There can be many reasons for this, but one is that they are afraid to take the risk of making a decision. They feel if they make a decision, they are cutting off all other options and that can be scary. Decision making involves risk and uncertainty. Evaluating alternatives is a way to alleviate some feelings of risk. That is why you are encouraged to research careers, do informational interviews, job shadow, and take a course in your proposed major. Even with all of this information, you cannot know all possible outcomes of your decision and it can still feel risky. Sometimes the decision isn't quite as risky as it seems. Think about it. What if you choose a major and find you don't like it? What if you work at a job for a year and aren't happy? What are some options you would have at that point? Could you use your skills to do something else? Could you get some further training to change your career? Do you know people who are working in fields completely different from what they majored in? Do you know people who have changed careers? Are they happy? If you still feel paralyzed and can't make a decision, look back at the career myths earlier in this section or talk about your fears with a friend or counselor.

How do you make big decisions? Write the steps you take to make big decisions below. Some examples of big decisions might be deciding which college to attend, deciding to take a job, making a large purchase like a car, or deciding to move away from home.

## Decision Making: The Process

It usually helps people who are facing large decisions to look at a step-by-step process.

The decision-making process involves using what you know (or can learn) to get what you want. The steps below show what is involved in making a well-considered decision.

- I. **Recognize and define the decision to be made.** This sounds easy, but it is good to be specific about what you want to decide.
- II. **Know what is important to you and what you want to attain or accomplish.** Look in the values section of this book to help you with this.
- III. **Examine the information you already have and seek and utilize new information.** This is what you did when you researched careers and talked to people like faculty members and people employed in fields of interest.
- IV. **Identify the alternatives that are available.** You made a prioritized list of careers that might fit for you on page 10. You may be able to shorten your list now. The remaining careers are your alternatives.
- V. **Assess the risks and costs involved in choosing each alternative.** Many people like to make a list of pros and cons.
- VI. **Choose among alternatives.** This is the hard part. Look at the costs and risks. Which option seems best? Pretend you have made your decision for a day and live with it. How does it feel?
- VII. **Develop a plan or strategy for attaining what you want.** The goal setting section that is next will help you with this step.
- VIII. **Review the decision.** This is VERY important. If you live with a decision for awhile and realize it isn't right for you, go back through the process and make a new decision. It is better to be honest with yourself and re-evaluate than to be unhappy with a long-term decision.

How did your decision making plan compare? Did you have other steps that would be more helpful to you, or were you missing steps? Where are you at in your career decision making process? Write below what you have done already in your career decision making process and what you need to do.

## Goal Setting

**Goals are statements of what you want to do. A goal should have the following characteristics:**

- CONCEIVABLE:** It can be put into words.
- ACCEPTABLE:** It appears to be appropriate to your values.
- ATTAINABLE:** It can be accomplished using a plan of action.
- MANAGEABLE:** You have direct control over the achievement of the goal; it does not depend on others.
- ASSESSABLE:** There is some sort of record keeping and a method for assessment.
- DESIRABLE:** It is something you really want to do.
- GROWTH PRODUCING:** It encourages positive self-development and change.

What is a goal you would like to set? This can be a career goal or another type of goal.

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Now list some objectives. Objectives are steps to reaching your goal. Objectives should be specific and they are short term. The more specific and measurable your objectives are, the more likely it is that you will accomplish them. You can think of it as taking smaller chunks of a big project and doing them step by step. List your objectives.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5.

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It isn't always easy to reach goals. As a matter of fact, reaching big and important goals usually isn't easy. One thing to remember is that you need to consider what you are willing to give up to reach your goal. If you had the goal of making the hockey team when you were in high school, you probably had to give up things like free time and sleeping in. If you have the goal of losing weight, you may need to cut down on portions of food you enjoy and give up some free time to exercise. Another important facet of goal setting is that you need to have a realistic timeline to reach your goal. If you bench press 35 pounds today, you cannot set a goal of bench pressing 175 pounds by next week. You should also set your goals high, but realistically. If your objectives are small and measurable and you give yourself enough time to complete your goal, just think of the sense of accomplishment you will feel when you reach your ambitious goal! It is also a great idea to reward yourself after you complete each objective and after reaching your goal. This technique can help you to keep motivated even when the going gets tough.

Have you ever set a goal and reached it? What was the goal? Did you use the above techniques?

## Other Resources for Decision Making and Goal Setting

You may be feel like you need to work on your self-assessment some more. You might need more resources for career exploration. You may be stuck and be having difficulty in making your decision on a major or career. It is possible you just need some more information or help in this area. Check out the following resources.

- Make an appointment to see a career counselor at the Career Development Center. Sometimes it helps to talk things out. Other times you may need more information or resources and your counselor may be able to help you or refer you to someone who can help. Call us at 507-389-6061 to set up an appointment.
- Take the *CSP 110 - Decision Making for Career and Life* class at Minnesota State Mankato. The coursework in this class not only takes you through the career development process, including self-assessment and career exploration, but also provides resources for critical thinking and decision making.
- Do you feel like something is still getting in the way of your decision making? Are you stressed out about your decision or feeling down about it? You can make an appointment with a Counselor at the Counseling Center. The services there are free and confidential. To make an appointment you may either call them at 507-389-1455 or stop in at CSU 245.
- Visit our **CAREER RESOURCE LIBRARY** in the Career Development Center and take some time to explore. You might find some of the books in our Career Exploration section useful, like *What Color is Your Parachute* by Richard Bolles. There is an abundance of information on many careers and employers as well as job search guides.
- Wherever you are in the decision making process, you can gain some work or volunteer experience that may help you decide and/or be relevant for your future career. Log on to [mavjobs.com](http://mavjobs.com) and check out part-time job opportunities. You can also check out the Student Activities website at <http://www.mnsu.edu/activities/> to find out about volunteer and campus leadership opportunities. Get involved in RHA if you live on campus or become involved in a student organization or community activity that interests you or relates to your major.
- Work through the FOCUS program provided by the Career Development Center. You can do more self-assessment, learn more about the world of work, learn about educational opportunities, scholarships and financial aid, and fine tune your job search skills. The FOCUS program is pre-paid for Minnesota State Mankato students and can be accessed by any computer with internet access. <http://www.mnsu.edu/cdc/students/career/focus.html>
- Take the Strong Interest Inventory to learn more about your interests and apply them to careers or take the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) to find out about your personality and how it might fit in with different career choices. <http://www.mnsu.edu/cdc/students/career/stronginterest.html>

- 🐾 Don't forget about your academic advisor! If you are an undeclared student, you probably have an advisor in the First Year Experience office. They are a wonderful resource and can help you to navigate your education. <http://www.mnsu.edu/fye/>
- 🐾 Talk to your professors! If you are interested in a class or major, they have firsthand knowledge about the field and what their students do with majors in their departments.
- 🐾 Use the CDC website! [www.mnsu.edu/cdc](http://www.mnsu.edu/cdc)
- 🐾 Attend the Major Fair and Career Day events. Check out the CDC events website for dates and information. Events are great opportunities to learn about majors, careers, and the job market.
- 🐾 Visit [www.iseek.org](http://www.iseek.org) to explore careers and do some more self-assessment, plan your education and find jobs.

If you have decided on your major and career, congratulations! Your work isn't done though. Of course you will have classes to take in your major. You will also need to prepare yourself to excel in the job market. The following resources are available to help you do just that!

- 🐾 Use the skills assessments in this handbook to think about which skills you may need to obtain or improve to succeed in your career. Think about ways you might develop these new skills and set goals and objectives to do so. You can gain skills and valuable experience through part-time jobs, volunteer experiences, and campus involvement as well as through your coursework.
- 🐾 Talk to your professors about what they recommend for you to have an edge in the job market. Talk to the internship coordinator for your program and sign up for [mavjobs.com](http://mavjobs.com) to find an internship.
- 🐾 When you are ready to look for jobs, check out the Job Search Handbook available through the CDC. It is an awesome resource to help you get started on the job search.
- 🐾 NETWORK! Get to know people in your field. There are many ways to do this. Come to the Career Development Center or check out the Job Search Handbook for more information on networking.
- 🐾 Use the CDC resources available to you. Get started on your resume. Have your resume reviewed at a **CDC QuickStop**. Learn about interviewing skills. Research the job market. Log on to [mavjobs.com](http://mavjobs.com). Participate in on-campus recruiting. Visit a career counselor in the CDC to talk about your job search skills and the job market in your career area. Use these helpful services to learn how to land a great job.

Thank you for working through this handbook. Please contact the Career Development Center if you would like further information on or assistance with any of the topics in this handbook.