

# Identify Your Interests, Values, Personality Traits, and Skills

How do you figure out which career is right for you? At CCE, we know that the career exploration process can be daunting. While it may feel intimidating at first, there are steps you can take to start making progress towards self-awareness and understanding career options that may be a fit for you.

Self-assessment is the first step. The more you understand yourself and your motivations, the more informed and productive your career search process will be. Start by reflecting on your interests, values, skills and personality traits, as well as key experiences you have enjoyed. Research shows that people most satisfied in their careers are those who are working in jobs that closely align with these areas. Use the following activities to think about these areas and how they connect to potential career options. Complete them on your own or discuss them with a CCE career counselor.

## Identity:

Identity is important to career exploration because it represents you as you define yourself. It is not another's perception of you or who you should be. Knowing who you are and being confident in that identity will help you stay grounded as you explore the next phase of your life. You may think of yourself in terms of many identities and aspects of yourself that intersect. Some of these identities may be grounded in the communities of which you are a part and the life experiences you have had. Your identities may be closely tied to your values, interests, social contexts and self-image. In the exercise below try to reflect deeply on your core self, that which is part of you regardless of who you are with.

Describe yourself in the lines below. Try using a mix of demographic descriptors (age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, race, ethnicity, etc.), adjectives, or communities in which you consider yourself a member (first-generation college student, military veteran, etc.) in order to paint a full picture of who you are.

*At my core, I am...*

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Keep these aspects of your identity in mind as you move forward with the self-assessment exercises in this section, as they often influence other elements of career exploration such as your interests and values. Jot notes in the chart on page 11.



Char Smullyan



Char Smullyan

# Interests:

Interests represent things you like to learn about or do as hobbies, but may also give clues to the kinds of careers and jobs you would enjoy. In the spaces below, list 10–20 things that you really like to do or enjoy learning about. Use the following questions to brainstorm ideas:

- What have been your favorite courses?
- In your previous jobs, internships, or extracurricular experiences, what tasks did you enjoy most?
- What are the things you find yourself doing and enjoying, even though you don't have to do them?
- What local, societal or world problems interest you?
- If you were an excellent writer, what subjects would you want to write about?
- If you could teach a course on any subject, what subjects would you teach?
- What do you do for fun? To relax and unwind?


Now, scan through your list. What trends or topical themes appear throughout? Use the following theme descriptions to identify patterns and circle or highlight two or three that describe your interests. Note which theme contains activities that are most engaging, not necessarily the highest number of items.

Activities involving:

- athletic or mechanical ability; working outdoors or with machines, tools, plants or animals
- observing, learning, investigating, analyzing, evaluating, or problem solving
- imagination and creativity; artistic, innovative, or intuitive abilities; or unstructured environments
- working with people to enlighten, inform, help, train or cure; skill with words
- working with people to influence, persuade, perform, lead, or manage for business goals or economic gain
- organizing, clerical, or numerical ability; step by step tasks, details and data

Write some keywords from the themes that most describe your interests in column 1 of the chart on page 11.



# Values:

Values play an integral role in career satisfaction. Of the following list, prioritize the ten career values that are most important to you now (they may change over time) by circling them, and cross out the ten that are least important. Add any other values that are missing from your list.

- Achievement
- Advancement and promotion
- Adventure
- Arts
- Challenging problems
- Change and variety
- Close relationships
- Community
- Competence
- Competition
- Cooperation
- Country
- Creativity
- Decisiveness
- Democracy
- Ecological awareness
- Economic security
- Effectiveness
- Efficiency
- Ethical practice
- Excellence
- Excitement
- Fame
- Fast pace
- Financial gain
- Flexibility
- Freedom
- Friendships
- Growth
- Having a family
- Helping other people
- Helping society
- Honesty
- Independence
- Influencing others
- Inner harmony
- Integrity
- Intellectual status
- Involvement
- Job tranquility
- Knowledge
- Leadership
- Location
- Loyalty
- Meaningful work
- Merit
- Money
- Nature
- Order
- Personal development
- Physical challenge
- Pleasure
- Power and authority
- Privacy
- Public service
- Purity
- Quality
- Recognition
- Religion
- Reputation
- Responsibility and accountability
- Security
- Self-respect
- Serenity
- Sophistication
- Stability
- Status
- Supervising others
- Time freedom
- Truth
- Wealth
- Wisdom
- Work under pressure
- Working with others
- Working alone

Now, prioritize your top ten values by considering which could be compromised if necessary and which cannot be compromised. After completing this exercise, write your top five values into the chart on page 11.

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



Char Smullyan

# Personality:

Personality can be defined as a combination of qualities that form an individual's distinctive character, which influence how you see, experience, and interact with the world. We all have certain innate preferences and personality characteristics that feel more comfortable and natural, such as how we gain energy, perceive information, make decisions, and organize our external environments.

Below are just eight aspects of your personality to consider. For each row, check off the one option that most describes you. While you may relate to both descriptions, think about which is most comfortable, or the option you would choose *first*.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>People and Interaction</b>	Gain energy by being with other people; tend to be sociable, seek out others, enjoy interacting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Time Alone</b>	Gain energy by spending time alone; enjoy social interaction
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Talk and Participate</b>	Talk more than listen, think out loud, focused on outside world of people and things	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Listen and Reflect</b>	Listen more than talk; reflective, like to think and then respond, focused on inner world of ideas
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Practical and Concrete</b>	Value realism and common sense, practical solutions, practical matters, concrete information, immediate action	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Creative and Abstract</b>	Drawn to imagination, creative new ideas, different ways of doing things, innovative solutions to problems
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Details</b>	See the trees in the forest and then the forest, give detailed descriptions, patient with routine details, precise step by step instructions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Big Picture</b>	See the forest and then the trees, give more global descriptions, impatient with routine details want to know the purpose of projects and general goals
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Logic</b>	Prefer analysis and putting things together in logical order	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Harmony</b>	Prefer harmony and empathy, gathering consensus
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Impartial Standards</b>	Value one standard for all	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Personal Analysis</b>	Value exceptions to the rule and consider the effect of actions on people and feelings
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Closure</b>	Prefer to have matters settled. Happiest when there is a plan and clear structure, like to bring closure to the external world	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Open-Ended</b>	Prefer flexibility. Happiest when time is unstructured, like to stay open to all possibilities
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Control and Organization</b>	Organized, enjoy making lists of tasks and subtasks, prioritize effectively, attached to calendars, goal sheets, and outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Unexpected and Go with the Flow</b>	Enjoy variety and the unexpected, comfortable with ambiguity and last minute changes, open to new information

Of those that you checked, select 3–5 that describe you best or resonate the most with you, and write them in the chart on page 11.



# Skills:

Throughout the course of your life, you have gained competencies in many areas. In which of the following do you excel? This list will help you to realize your strong points. Apply them to career decision-making and when transitioning to different fields. Check off the skills that you have demonstrated inside and outside of the classroom. Then, go back and circle those skills you most enjoy using and cross off those that you do not enjoy using.

## Communication Skills

- Present information to large and small groups
- Handle complaints in person/over the phone
- Sell ideas, products, or services
- Listen carefully and attentively
- Develop rapport easily with diverse individuals and groups of people
- Read or speak another language
- Edit and proofread written material
- Write clearly and concisely

## Counseling, Serving, and Interpersonal Relations Skills

- Counsel, advise, consult, guide others
- Demonstrate empathy, sensitivity, and patience
- Help people make their own decisions
- Help others improve health and welfare
- Listen empathically and with objectivity
- Create positive, hospitable environment
- Encourage, empower, advocate for people

## Creative and Innovative Skills

- Visualize concepts and results
- Brainstorm and make use of group synergy
- Design materials, products, or services
- Express ideas through a form
- Use computer software for artistic creations
- Write poetry, fiction, plays

## Cultural Respect Skills

- Understanding differences
- Global mindset
- Sensitivity
- Openness

## Financial Skills

- Develop/stay within a budget
- Eye for profit
- Recognize money making opportunities
- Manage money/make money grow
- Set financial priorities
- Develop cost cutting solutions
- Negotiate financial deals
- Understand economic principles

## Leadership, Management, and Administrative Skills

- Envision the future and lead change
- Establish policy and/or procedures
- Set goals and determine courses of action
- Create innovative solutions to complex problems
- Develop and facilitate work teams

- Provide training for development of staff
- Demonstrative flexibility during crisis
- Evaluate performance
- Streamline processes

## Life Skills

- Flexibility
- Adaptability
- Initiative
- Accountability
- Work ethic
- Responsibility

## Mechanical and Technical Skills

- Invent
- Assemble/build/install
- Perform precision work
- Operate hand/power tools
- Troubleshoot/diagnose problems
- Drafting/mechanical drawing
- Understand manuals/diagrams
- Learn new technology easily
- Program/Code
- Using technology to identify information

## Numerical Skills

- Solid ability with basic arithmetic
- Multiply numbers in your head
- Figure out percentages
- Recognize patterns and relationships in numbers
- Gain valuable information from graphs, tables, and charts

## Numerical Skills (Continued)

- Quickly spot numerical errors
- Make decisions based on numerical data
- Make rough calculations/estimates in your head
- Analyze statistical data

## Planning and Organizing Skills

- Identify and organize tasks or information
- Coordinate and organize people, activities, processes, systems, and programs
- Develop a plan and set objectives
- Set up and keep time schedules
- Anticipate problems and respond with solutions
- Plan and manage events

## Problem-Solving Skills

- Anticipate/solve problems
- Bring order to a chaotic situation
- Determine root causes
- Select most effective solution
- Improvise under stress
- Help a group identify solutions
- Handle difficult people
- Stay calm in emergencies

## Research and Analytical Skills

- Identify appropriate information sources
- Hypothesize and test for results
- Compile numerical and statistical data

- Classify and sort information into categories
- Write analysis of study and research
- Compare and evaluate information
- Formulate insightful and relevant questions
- Use technology for statistical analysis
- Keep accurate and complete records

## Training and Teaching Skills

- Use a variety of media for presentations
- Develop educational curriculum and materials
- Create and administer evaluation plans
- Facilitate a group
- Explain difficult ideas, complex topics
- Assess learning styles and respond accordingly
- Consult and recommend solutions

In the chart on page 11, write down 5–8 of the skills that you feel are your strongest and **would most like to use** in a career.

According to a 2016 survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), the top qualities/skills employers seek in hires are:

1. Ability to verbally communicate with persons inside and outside the organization
2. Ability to work in a team structure
3. Ability to make decisions and solve problems
4. Ability to plan, organize, and prioritize work
5. Ability to obtain and process information
6. Ability to analyze quantitative data
7. Technical knowledge related to the job
8. Proficiency with computer software programs
9. Ability to create and/or edit written reports
10. Ability to sell or influence others

Year after year employers report looking for the same transferable skills, which are listed above. Remember these types of skills are developed both through studies, extracurricular activities, clubs, internships, study abroad, and life experiences unique to you!

## > RELATED ASSESSMENTS

### STRONG INTEREST INVENTORY (SII)

The Strong Interest Inventory can help you discover your interests, preferences, and personal styles. It identifies themes and specific areas of interest, and it compares your interests with those of individuals in a variety of occupations. It can also help you identify new career, academic, or extracurricular options to investigate.

### CAREER VALUES CARD SORT

The Career Values Card Sort is a quick, simple tool that allows you to prioritize your career-related values. This assessment is an effective tool for providing a deeper understanding of what you intrinsically need out of a career.

### MYERS-BRIGGS TYPE INDICATOR (MBTI)

The MBTI can help you identify your personality preferences and provide insight into how you make decisions, interact with people, gather information, and get energized. The MBTI does not measure aptitudes, but helps you better understand your motivations, strengths and potential areas of growth, and career areas for exploration.

### MOTIVATED SKILLS CARD SORT AND SKILLSCAN CARD SORT

The Motivated Skills and SkillScan are two Card Sort assessments that help you identify the skills that you most want to use in a career. Both of these assessments have you rate a number of skills based on both how much you enjoy using the skills and how much you want to use it in a career. This information can be used to identify potential careers that value these skills and areas for further development.

If you want to further explore your interests, values, personality, and skills, make an appointment with a CCE career counselor.



# Likes and Dislikes:

Complete the activity below to reflect on how you have enjoyed or not enjoyed your previous experiences. When listing your likes and dislikes, be sure to think about the job tasks, skills you used, work environment, people you worked with, your boss/supervisor, the company culture and politics, hours, pay, perks, benefits, socialization, friends, resources available to complete the job, commute, professional development/opportunities for growth, travel, etc. Also, consider what was going on in your personal life at the time of each job—do you think that had any influence on the satisfaction of this particular job?

Job Title, Company/Organization and Brief Description	What I Liked about Job	What I Disliked about Job	Influence of Personal Life Factors?

Use this chart to record the interests, values, personality traits, identities, and skills you have identified through the previous exercises. Also note potential career options you have considered, or any careers that may connect to some of your preferences which you would like to explore further. Next, move to page 12 to learn about how to connect the information below to possible careers.

SELF-ASSESSMENT RESULTS					
Interests	Values	Personality Traits	Identities	Skills	Career Options