

CAREER DECISION PYRAMID

Self-Exploration Services (Yellow Level) #2

How Assessment Can Help You Choose a Major or Career

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When you were a kid, you probably knew exactly what you wanted to be when you grew up.

Today, you may not be so sure.

The good news is that if you haven't yet declared your major or zeroed in on a career you'd like to pursue, there's still time. Better yet, you don't have to agonize over these decisions. Your career center can steer you in the right direction.

The career center staff can't make academic or career decisions for you. You can, by scheduling counseling sessions with the staff and using other resources available through your career center, including assessment tools.

These tools can tell you a lot about yourself, including things you aren't aware of or haven't thought much about. Or, they may verify what you already know.

In general, assessment tools help you:

- Identify your strengths and weaknesses—what you do well and what you could do better;
- Pinpoint your interests and match them with your strengths;
- Clarify your values, specifically what matters to you, e.g. making a lot of money or feeling that what you do makes a difference, working alone or as part of a team;
- Look at the overlap among your strengths, interests, and values to identify corresponding majors or careers.

Career counselors also recommend that students not look at assessment as a once-and-done proposition, but to do it periodically. After all, your interests and skills will change over time.

A wide variety of assessment tools are available to identify your skills, interests, preferences, values, and abilities. Which, if any, you use will depend on what your career counselor suggests and what your specific needs are. Here are a few of the more typical tools:

- *Do What You Are (DWYA)* a unique and powerful web-based career development and advising solution based on the proven science of Personality Type. It is similar to the MBTI in scope.

- *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* can help you determine your personal preferences and strengths based on four dimensions that describe a specific personality type:

- focus of energy (introversion vs. extraversion);
- information-gathering methods (concrete facts vs. meanings and possibilities);

- decision-making preferences (objective vs. subjective); and
- lifestyle preferences (planned and orderly vs. spontaneous and less structured).

This is an excellent tool for discovering your strengths and applying them to matching occupations and working environments.

•*Self-Directed Search* is based on the Holland Theory or RIASEC Code. The student receives a three-letter code that describes his or her personality/career type. An accompanying booklet provides listings of careers.

Other Options:

Strong Interest Inventory matches students, based on their likes and dislikes, with individuals who share their interests, to determine if the students might enjoy the same kind of careers as those individuals. Students are provided with three sets of information:

- A combination of general interest scales (realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional) that provide an overall picture of the student's preferences, values, and interests;
- Basic interest scales that target specific subcategories of general scales and further narrow down interests and desirable aspects of potential careers (such as writing, public speaking, computers, teaching); and
- A list of 10 careers, corresponding to a three-letter code, that encourages further exploration.

Besides these, many other exercises are devised by career counselors to help students figure out what they want to be and do.

Several assessment tools are also available online, including:

Steps to Career/Life Planning Success—

<http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infocecs/CRC/manual-home.html>

Career Planning Process—

<http://www.bgsu.edu/colleges/library/infosrv/lue/careers/planning.html>

Coaching for Success, Inc.—<http://www.coach.net/personal.htm>

While you can use assessment tools independently of the career center, you stand to benefit more by selecting tools with a career counselor. This is the person who can provide context for the results, help you prioritize the data, and help you identify careers that might suit you.