CHOOSING A MAJOR: CHARTING A CAREER

A Plan for Your Future

Cal State LA Career Development Center
What percentage of college students change their majors at least once?
When you pick a specific major, you are picking a specific career.
Except for specialized ‘professional’ majors like nursing, engineering and social work, choosing a major does not limit you to just one career choice.

Job titles for Political Science majors

- Activist or advocate
- Campaign manager or worker
- City planner
- Foreign service officer
- Immigration officer
- Labor relations specialist
- Lawyer
- Lobbyist
- Mediator
- Pollster
- Pollster
- Speech writer
- Teacher or professor etc., etc., etc.
Once you focus on a major, you can’t study anything else.
You can satisfy your interests by
- undertaking a double major
- adding a minor
- studying for a certificate
- taking a class simply because you are curious about it
Your choice of college major will have a huge impact on your entire life.
Mm, maybe yes, maybe no

The typical American worker
- will work at least 40 years of their lives
- will hold an average of 15 different jobs
- will have at least 3 different careers
- It is not unusual for people to work in jobs not directly related to their majors.

Getting a degree is about more than gaining knowledge in a particular college major.

We hope you will develop MANY skills and competencies that will allow you to be employed in many different work environments.
Reasons for choosing a major

THE WRONG REASONS

- “My parents want me to study this.”
- “My friends are in this major.”
- “This major will lead to a career in which I’ll make buckets of money.”
- “This field looks interesting on television!”
- “Frankly, I’m too lazy to research this, so I’ll just choose something!”
Reasons for choosing a major

THE RIGHT REASONS

- “I really love studying this field – in fact, I even read about it in my spare time.”

- “Pursuing this major seems right to me – I feel that it is a part of who I am.”

- “I have many interests, but after doing my research, I think this is the best major for me.”
How *do* I choose a major?

Who am I?  
(self analysis)

Where do I want to go?  
(career research)
1. **Who am I?**

- Interests
- Personality
- Skills
- Values
1. Who am I? Interests  
(those things you love doing)

Interests can be divided into six occupational categories -

1. **Realistic** “doers” have mechanical &/or athletic abilities; enjoy building; prefer concrete problems & working outdoors

2. **Investigative** “thinkers” are people who love analyzing things: they observe, learn, evaluate, solve problems. Prefer to work alone, are often inventive.

3. **Artistic** people are the “creators” who are innovative and original. Like unstructured situations, use their imagination, need to express themselves, are often emotional & sensitive.

4. **Social** people are the “helpers.” they like to train, assist, inform & cure others. Like working in groups, have good communication skills, are friendly & empathetic.
1. Who am I? Interests
(those things you love doing)

5. **Enterprising** people are “persuaders” who enjoy influencing, managing & leading others, often for economic gain. Energetic, ambitious: often into status & power.

6. **Conventional** people are the “organizers” who like working with data & details; have clerical & numerical abilities, are efficient & dependable.

Most people see themselves in 2 or 3 of these different interest categories. Where are your interests now?
1. Who am I? Personality
(the way you’ve always been - since birth!)

- The main components of personality include these dynamics:
  - Are you an introvert or an extrovert?
  - Are you realistic and practical, working in the ‘here & now,’ or are you able to see ‘the big picture’ and come up with creative ideas?
  - Do you make logical, analytical decisions, or are you often influenced by feelings?
  - Do you prefer a planned & orderly way of doing things, or do you like to be spontaneous & flexible?
1. Who am I? Skills
(those things you are good at)

- Skills & interests may overlap, because things you are good at are usually enjoyable.

- Skills are not necessarily innate. They can be learned or acquired, and they can be improved with practice.
Another way of looking at skills—
3 major groups of skills

- **PEOPLE** skills (serving, helping, speaking, taking instructions, supervising, negotiating, mentoring)
  Sample majors: Social Work, Business Management, Communication Studies, Child & Family Studies, Psychology

- **DATA** skills (comparing, compiling, computing, analyzing, coordinating, innovating, synthesizing)
  Sample majors: Computer Science, Biology, Anthropology, Sociology

- **THINGS** skills (handling, tending, setting up, manipulating, operating, controlling)
  Sample majors: Engineering, Fire Protection Administration, Criminal Justice, TV/Film/Theatre (Production)
1. Who am I? What do you value?

Values are developed early in life and are motivators that indicate what is important to you.

- Personal & family values
- Cultural values
- Economic values
Career testing can be an important part of your self-analysis, but the test(s) will not TELL you what to major in. The Career Center offers the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and the Strong Interest Inventory.

Talk to a career counselor if you are interested in formal career testing.

FOCUS 2 is a free, online, interactive self-guided career, major and education planning system that offers short assessments that gauge your:
- Interests
- Skills
- Personality type
- Values

A list of occupations and majors is produced for your consideration and further research.
1. Go to: www.calstatela.edu/univ/cdc/focus-2-help
2. Click on “Focus 2”
3. Click on “Register”
4. Create your profile

Your access code is eaglesla
2. Where do you want to go?

- Research Resources
- Informational Interviews
- Volunteering, Job Shadowing, Practical Work Experience
2. Where do you want to go? Research Resources

ONLINE

- **Career Center website**
  [calstatela.edu/careercenter](calstatela.edu/careercenter)
  The CDC website contains lots of research resources, including:
  “What can I do with this major?”
  Also, under CareerExpress,
  “Focus2”
  “Candid Career”

- **bls.gov/ooh**
  awesome site for info on hundreds of careers

BOOKS

Available in the CDC library, as well as your local library:

- **The Encyclopedia of Careers & Vocational Guidance** (4 volumes)
- **Guide to College Majors**
- **Book of College Majors**
- **Various major-specific titles**
Who knows careers better than the people working in them?

Start by asking family, friends, alumni, acquaintances who are working in a field of interest to you.

Preferably in person, speak to them about their career. You are interviewing them for information, not a job.

The Career Center has a flyer with suggested questions you can ask.

Interview those people!
Job shadowing allows you to observe professionals on the job and get insight into the practical side of a particular career. The professionals you talk to may be willing to let you shadow them.

Certain employers, like hospitals, schools, police departments and non-profit organizations are often happy to have volunteers. Volunteering gets you exposed to different work environments.
Every job is a learning experience - no matter what your job is, or whether or not it relates to fields you might want to study.

WHY?

If nothing else, it might tell you what kind of work you’d never want to do professionally. But more importantly, it gets you in a real work environment in which you can observe your bosses, study the business, and show personal responsibility……it’s also something to put on your resume!
True or false?

You need to declare a major by the time you complete 30 semester units.
BUT -- make an informed choice by following through with these to-do’s:

1. Reflect on your interests, skills, personality and values.
2. Do research on majors and careers.
3. Speak to professionals, and spend some time volunteering and job shadowing.
4. Talk to a career counselor – they are happy to answer questions and provide guidance.
And one more thing –

Choose a major for all the RIGHT reasons.
CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER

For counseling, testing, free workshops & other career-related action, visit us!

(323) 343-3237
calstatela.edu/careercenter