

# Major & Career Exploration Guide

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# Exploration and Assessment

The Major & Career Exploration Guide is helpful for students who are in the process of determining a major or career path. This guide will introduce you to a series of self-assessments and activities designed to identify careers/occupations that are a good fit with your personality style, skills, interests, and values.



Major and career exploration is the first of four milestones in our [Roadmap to Career Success](#). Once you have completed self assessment and career exploration, you will be ready to move onto the next milestones and build specific skills through internships, service learning, and co-curricular activities.

## What is major and career exploration?

Major exploration is the process of exploring and deciding on an undergraduate major or field of study. Career exploration is the process of researching, evaluating, and learning about a variety of occupations and career opportunities. After completing self assessment inventories, you will have some ideas of majors and careers of interest to further explore. This guide will help you navigate the vast amounts of career-related data and narrow down your options, as well as make some decisions on majors and/or careers to pursue.

## What is self-assessment?

Self-assessment is the starting point in the career development process. In order to determine what you want to do, you must understand how your personal preferences, strengths and interests determine what is meaningful to you in life and work. We offer several formal career assessments that are easy to complete online in a survey format and offer a list of potential majors and careers of interest based on how you answer a series of questions.

**Self-assessments** can be conducted on the following areas and attempt to answer the following questions:

- **Personality** - What are your natural preferences and traits?
- **Interests** - What do you like to do?
- **Values** - What is important to you?
- **Skills** - What are your strengths? What are your areas of growth?

**Career assessments** are not tests or measures of aptitude--there are no right or wrong answers. Self-assessments are meant to be used as a guide for decision making, not a rule. Since both careers and personalities are multifaceted, the focus of interpretation is on identifying key themes which are unique to each individual. Therefore, it is recommended that you discuss your assessment results with a professional career counselor.



The SJSU Career Center offers a variety of assessment tools to students. Most do not require a referral by an academic advisor or career counselor, but it is highly recommended that you consult with your career counselor to select the most appropriate assessments based on your career goals as well as scheduling an appointment to review results.

Below is more information about each assessment and how to access:

**Focus2** (free and accessible using SSO) Platform offers assessments that help you identify work interests and personality preferences that connect to occupations and majors. After completing the assessments, you can also create an educational and career plan to help you reach your goals.

There are several assessments available to you on Focus2. For this guide, the primary assessment to take is the Work Interest Assessment. According to John Holland's Theory of Career Choice, people search for environments that will let them use their skills and abilities while taking on enjoyable problems and roles. You can [learn more about 6 \(RIASEC\) codes](#) here.

**Career Values Assessment** is designed to help you explore and identify your top career values. When your values are aligned with your career and employer, you will feel more satisfied and rewarded by your work.

**Skills Inventory** helps you identify and organize your top career-related skills and competencies. Once you've selected your most important skills, you can find occupations that will give you the opportunity to best use your skills.

**MBTI** (additional cost by referral/request only) is one of the most widely used personality assessment tools. Developed by Isabel Briggs Myers and her mother Katherine Briggs, they made C.G. Jung's theory of psychological types easy to understand and accessible to people. Through a series of questions, the MBTI helps you assess the following:

- What energizes you (Extroversion/Introversion)
- How you best process information (Sensing/Intuition)

- How you prefer to make decisions (Feeling/Thinking)
- How you organize yourself in the world (Judging/Perceiving)

**Strong Interest Inventory** (additional cost by referral/request only) is an assessment that helps you explore your interests in six different areas (known as Holland Codes):

- Realistic (building)
- Investigative (thinking)
- Artistic (creative)
- Social (helping)
- Enterprising (persuading)
- Conventional (organizing)

Developed by E. K. Strong Jr., the purpose of the inventory is to connect occupations and careers to these areas of interests or interest themes. While individuals can have interests across all thematic areas, there are typically higher levels of interest in three of the six areas of Holland Codes. The Strong assessment also helps individuals learn about work environment preferences and explore rewarding career and leisure activities related to their Holland Codes.

### Let's get started!

In order to determine the assessment that can help increase the likelihood of making a smart, well-informed career or major decision, you can do a quick self-check. Review the statements and/or questions below and note which of them applies to you. You will be directed to the appropriate activity to start your exploration:

- [I need to decide on a major but have so many interests it is hard to decide.](#)
- [I need to decide on a major but I have no idea what I am good at.](#)
- [I arrived at college with a major in mind but after taking a couple of classes, I am not sure that this major is a good fit for me. How can I figure out if I should stay or change majors?](#)
- [I enjoy my major but I am not sure what career path to choose after graduation.](#)
- [I know what I am good at and what my strengths are. What careers would be the best fit for me?](#)
- [I have an idea of what I am interested in. What occupations fit my interests?](#)

# Major Exploration

Major exploration is simply the process of exploring and deciding on an undergraduate major (field of study) and involves doing self-assessment and research. Someone who is ready to explore majors may be asking themselves questions such as:

- I need to decide on a major but have so many interests it is hard to decide. What should I do?
- I need to decide on a major but I have no idea what I am good at. Where do I start?
- I have major in mind but after taking a couple of classes, I am not sure this major is a good fit for me. How can I figure out if I should change my major?
- I am undeclared and need to declare a major. Which major do I choose?
- I have declared a major but notice that my interests have changed. What other majors can I consider?
- I have not met the academic requirements in my current major and need to explore other majors. How do I do this?

Keep in mind that major does not always equal a career. Your undergraduate education should prepare you for learning how to: collect and analyze data, solve complex problems, understand how humanistic and social factors influence outcomes, and communicate effectively. We recommend that you pursue what you are most curious about and then work with your career counselor to determine how to build transferable skills.

Consider common myths and facts about majors and careers before you begin the self-assessment process:

| MYTH                                                                                                   | FACT                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Your major will determine your career for the rest of your life.                                       | Your college major is just the first step in your career journey. Gaining additional training, certification, and work experience can lead to various careers throughout one's life. Learn more about <a href="#">successful business leaders who earned liberal arts degrees</a> .          |
| Your major prepares you for one specific career.                                                       | While there are specific career paths that require certain majors ( e.g. accounting, nursing, engineering fields) the majority of careers require broad skills developed through undergraduate education with industry or company specific skills learned through internships or on the job. |
| An introductory college course on a subject will tell you everything you need to know about the major. | An introductory course provides a high-level overview of a topic but reviewing ALL the required coursework for a major will provide a more comprehensive view of the subject.                                                                                                                |

### Step 1: Complete the following self-assessments.

- a. Work Interest Assessments can be found in [Focus2](#). Use the Major Exploration worksheet on the next page and write three majors of interest based on your Focus2 results.
- b. [Skills Inventory](#) can be used to select top skills that are most important to you as a student, an intern, a volunteer or at work.

### Step 2: Research.

Once you have identified at least 3 majors of interest as listed in your Focus2 Results, it is time to learn about related careers/occupations. **Tip:** You can save your favorite majors in Focus2 by clicking *Save this Major*.

In addition, you can use “What Can I Do With This Major?” to complete the Major Exploration worksheet. Access the tool from the [Explore Your Options](#) webpage. Then, find your major after selecting *View All Majors*. You can also use the SJSU Catalog to complete the Major Exploration Worksheet.

# Major Exploration Worksheet

Use the following resources to complete the table:

[Focus2](#) - Complete Work Interest Assessment and select three supporting majors/programs that interest you

[What Can I Do With This Major?](#) - Access from the Explore Your Options webpage. Find your major after selecting *View All Majors*.

[SJSU Majors and Programs](#) - Search for required/core courses for your major and [find your major advisor](#)

| <i>Major Options<br/>(Focus2)</i> | <i>List 3 occupations/<br/>careers that are<br/>related to the major<br/>(What Can I Do With<br/>This Major?)</i> | <i>What are 3 career<br/>areas associated with<br/>this major?<br/>(What Can I Do With<br/>This Major?)</i> | <i>List 3-5 upper division/<br/>major-specific courses<br/>that are required for the<br/>major<br/>(SJSU Catalog)</i> | <i>Do you have other<br/>considerations that you<br/>want to include (e.g.<br/>program impaction,<br/>years to completion,<br/>internship/field work/<br/>practicum<br/>requirements)?</i> | <i>Rank major options<br/>(from column 1) now<br/>that you know more<br/>based on self-assess-<br/>ment and research.<br/>Rate 1-3, 1 being<br/>highest interest</i> |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Example:<br/>Psychology</i>    | <i>Counseling<br/><br/>Employment and<br/>Recruitment<br/><br/>Sales</i>                                          | <i>Human services<br/><br/>Human resources<br/><br/>Business and industry</i>                               | <i>Psychology of Aging<br/><br/>Human Learning<br/><br/>Social Psychology</i>                                         | <i>May require masters<br/>degree or higher to<br/>pursue a career in<br/>counseling</i>                                                                                                   | <i>2</i>                                                                                                                                                             |
|                                   |                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                      |
|                                   |                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                      |
|                                   |                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                      |

What questions remain for you as you explore this option?

**Note:** Please consult with your career counselor if you have any questions.

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# Major Exploration: Next Steps

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Once you've identified and ranked your majors, select which option applies to you:

If you need to declare or change a major:

1. Evaluate your majors of interest by reading the course descriptions in the [SJSU catalog](#).
2. Review the [Colleges and Departments](#) website for overview of major and career paths.
3. Meet with an [academic and/or major advisor](#) in the college success center to check for eligibility.

If you declared a major and would like to stay in that major:

1. Share your Focus2 Interest Assessment Results worksheet with a career counselor/academic advisor. Discuss majors and career paths that align with your interest areas.
2. Build Experience. Meet with your career counselor and discuss how to design your undergraduate experience so that you can build transferable skills aligned with your long-term career goals.
3. Review the [Career Pathways](#) page to see job/internship feeds by industry and top employers who hire SJSU students within the following career pathway:



*Arts, Communication, Entertainment*



*Business, Financial Services, Logistics*



*Education, Public & Human Services*



*Health Fitness & Nutrition*



*Technology & Engineering*

# Career Exploration

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Career exploration is the process of learning about various occupations and how they connect with your preferences and future career goals. Someone who is ready to explore careers/occupation may be asking themselves questions like:

- I enjoy my major but I am not sure what career path to choose after graduation.
- What occupations/careers would be the best fit for me based on my strengths and skills?
- What occupations or industries are most aligned with my interest areas?
- What do I do if I have multiple career interest areas?

The first part of the career exploration process is to conduct self-assessment. Identifying your interests, values, and skills, as well as how you want to connect these traits to your work will help you pursue meaningful career paths. The second part of the process will consist of career research. Complete the following activities to get started.

## Step 1: Complete the following self-assessments.

- a. Work Interest Assessments can be found in [Focus2](#). Use the Occupation Exploration worksheet on the next page and write three occupations of interest based on your Focus2 results.
- b. [Skills Inventory](#) can be used to select top skills that are most important to you as a student, an intern, a volunteer or at work.
- c. [Career Values Assessment](#) can be used to select top values that are most important to you in your career.

## Step 2: Research.

1. [Focus2](#): Read through the career listings from your assessment results, select an occupation listed under occupations matching your results. Click *Save this Occupation* if you would like to revisit this again.
2. O\*NET [onetonline.org](https://onetonline.org): Use the occupation quick search to look up careers by title. O\*NET will offer additional career options beyond what is listed on Focus2. You can also search for occupations in this database by using your three-letter Holland Code (Ex: SAE). Select three careers from your Holland Code list to explore further. As you select your top three occupations, be sure to also reflect on your top career values and skills. Read [more about the Holland Codes](#) here.

**Optional:** "What Can I Do With This Major?" - Visit the [Explore Your Options](#) webpage to access the tool. Find your major after selecting *View All Majors*. Learn about additional career areas related to your major if needed.

# Occupation Exploration Worksheet

Use the following resources to complete the table:

[Focus2](#) - Complete Work Interest Assessment and select three occupations that interest you

[O\\*NET](#) - Type occupation title in search bar

[Skills Inventory](#) - Complete the assessment

[Career Values Assessment](#) - Complete the assessment

| Occupation Options (Focus2)                  | Top 3-5 skills necessary for this? Do they match your skills? (O*NET, Skills Inventory or Focus2) | Top 3 work values that align with your values? (Career Values Assessment, Focus2 or O*NET) | Earnings (median in CA) (Focus2 or O*NET) | Do you have other considerations that you want to include? (e.g. location, license, certification) (Optional) | Rank occupation options (from column 1) Rate 1-3, 1 being highest interest |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Example:<br>Bioengineer/bio-medical engineer | Critical thinking<br>Active listening<br>Complex problem solving                                  | Independence<br>Achievement<br>Working conditions                                          | \$101,870                                 | May require masters degree<br><br>Usually requires several years of experience to achieve median earning      | 3                                                                          |
|                                              |                                                                                                   |                                                                                            |                                           |                                                                                                               |                                                                            |
|                                              |                                                                                                   |                                                                                            |                                           |                                                                                                               |                                                                            |
|                                              |                                                                                                   |                                                                                            |                                           |                                                                                                               |                                                                            |

What questions remain for you as you explore this option?

For example: Does your current major prepare you for this occupation? Does the occupation entail tasks that you might find engaging? What is the work interest profile of the occupation that you selected and how close does it align with yours (e.g 3 letter Holland Code?)

**Note:** Please consult with your career counselor if you have any questions.

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# Occupation Exploration: Next Steps

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Once you've ranked your occupations, you can do one or all of these options:

1. Complete the [Career Decision Making Activity](#) on page 12. Share this with your career counselor. Connect with an academic advisor if you are considering changing your major based on your career exploration.
2. Keep track of your career exploration journey with the [Career Plan Checklist](#). Share this with your career counselor, academic advisor, mentors, and parents as you make some decisions and seek support.
3. Explore [career pathways](#) related to SJSU majors. You can review job/internship positions, employers that have hired SJSU students, and professional organizations by these pathways, as well as connect with a career counselor who specializes in each pathway.
4. Identify, research, and connect with career professionals in your fields of interest using the [SJSU<sup>2</sup> Mentoring & Meetup](#) platform and [LinkedIn Alumni Search](#).
5. Conduct Informational Interviews which are short, 20-30 minute, career conversations that can provide insight on whether a career path is a good match for you. Review *Conducting Informational Interviews* on page 5 of the [Job/Internship Search Guide](#) for more tips and advice on informational interviewing.
6. Attend career panels and employer events. Use [SJSU Handshake](#) to search for live and virtual career panels, information sessions, job fairs, and alumni events taking place on and off campus.

# Career Decision Making Explained

Once you have completed the self assessment and career exploration process, it's time to narrow down options and make some decisions.

The next activity will help you use the DECIDE model to make well thought-out decisions. You can apply this decision making process to more than just career decisions, it serves as a good framework for academic and life decisions as well. The DECIDE model was originally developed by So Barnard to assist with decision making by the Federal Aviation Administration, as pilots needed a succinct and easy to follow framework when making high stakes decisions. The model has since been used to assist with the decision making process in various industries including healthcare and career exploration.



Here is an example of the steps and how an undeclared student could use it.

## 1. (D)efine the problem or decision to be made

**Example:** *What major should I choose from the top 3 that I ranked in the Major Exploration Activity?*

## 2. (E)stablish your criteria based on your values

**Example:** *I want to choose a major based on my interests, one that is not impacted, and that will allow me to graduate in 4 years.*

## 3. (C)hoose a few options that match your criteria

**Example:** *Based on my Focus2 results my top 3 majors of interest are sociology, psychology, and English.*

## 4. (I)dentify and compare the pros and cons of each option

**Example:** *Based on my values, I want to study something I'm interested in and curious about, but also that isn't impacted and will allow me to graduate within 4 years. None of these majors are impacted and I can finish them within 4 years but I think I'm more drawn to sociology and psychology versus English. I still don't know what the main differences are between sociology and psychology. I think I need more information on career paths for these majors.*

## 5. (D)ecide

**Example:** *I think sociology or psychology could be a good major for me, but I still need more information. I can make an appointment with my career counselor to review career paths and maybe an academic advisor to learn more about the different classes I'd have to take in each major. I'll make those appointments today.*

## 6. (E)valuate the results

**Example:** *After I met with my career counselor, I learned that there were very similar career paths for both majors but that psychology focused more on the study of human behavior through individuals and small groups while sociology focuses on human behavior from a systems/social perspective. They both sound interesting, and my academic advisor shared that I can take some psychology or sociology courses as part of my GEs. I think I will take a course in psychology and see how I like it before making a final decision on my major. This will help me get a better understanding of the courses and will still keep me on track to graduate in 4 years.*

# Career Decision Making Activity

Review the DECIDE Model diagram.

Complete this activity to help with your career decision making process.

1. Define the problem. (Write your problem in the form of a question.)

2. Establish criteria based on your top values. Identify your top 5 values by completing the [Career Values Assessment](#).

To further explore your values, answer the following questions.

**Major Exploration:** Of the majors you are considering, which majors are most closely related to your values? Describe how your values will be supported within this major.

**Career Exploration:** Of the careers you are considering, which careers will allow you to meet your top values? Describe how your values will be represented in your work.

3. Choose 3 options from your Major Exploration or Career Exploration results that match your criteria. If you have completed both Major Exploration and Career Exploration and came up with varying major and/or career options, rank them and select your top 3.

Option 1:

Option 2:

Option 3:



4. Identify and compare the pros and cons of each option.

| Major or Career Options | Pros | Cons | Rank 1 to 3<br>(1=top rank) |
|-------------------------|------|------|-----------------------------|
|                         |      |      |                             |
|                         |      |      |                             |
|                         |      |      |                             |

5. Decide the most logical option for your situation and identify action steps/tasks needed to be taken (e.g. consult with a career counselor/advisor, build experience such as volunteer or internship, conduct informational interview with an alumni/other professional).

6. Evaluate the results of your decision. Review and make adjustments as needed. Consult with your career counselor if needed.