

Choosing a Major/Choosing a Career

Many people spend more time deciding which kind of car to buy than which kind of career to pursue. What are some of the consequences of making a bad career decision?

- being in a career that doesn't fit with your personality, values, interests, and skills
- completing a degree that you aren't really interested in
- finding low satisfaction or meaning in your career

Choosing a career and college major are major life decisions that are best made using a multi-step process of self-evaluation, career research, a decision making process that involves further exploration and verification, and then making a concrete plan:

Self-Awareness → Career Awareness → Tentative Career Goal → Decision Making → Action Planning

STEP 1: Self-Awareness

Before anything else, it is necessary to identify and clarify the kinds of interests, values, personality characteristics and skills that you have, especially as they relate to the world of work. This kind of self-evaluation is commonly done through the use of career assessments. The following are ones that we will use:

I. Interests - what are your interests as they pertain to the world of work? Do you like working with people, with tools and technology, with ideas? Are you interested in expressive and creative activities? Do you like working outdoors or in nature?

- a. **California Career Zone Interest Profiler** (<http://www.cacareerzone.org/ip/>)
- b. **O*NET Interest Profiler** (<http://www.mynextmove.org/explore/ip>)
- c. **Strong Interest Inventory** (coming soon; check with counseling)
- d. **Occ-U-Sort Questionnaire** (www.eureka.org log in code: SHGYBC)

II. Values – what conditions are important to you in a job? Do you value job security, independence, working collaboratively with others, prestige? How important is salary?

- a. **Eureka *What Are My Values?*** (www.eureka.org log in code: SHGYBC)
- b. **Cal. Career Zone - Work Importance Profiler** <http://www.cacareerzone.org/wip/>

III. Personality – people can be described as being of certain general personality types. Because occupations and work environment attract particular personality types, a culture is created in

work environments that complements or aligns with people that are of that particular type. The following assessments will help you see this relationship.

- a. **Eureka Inner Heroes Assessment** (www.eureka.org log in code: SHGYIBC)
- b. **Eureka True Colors Assessment** (www.eureka.org log in code: SHGYIBC)

IV. Skills – what are some skills that you already have? What are some skills that you would like to acquire? How do these skills relate to particular occupations?

- a. **Cal. Career Zone Skills Profiler** (<http://www.cacareerzone.org/skills/>)
- b. **Eureka Microskills Assessment** (www.eureka.org log in code: SHGYIBC)

Step 2: Career Awareness

Now that you have some idea about occupations that could be a good potential fit with your values, skills, interests, and personality, you will use this information to look carefully at these occupations. Your goal is learn as much about them as possible to help you make an informed career decision. California Career Zone, Eureka, and O*NET all have extensive occupational information, including descriptions of tasks and duties, required educational background, salary, future demand and more. You are also able to sort occupations based on how much education is required (i.e., look at what requires an associate's, bachelor's, or beyond).

California Career Zone: Once you have completed the three assessments on this website (www.cacareerzone.org), go to the homepage and click on *Grow*. Then click on *Portfolio Summary Report*. You will see a summary of each of the evaluations you took. Read this information carefully. Below the score summaries, you will see occupational matches. Each match is a link to a page with descriptive information about that occupation.

Eureka: Once you have completed the assessments on Eureka (www.eureka.org), go to *My Planner* and click on *Combined Microskills, True Colors, and Occ-u-sort Results*. This will allow you to see occupational matches based on these assessments. Click on links to see career information (note: Eureka doesn't relate the values assessment to specific occupations or careers). You are also able to see occupational matches based on the *Inner Heroes* assessment: go to *dashboard*, click on *Inner Heroes*, and click on the *save and go to results* tab. Click on *Occupations*.

O*NET: From the ONET Interest Profiler, you will automatically, upon completing the Profiler, be able to see occupation descriptions both in a shorter or summary format (MyNextMove) and in highly detailed form (ONET: www.onetonline.org)

Occupational Outlook Handbook: No assessments are connected to this site, but it is an excellent resource for doing research on occupations, including tasks/duties, necessary preparation, salary information, outlook (ie future demand). www.bls.gov/ooh

You also need to look at **Labor Market Information (LMI)** for careers you have identified. How strong is the demand for this occupation? If demand is low or not projected to grow much, is it worth the risk? Career Coach and the California State Government Employment Development Department are excellent resources for this type of research, especially for LMI by specific area.

Bureau of Labor Statistics: the principal fact-finding agency for the Federal Government in the broad field of labor economics and statistics www.bls.gov

Career Coach: Career Coach allows you to look at the local (within a fifty mile radius of the college) LMI. It shows how many positions there are in total in our geographic area for specific occupations, how much each occupation is predicted to grow over 5 or 10 years, and what the salary range is like. It also links to current job openings in our area so that you can see what employers are asking for in regard to qualifications. Career Coach can be reached through BC's website: <https://bakersfield.emsicareercoach.com/>

Employment Development Department, California State Government : this website allows you to look at LMI state wide or by county or region: <http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/>

Step 3: Tentative Career Goal

The work you have done so far will have helped you identify one or more potential careers that align with your personality, interests, and values. In this stage, you undertake a process of further exploration and verification to make sure that these are in fact suitable career choices for you. So far, a lot of what you have done has involved reading and research, which is extremely valuable, but now you want to take it to the next level by acquiring some first-hand knowledge. This involves actually talking to people in your field(s) of interest, observing work environments in person, and possibly engaging in actual work through an internship. There is no substitute for this. This process will hopefully bring you closer to making a definite choice.

Informational Interviews: Informational Interviews are a type of interview in which you are not actually applying for a position, but instead interviewing someone who does the kind of work you want to do, or manages people doing that work. It will allow you to gather more information about an occupation or field, build interviewing skills, and make contacts. Please read the tutorial at the Quintessential Careers about the process of informational interviewing: http://www.quintcareers.com/informational_interviewing.html.

Job Shadowing: The opportunity to be able to observe first-hand a professional in the act of doing his or her job is an extremely valuable one. You also get to experience the work

environment. This can be very helpful for those interested in occupations where you may work in more than one setting (e.g., lawyers) . Please read the tutorial at the Quintessential Careers site about job shadowing: http://www.quintcareers.com/job_shadowing.html

Step 4: Decision Making

After completing the first three stages of the process, you may have decided on a single career goal. You may, however, still be considering more than one possibility. If this is the case, you will ultimately need to choose. The essence of the decision making process involves identifying the pros and cons of each path that you are considering, comparing pros and cons, and selecting the one that provides the most advantages and least disadvantages. You are considering not just your level of interest, but salary/benefits, timeframe to complete qualifications to enter this field, demand/outlook for this profession. How will selecting one occupation affect you and your family vs. selecting another?

The basic decision making process involves the following steps:

Gather information → identify positives → identify negatives → weigh the evidence → choose

Review the following tutorials on decision making:

California Career Café Decision Making: <http://www.cacareercafe.com/start/decisions/>

Career Key: <http://www.careerkey.org/make-a-good-decision/index.html>

Step 5: Planning

After completing the previous steps, you should now be ready to make a concrete plan on how to achieve your career goal. At the core of this will be your **Comprehensive Student Educational Plan**, listing all the required courses for your degree at BC, plus, if you are transferring, any additional courses you will need for your bachelor's program. If your career goal requires a graduate degree of some kind (eg Master's or PhD), you will examine the admissions requirements for that to help you make a decision about what courses to take while still an undergraduate. You will also look at any internships or practical experience you need to acquire. This step is accomplished in consultation with a counselor or advisor, and/or by taking one of the following educational planning courses:

Student Development B1 - Educational Planning

Student Development B2 - Career Decision Making/Planning

Student Development B6 - Tools for College Survival