We Build Success

Finding Your Career Focus

This packet of exercises is a tool to help you get started in determining your career goals. It will help you analyze who you are, what skills you have to offer a potential employer, and which characteristics are important to you in your career.

We have designed several exercises to help you with the first step – Learning About Yourself: Grab some paper and record your answers to the following questions. After you complete these exercises, record your reactions on Your Career Development Profile. These are topics you may want to address with a career counselor during your next visit.

Exercise 1: Questions to Ask Yourself

- Describe your present career situation. What are your thoughts and motivations about your career?
- What kinds of obstacles (thoughts, issues, and practical needs) might get in the way of your career planning progress?
- Which majors would you like to explore?
- Take a moment to visualize the type of work you want to do. What kinds of ideas and activities come to mind?
- What is important to you when you think about choosing an ideal career? (Salary, location, hours, physical activity, types of responsibilities, job satisfaction, co-workers, opportunity for advancement, etc.)
- What does “career success” mean to you?
- Which school subjects do/did you enjoy? What would you like to study or learn if money were no object?
- What types of information do you find the most fascinating?
• What kinds of places do you like to visit? What do you like to do there?

• What have you done in your present or previous jobs (internships or volunteer experiences) that has made you the most proud or happy?

• Reviewing all the jobs you’ve held and the activities in which you’ve been involved, describe the pattern of interests you see being expressed.

• Outside of work, what have been your greatest achievements?

• What recreational activities and hobbies do you engage in? (Try to list at least 10 – think of things you enjoy doing both indoors and outdoors).

• Who are the most interesting people you know and what do they do? What qualities do you admire in people you respect most?

• Why did you choose to attend UW-River Falls? Who or what influenced your decision?

• What kinds of jobs did your parents, grandparents or other family members have?

• List the two or three people whose opinions are most important to you with regard to your vocation and educational planning (these may be family members, role models or friends with whom you talk to about your career choices).

• With regard to the individuals you listed above, what kind of vocation, do you think they expect out of you? (Provide specific job areas or qualities).

• What pressures have you faced in conforming to or rejecting your family’s influence regarding education and career?

**Exercise 2: Work Satisfaction Values**

What occupational rewards are important to you? When you choose a career and plan for your future, you anticipate some rewards – tangible as well as intangible. This exercise will help you discover what factors will contribute to a satisfying career for you, as well as the factors that are relatively unimportant.

The following list describes a wide variety of satisfactions people obtain from their jobs. Look at the definitions of these various satisfactions and rate the degree of importance that you would assign to each for yourself, using the scale below:

1 – Not important at all
2 – Not very important
3 – Reasonably important
4 – Very important in my career

After you finish this exercise, list your top five work values on a separate piece of paper and answer these questions:

• Why would you work if you didn’t have to?

• In what kinds of work situations would you work harder than you ordinarily do?

• Are there situations where you would work for less than normal pay? What would be the compensating rewards?

• If you could use your work to indulge in your favorite form of “play”, what would you be doing?

• Do any of your values conflict with each other?
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____ Help society: contribute to the improvement of the world in which I live

____ Help others: in a direct way

____ Teamwork: work cooperatively with others

____ Public contact: have a lot of day-to-day contact with people

____ Competition: activities that pit my abilities against others in clear win-or-lose situations

____ Make decisions: power to decide courses of action, policies, etc.

____ Work under pressure: time pressure and/or work quality is judged critically by superiors, customers, or others.

____ Power and authority: control the work activities of others

____ Influence people: position to change attitudes or opinions of others; “sell” an idea, product, or service

____ Work alone: do projects by myself without any significant amount of contact with others

____ Mental challenge: engage problem-solving activities; the pursuit of knowledge, truth, or understanding; intellectual growth

____ Professional development: opportunities for growth and learning on the job

____ Intellectual status: regarded as a person of high intellectual prowess or an acknowledged “expert” in a given field

____ Artistic creativity: engage in creative work in any of several art forms

____ Aesthetics: be involved in studying or appreciating the beauty of things, ideas, etc.

____ Supervision: be directly responsible for the work of others

____ Change and variety: frequently changing work responsibilities (content and/or setting)

____ Precision work: work in situations where there is very little tolerance for error

____ Stability/routine: predictable work routine and duties and not likely to change often

____ Security: be assured of keeping my job and reasonable financial reward

____ Fast pace: work in circumstances with a high pace of activity; work that must be done quickly

____ Recognition: be recognized for the quality of my work in some visible or public way

____ Excitement: experience a high degree of (or frequent) excitement in the course of my work

____ Adventure: have work duties that involve frequent risk-taking

____ High profit/financial rewards: accumulating large amounts of money or other material gain

____ Independence/autonomy: determine my work without significant direction from others

____ Moral/ethical fulfillment: feel that my work is contributes significantly to my moral standards

____ Location: geographical location conducive to my lifestyle

____ Physical challenges: physical demands I would find rewarding

____ Time freedom: flexible hours or part-time work commitment

____ Advancement: chance for career progression and increased responsibilities

____ Low stress: minimal pressure

____ Set schedule: evenings and weekends free from work-related duties

____ Educate: motivate and teach others
Exercise 3: Rate Your Interests

Check the activities or career fields that interest you.

1. _____ Work on a farm
2. _____ Solve complicated math problems
3. _____ Act in a movie or a play
4. _____ Study social groups in society
5. _____ Interview strangers for the TV news
6. _____ Learn about and study the economy
7. _____ Study “how-to” mechanical manuals
8. _____ Perform science lab experiments
9. _____ Manage an art gallery
10. _____ Conduct a religious service
11. _____ Bargain at a flea market
12. _____ Write up charts with statistics
13. _____ Build cabinets or furniture
14. _____ Study the effects of pollution on the environment
15. _____ Write a movie screenplay
16. _____ Lead a club or scout troop
17. _____ Buy merchandise for a store
18. _____ Work nine to five in a corporate office
19. _____ Operate heavy machines
20. _____ Play chess
21. _____ Work on an art or music magazine
22. _____ Get involved in a charity or community organization
23. _____ Do fast-paced, high-pressure sales work
24. _____ Design computer games and programs
25. _____ Work outside in a national park
26. _____ Research a law case
27. _____ Play an instrument
28. _____ Work with babies or children
29. _____ Run for class office
30. _____ Work after school to save money
31. _____ Set up a stereo system
32. _____ Read science fiction
33. _____ Write a short story, play, or novel
34. _____ Entertain at a party
35. _____ Work in a politician’s office
36. _____ Keyboard documents into computers
37. _____ Build an aircraft model
38. _____ Use an electronic microscope or a high-tech medical instrument
39. _____ Design a new line of clothes
40. _____ Discuss literature
41. _____ Debate political and social issues
42. _____ Keep accurate records of a business

Evaluate Yourself

To score your interest survey, circle every number you checked on the survey. Count the number of circles and put the total on the blank line.

1  7  13  19  25  31  37 _____ Realistic

2  8  14  20  26  32  38 _____ Investigative

3  9  15  21  27  33  39 _____ Artist

4 10  16  22  28  34  40 _____ Social

5 11  17  23  29  35  41 _____ Enterprising

6 12  18  24  30  36  42 _____ Conventional
Career Interest Clusters

In general, most jobs fall into one of six interest clusters or may be a blend of more than one.

REALISTIC: The realistic type loves working with their hands and being physically active. The realistic work fields might be in carpentry, mechanical work, outdoor work, police work, x-ray technician, hairdresser, computer technology, chef, or air traffic controller. Some of the words to describe these workers would be practical, stable, self-controlled, and independent.

INVESTIGATIVE: The investigative type usually involves themselves in probing activities such as analysis, inquiry, or research. Some of the investigative fields of work would be research, mathematics, natural sciences, and medicine. This worker loves to think independently, so often they prefer working alone.

ARTISTIC: Artistic workers value creative self-expression. They tend to be innovative, imaginative, and out-of-the-ordinary. They often put their emotions into their work. Some of the artistic fields would be music, writing and commercial or graphic art.

SOCIAL: Social types are usually involved in helping others and require interactions with other people. Some careers for this group include parole officer, attorney, physical or occupational therapist, sales, social worker, personnel director, funeral director, dietitian, minister, waitress/waiter, receptionist or teacher.

ENTERPRISING: Enterprising workers are self-confident, social and adventurous. They like making decisions, selling products, leading groups and participating in politics. Some careers for enterprisers are florist, stockbroker, business manager, insurance manager, advertising agent, banker, TV/radio announcer, lawyer, police officer, lobbyist, and personal recruiter.

CONVENTIONAL: Conventional workers are people who are like details and enjoy collecting and organizing. They work well within a system and are efficient and practical. They enjoy steady routines and following clearly defined procedures. Some of the careers for conventional people are accountant, business teacher, bookkeeper, personnel clerk, actuary, secretary, librarian, credit manager, bank manager, statistician, financial analyst, tax consultant, computer operator, medical lab technologist, and corrections officer.

Exercise 4: Assess Your Skills

For each item on the table on the following pages:

- mark an X next to each skill you enjoy using (even if you aren’t an expert at it!)
- mark a ✔ next to the skills you’ve never used
- mark a ☐ next to any skills that you would like to develop or acquire
- mark a ✓ next to all the personal qualities that apply to you

Once you have completed these steps, review those skills that are marked with an X. These are your motivated or preferred skills. These skills represent your areas of mastery and probably your areas of greatest satisfaction as well. If you use these skills on the job whenever possible, and look for additional ways to use them, you will probably increase the enjoyment and satisfaction you derive from your job.

Review your list and identify five skills that interest you and that you would like to develop. Think of ways you can develop these skills, such as taking a course or class, getting on-the-job training, joining a club, volunteering, or asking a friend, associate, colleague, or mentor for help.
\[ \text{X } = \text{ skills you enjoy using} \]
\[ \text{☆ } = \text{ skills you have never used} \]
\[ \text{O } = \text{ skills you would like to develop or acquire} \]
\[ \text{√ } = \text{ personal qualities that apply to you} \]

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**Clerical Skills**
- examining
- evaluating
- filing
- developing
- improving
- recording
- collating
- computing
- recommending
- following
- bookkeeping
- keyboarding

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**Technical Skills**
- financing
- evaluating
- calculating
- adjusting
- aligning
- observing
- verifying
- drafting
- designing
- cataloguing
- examining

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**Public Relations Skills**
- planning
- conducting
- informing
- consulting
- writing
- researching
- representing
- negotiating
- collaborating
- communicating

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**Agricultural Skills**
- inspecting
- costing
- lifting
- cultivating
- assembling
- problem-solving
- devising
- scheduling
- constructing

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**Selling Skills**
- contracting
- persuading
- reviewing
- inspecting
- informing
- promoting
- positioning
- influencing
- convincing
- comparing
- recommending

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**Maintenance Skills**
- operating
- repairing
- maintaining
- dismantling
- adjusting
- cleaning
- purchasing
- climbing

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**Management Skills**
- planning
- organizing
- scheduling
- assigning
- delegating
- directing
- hiring
- measuring
- administering
- conducting
- controlling
- coordinating

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Exercise 5: Decision Making/Goal Setting

With all of the information you’ve gathered about yourself, your values, interests, and skills now you need to make some decisions and set some goals for your career.

• What does this decision involve?
• What criterion involved in making this decision is most important to me?
• What are my alternatives/options?
• What are the positive consequences of each alternative?
• What are the negative consequences of each alternative?
• What are the risks involved in each alternative?
• What do I want most from a career? (State your concrete career goal(s) – attempt to be as specific as possible).
• What are my resources/strengths? (Inward and outward – the things that could help you reach your goal).
• Where can I find further information about this career?
• Who can assist me? (In either providing additional information or helping you reach your goal).
• What are the potential obstacles and risks that might prevent me from reaching my goal(s)? These could be internal barriers, (such as lack of confidence, procrastination, weak skills, stereotypes, etc.) or external barriers (such as lack of time and money, the job market, etc.).
• What could I do to overcome these potential obstacles, or barriers to action?
• Step by step short-term goals (or “action plans”) can help us to achieve our long-term goals. Take into consideration what you need to do, how you are going to do it, and when you are going to do it.