

Major & Career Decision Guide

Welcome! Congratulations on taking the first step towards choosing your major! Deciding on a major can feel overwhelming. This guide is designed to help you every step of the way. Before we get started on this major decision journey, it's important that we debunk some myths and learn about the connection between majors and careers.

Major and Career Decision Making Myths

Myth: There is only one major/career that is right for you.

Truth: There are a lot of 'good fit' majors/careers for every student

Myth: Most college graduates work in a career that is directly related to their major

Truth: Over 70% of US workers are working a job that is not directly related to their major

Myth: You should have it all figured out by now

Truth: Now is the time to explore! About 70% of students change their major at least once.

Retrieved from: Burnett, W. & Evans, D. J. (2015). *Designing Your Life: How to Build a Well-Lived, Joyful Life*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf

How Majors and Careers are Related

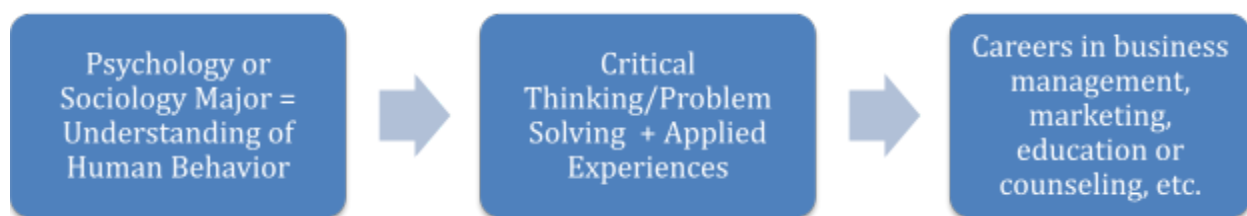
Many people think that the relationship between majors and careers looks like this:

Major = Career



For some majors, like journalism and chemical engineering, the coursework develops a specialized skill set, leading you to a specific career. But usually the major and career relationship usually looks like this:

Major + Career Competencies & Experience = Many Careers



The FOUR Steps of Major Decision Making

The major you choose can lead to many different career possibilities. The area you choose to study will shape the way you view the world and have a direct impact on your academic engagement and interest, your passion for learning, and your overall satisfaction with college. Review the steps below to help you more confidently decide on a major.

STEP ONE: SELF-EXPLORATION

Developing self-awareness is the first step in choosing a major that is a good fit for you.

- Review the self-assessments below to help you better understand your values, interests, personality, and strengths.
 - [Values](#)
 - [Interests](#)
 - [Personality](#)
 - [Strengths](#)
- [Join the Exploring Career Community](#) to explore the connection between your self-assessments and potential majors and career pathways.

STEP TWO: GENERATE IDEAS

After reviewing the results of your self-assessments, check out the complete [list of academic majors](#) at Stony Brook. Now that you have a better understanding of your interests, begin to narrow down your majors of interests.

- Cross out all majors **you know you are not considering**
- Highlight all majors **you are interested in**
- Circle all majors **you're not sure about, but would like to learn more about**
- Research the circled majors and either highlight them or cross them out using the tools below as a guide:
 - [What Can I Do With This Major?](#)
 - This career tool provides information on the relationship between specific majors and typical career areas, employers that hire people with each major, strategies to make you a more marketable candidate, and professional associations and other related resources.
 - [Occupational Outlook Handbook: Fields of Degree](#)
 - This career tool highlights data and information from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and the U.S. Census Bureau for a variety of academic fields. Each page provides a glimpse of workers with the degree and shows occupations, outlook, and more for people in that major.

STEP THREE: TAKE ACTION

Once you've narrowed down your list of majors, follow these three strategies for exploring whether or not a major feels right for you. Be sure to reflect* on your discoveries.

1. **RESEARCH:** Use reliable resources to learn more about majors that interest you and connect them to potential career paths.

[What Can I Do With This Major?](#)

[Occupational Outlook Handbook: Fields of Degree](#)

[Career OneStop](#)

[O*Net Online](#)

[Vault](#)

2. **TALK:** One of the most effective ways to learn about what a major/career is really like is to have *informational interviews* or *career conversations*. Below is a list of people you can talk to:

- Professors who teach courses in subjects that interest you
- Classmates who have taken courses in your major of interest
- [Major advisor](#)
- Alumni with majors/careers that interest you
- Career Coach in the related Career Community
- Family/Friends in careers that interest you

Not sure how to conduct an informational interview? Check out these resources

- [How to Request, Conduct, and Follow-Up on an Informational Interview](#)
- [Sample Questions and Tips](#)
- [How to Connect with Stony Brook Alumni on LinkedIn](#)

3. **TRY:** Take action! Find small things that you can do to gain more in depth knowledge of a major or career. Here are some suggestions:
 - Sit in on a 100, 200, and 300 level class in the major you're interested in
 - Attend a meeting for a [club/organization](#) related to your major of interest.
 - Attend a Career Center workshop on a topic of interest to you
 - Spend a few hours shadowing someone in a job of interest
 - Find a relevant [micro-internship](#)
 - Join a [professional organization](#)

Check out this [tool](#) to find more ideas on how to use the strategies above.

Ready to have a conversation with a Career Coach? [Learn about what to expect from career coaching.](#) **Schedule an appointment through [Handshake](#).**

REFLECTION ON STEP 3

Evaluating majors and careers of interest through experiences will help you start to understand and develop your interests. However, it's important to **reflect** on each experience and what you specifically like and don't like.

Here are some questions to ask yourself both during and after your research, talk, and try:

- What part of my research/conversation/experience was interesting to me?
- What about my research/conversation/experience made me feel excited?
- What about my research/conversation/experience did not interest me?
- What do I still want to know after my research/conversation/experience?
- What action steps am I taking as a result of this research/conversation/experience?

Having career conversations with a career coach will help you develop your responses. Schedule a career coaching appointment through [Handshake](#) or connect through [Career Center Everywhere](#).

STEP FOUR: IMPLEMENTATION

Now you're ready to declare your major! Connect with a [major advisor](#) to discuss your major requirements and plan out your academic journey.

Additional Resources and Next Steps

- **You are now ready to join an [Industry Focused Career Community](#):** Use your NetID and password to login to [Handshake](#), our online job and internship database, so we can keep in touch with you and notify you of major and career exploration-related events.
- **Take Action:** Join a [club/organization](#), look for an [on-campus job or internship](#), or get involved in other opportunities to develop your [career competencies](#) outside of the classroom.
- **Schedule a career coaching appointment through [Handshake](#) or connect through [Career Center Everywhere](#).**