



Strategies for Discovering a Major That's Compatible with Your Interests, Talents, & Values



1. Reflect on successful and enjoyable learning experiences you've had in the past. Think back to high school. What did you enjoy? What did you do with ease and had no struggle with? Think also about out-of-school experiences that you partook in, or are continuing to participate in. These are all things that you should take notice of that could be an indicator of not just your interests, but your natural abilities.

2. Use your elective courses to test your interests and abilities in subjects that you might consider as a major. Most majors have some room for free electives, meaning you can take courses of your choice. Use these free electives to your advantage to help you explore potential majors. If the elective course you take turns out not to be what you hoped it would be, or it leads you to not choosing that major, that's okay. You won't lose that course and it will still be applicable towards your chosen major as a future elective.

3. Be sure you know what courses are required for the major you're considering. Each major's course requirements vary and often, there are no two majors that are alike. With that being said, it's your responsibility to take the initiative to start researching any potential majors you're interested in. How do you know if you really like any particular major if you have no idea what it entails? Looking at coursework via an advising guide along with the course catalog will take you a long way to discovering if a major is or isn't for you. Once you've accurately identified all requirements for your potential majors, ask yourself these questions:

- **Do the course titles and descriptions appeal to my interests and values?**
- **Do I have the abilities and skills needed to do well in these courses?**

4. Speak with students majoring in the field you're considering and ask them about their experiences. Getting another student's perspective regarding the majors you're considering is always a good research method to get an idea of a real-time experience. To find students in the majors you're interested in, you could potentially visit student clubs that students are engaging in related to the major(s) you're interested in. Consider talking with your peers in your class to see what major(s) they've declared or are also interested in to get some perspective. Some questions to consider asking are as follows:

- **What first attracted you to this major?**
- **What would you say are the advantages and disadvantages of majoring in this field?**
- **Knowing what you know now, would you choose the same major again?**

5. Discuss the major you're considering with an academic advisor. To get unbiased feedback about the pros and cons of majoring in that field, it's probably best to speak with an academic advisor who advises students in various majors.

6. Speak with faculty members in the department. Consider asking the following questions:

- **What academic skills or qualities are needed for a student to be successful in your field?**
- **What are the greatest challenges faced by students majoring in your field?**
- **What do students seem to like most and least about majoring in your field?**
- **What can students do with a major in your field after graduation?**
- **What types of graduate programs or professional schools would a student in your major be well prepared to enter?**

7. Surf the Web site of the professional organization associated with the field you're considering as a major. The website of a professional organization often contains useful information for students who are considering that field as a major. For example, if you're considering a major in Philosophy, you might want to look at the website of the American Philosophical Association.

8. Be sure you know whether the major you're considering requires specific academic standards to be met before being admitted. Certain majors have specific admission policies due to the college they belong to. For example, some majors have a specific GPA to be admitted. You can check admission standards for all colleges in the catalog. Something to make note of, if you're failing to meet these specific standards, you may need to increase the amount of time and effort you devote to your studies and seek assistance from campus resources. However, if you find yourself maximizing your efforts and are still not meeting the academic standards of that particular major, you may want to consult with an academic advisor to help you identify an alternative field that may be closely related to your major of interest and is more align with your skills and abilities.

9. Consider the possibility of a college minor in a field that complements your major. If you have strong interest in two majors, a minor will allow you to major in one of those fields while minoring in the other. Taking a cluster of courses in a field outside of your major can be an effective way to strengthen your resume and increase your employment prospects; it demonstrates your versatility and enables you to develop skills and acquire knowledge in areas that may be missing or underemphasized in your major.

10. Visit your career center. The career center can be a valuable resource while exploring majors. This center can be used to connect majors and careers. Any good research regarding potential majors should include what your post-undergraduate life could possibly look like. Future careers should not be the only predictor for what you study while in college, however it may impact what you might want to study and how you want to study. The career center may also be a good resource to get data on previous college graduates who have majored in the field that you're considering and what they've gone on to do with that major post-graduation.