



Exploring Your Career Options

Do you remember the first time someone asked you, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” All of us start thinking about our careers at a very young age and are influenced by a variety of sources. Maybe people close to you, including family, teachers, and friends have suggested careers to you. Taking the time to really think about what you do well, what you like to do, and what is important to you will help you make good choices for your career.

Understand that you will change careers during your working life, so you do not need to decide now what you will want to do for the rest of your life. Skills you gain in college and in your work, further education and training, and changes in your interests and what’s important to you will allow you to make changes throughout your career. For deciding on your career path after graduation, you can follow these three steps.

1. Know What You Want and What You Have to Offer

By examining your skills, interests, and values, you can begin to draw conclusions about the kind of work you’d like to do.

- **Skills** are the competencies you have or can develop, which will be used in your work. Examples of skills include: communicating (in writing and/or verbally), planning and organizing, leading others, problem-solving, researching and analyzing, decision making, and interpersonal (relating to others, listening, etc.). In addition to identifying the skills you have, it is also important to identify those skills that you *enjoy* using.
- **Interests** are the activities and ideas that generate enthusiasm for you. Interests are reflected in the way you choose to spend your time. Examples of interests include: participating in athletics, politics, listening to or performing music, debating, being outdoors, creating new things, etc. Your interests may be directly or indirectly related to careers you choose to explore. For example, if you have a very strong interest in participating in athletics, you may choose to explore careers that involve working with athletes or working in a competitive environment.
- **Values** are the “emotional salary of work,” according to Howard Figler, author of *The Complete Job-Search Handbook*. Your values determine what gives you satisfaction. Examples of work values include: financial reward, power and authority, helping others, contributing to society, social (forming relationships with those around you), prestige, accomplishment, etc. Once you identify and prioritize what you want to get out of work, you can evaluate career options based on whether those values are present or absent.

Resources for identifying your skills, interests, and values, and determining careers that are potentially good matches for you include the following:

- **Speaking with a career counselor** about your skills, interests, and values to help you formulate some ideas for how to begin exploring careers
 - **Taking a “career test”** to help you define your interests and skills. You can stop by the Career Center or you can take some of the web-based assessments found on the JobHuntersBible website (written by Richard Bolles, author of *What Color is Your Parachute*):
<http://www.jobhuntersbible.com/counseling/ctests.shtml#key>. Endicott students and alumni can also take **TypeFocus**, an online self-assessment, free of charge. To take TypeFocus, go to <https://www.typefocus.com/>. The access code is EC344. Then you can create your own account.
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2. Explore Career Paths that Interest You

Now that you've identified your skills, interests and values and have begun to think about possible careers, it's time to gather more information. The best ways to research careers are:

- **Read about them.** The Career Center and the Library have books that describe a variety of careers, related to all of the majors offered at Endicott. In addition to books there are great Web resources, including: www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm (the Occupational Outlook Handbook; covers *thousands* of occupations—very comprehensive). The Career Center also has a collection of handouts for each major. To access these handouts visit the Career Center page on Gullnet and choose “Career-Major Sheets”. Other resources for exploring careers include: www.careers-in-finance.com and www.careers-in-marketing.com (includes accounting, consulting, finance, marketing, advertising, PR, retail, and non-profit careers) and <http://www.idealists.org/info/Careers>.
- **Talk to people who are in those careers.** Reading about careers will give you a good introduction, but speaking with people who are working in fields that interest you will give you more in-depth information. In addition to giving you insight into their profession, they can also give you advice on how to look for jobs and internships in the field, as well as serve as important networking contacts. To find people in the careers that interest you, ask family, friends, professors, coaches, neighbors, current or former employers, etc. if they can help you find contacts for informational interviews. You can also use LinkedIn.com to search for contacts. The Endicott College Networking Group on LinkedIn is a great place to start.
- **Try them out.** You can try out careers that interest you by doing your internships in those areas. Additionally, look for part-time, summer, volunteer, or job shadowing opportunities to gain experience and help determine if the work involved is a good match for you.

3. Search for Jobs

Congratulations. If you have taken the time to assess your skills, interests and values, as well as explore opportunities that are a good fit for you, you're now ready to make a well-informed decision about the career path you want to pursue after graduation. Your research and self-assessment will not only benefit you by helping you make good decisions about your initial career plans, but you will also be able to articulate to employers why you are a good fit for the jobs to which you are applying.

After researching the career paths that interest you, you'll be able to identify the jobs you will want to pursue after graduation. Keep in mind that there may be several different jobs or industries where you can do the work that interests you. You can then research the industries or settings where you may be able to find these jobs. Knowing the geographic location(s) where you want to live after graduation will allow you to identify potential employers in those areas. Stop by the Career Center for more information on developing your job search strategy, or schedule an appointment with a career counselor.