

How do I Choose a Major?

It's not always easy to figure out where to start as you explore majors, academic goals, and career plans. Choosing a college major and directing yourself toward a perspective career can be stressful. You might feel pressure to make the right decision and/or feel overwhelmed by the number of options from which to choose from. What is most important is **how** you decided on a major that is appropriate, attainable and realistic for you.

Consider the following steps as one approach in the decision-making process:

Step 1: Gaining Self Awareness - exploring and discovering your personal abilities, interests and values. You must know yourself before you can know what choice is best for you. The most important factor to consider when reaching a decision about a major is whether it is compatible with key characteristics of your "self" (abilities, values, interests) – they provide the foundation for effective decisions about a college major.

Finding yourself should take place before you find a major and future career path. Good questions are those that increase self-awareness of your:

Interests: what you like doing (*see Personal Interest section below*)

Abilities: what you're good at doing (*See Personal Abilities section below*)

Values: what you feel good about doing (*See Personal Values section below*)

Step 2: Awareness of Your Options: exploring, discovering, and becoming aware of the academic options that best match your personal abilities, interests, and values. When exploring majors, consider using the following specific strategies:

- Think about what subjects you've enjoyed and been successful at in high school
- Use your elective or general education courses to test your interests and skills in subjects that you are considering as a major
- Understand the specific courses that are required for the major(s) you're considering, as well as any other requirements (GPA, internships, service learning, language requirements)
- Using the undergraduate bulletin, be sure you know what academic standards must be met for you to be accepted for entry in to the major you're considering. Also, do the course titles and descriptions appeal to your interests? Do you have the skills needed to do well in these courses?
- Look over introductory textbooks in the field that you're considering as your major and/or "sit-in" on an introductory course (with instructor permission)
- Talk with students majoring in the field that you're considering as a major and ask them about their experiences. Try to speak with more than one upperclassman so that you get a balanced perspective that goes beyond the opinion of just one individual. Possible questions include: "Knowing what you know now, would you choose the same major again?"; "What do you find most challenging/rewarding about this field of study?"; "What skills and/or characteristics do you feel students need in order to be successful within this field?"; "What attracted you to this major?"; "How else do you support your interest area on campus?"

- Attend/sit-in on a club meeting that supports your interest area(s)
- Speak with faculty members in the department that you're considering as a major. Consider asking them the following [questions](#)
- Visit the Office of Career Services (GSU, Room 309) to learn more about the online and hardcover resources available to assist with major/career exploration process
- Consider the possibility of a college minor in a field that may compliment your major. Taking a cluster of courses in another field outside of your major can also be an effective way to strengthen your resume and increase your employment prospects. Also, consider selecting options that will make you more marketable in your field of interest – for example, if you are considering entering into the creative side of the Advertising industry after graduation, you may want to build an InDesign course into your program – while not a required course, it will make you more marketable during your job search process

Other things to think about during this process:

Your Personality: Think about your emotions, behaviors, and ways of thinking. If you're introverted and shy, how would you feel about having to work in groups or give a speech to a room full of people? If you're impatient, would you be able to work with young children all day? If you like to take your time to make decisions, how would you react to tight deadlines? Personality traits may not be easy to change. Does your personality match with the majors/careers you are considering?

Your Motivations: Ask yourself what is motivating you to consider certain majors. Are you thinking about choosing a major just because you think it will be easy? Are you considering only majors that you think will lead to good jobs and a lot of money? Are you thinking about choosing a major because somebody else said you "should"? Are you motivated by your interests, abilities, values, or something else? Why are you at UHA? What do you want to accomplish? Would your motivation be strong enough to allow you to succeed in a major even if other factors seemed to point away from that major?

Realities: Consider what situations in your life may have a strong and overriding influence on your choice of major. Do your interests, values, personality traits, motivations, and abilities conflict with each other or are they in agreement? (Sometimes students are very interested in a major but find that they don't have the abilities to handle the required courses. On the other hand, some students have strong abilities in a particular area but don't have any real interest in studying that topic.) How much extra time will it take you to graduate if you've already completed a lot of credits that can't be applied to the major you choose? Are you able to meet the requirements of the major (GPA, pre-requisites...)? Does UHA offer the major you're interested in, or would you have to transfer to another school? Is your choice of major a realistic one?

Personal Interests:

Think about the kinds of things that you enjoy. Here are a few questions to get you started:

1. What do you truly enjoy doing and tend to do as often as you can?
2. What do you look forward to or get excited about?
3. What subjects did you enjoy in high school? In what subjects were your best grades?
4. Which subjects did you continue to explore beyond the requirements of the class?
5. What extra-curricular activities did you enjoy in high school? Which were the most enjoyable? What did you learn about yourself from them?
6. What sort of things are you naturally curious about or do you tend to seek-out information about?

7. What are your hobbies?
8. What has been your most stimulating or enjoyable learning experience?
9. What do you like to read about?
10. If you daydream about your future, does it tend to be about anything in particular?

Don't underestimate how important your interests can be when choosing a major. Imagine not being interested in a subject and studying it in depth for four years or more. Would you be interested in the course work required in a particular major?

Personal Abilities:

Here are few sample questions to help you think about your abilities (the things you are good at):

1. Do you seem to have a natural talent for helping other people, working with numbers, influencing others, solving problems, using your hands, organizing events, or other areas? What comes easily to you?
2. How have others judged your abilities in the past? Have you been recognized for achievements in art, music, debate, sports, or other performance areas?
3. What do you really excel at when you apply yourself?
4. What about yourself are you most proud of, or take most pride in doing?
5. Do you notice people coming to you for advice or assistance with anything? (If yes, what do they usually come to you for advice or help with?)
6. In what types of courses do you tend to earn the highest grades? Are your strengths in the math/science areas or in the social sciences or both? In what types of courses do you struggle? Why?

7. What has been your most successful learning experience?
8. What would your friends or family say is your most positive quality? What personal qualities do you see as your strengths? Limitations?
9. Which of your strengths do you want to be able to use everyday?
10. What do you contribute in group work? Creative brainstorming? Organizational skills? Leadership?

When researching majors it's important to ask yourself if you have the ability to be successful in the course work required – just as important – do you have the motivation?

Personal Values:

Think about what's really important to you – the values and principles that guide your life. How would you answer these questions?

1. What do you really care about? What things are really important to you?
2. What would you say are your highest priorities in life?
3. What does living a "good life" mean to you?
4. How would you define success? (What does being successful mean to you?)
5. What does a college degree mean to you? Why are you in college?
6. How would you summarize your personal values?

How would you feel if your values didn't match with a particular major or career you were considering?