MAKING

Career Decisions

THAT COUNT

A PRACTICAL GUIDE

THIRD EDITION

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JA WORLDWIDE

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Upper Saddle River, New Jersey
Columbus, Ohio
Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Luzzo, Darrell Anthony.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
I. Vocational guidance. II. Severy, Lisa Ellen. III. Title.
HF5381.L783 2009
650.14—dc21
2007041778

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Note: Every effort has been made to provide accurate and current Internet information in this book. However, the Internet and information on it are constantly changing, so it is inevitable that some of the Internet addresses listed in this textbook will change.
Career decision making is a lifelong process. The experiences we have during childhood and adolescence help us develop attitudes about the world of work and form the basis of some of our earliest career aspirations. As we enter adulthood, our experiences, personality, skills, and values become increasingly relevant as we narrow our interests down to the two or three careers we’re most likely to pursue. That’s when a clear understanding of the career decision-making process becomes so important. As just about every career counselor will attest, the most fulfilling and rewarding career decisions are made by those who understand what the process is all about.

This third edition of Making Career Decisions That Count: A Practical Guide is written specifically to help you learn more about the multifaceted nature of career decision making as you engage in career exploration and planning activities. Case studies of career decision makers of all ages are integrated throughout the book to illustrate important concepts and clarify the complexity of the career decision-making process. Interesting and informative chapter exercises provide you with several hands-on opportunities to put your newfound knowledge into practice. You’ll learn hundreds of useful strategies to help you make career decisions that will lead to satisfaction, stability, and success.

Chapter 1, “The Developmental Process of Making Career Decisions,” discusses Donald Super’s theory of career development and includes detailed examples of the various stages of the career decision-making process. You’ll learn firsthand that making satisfying career decisions requires an increased awareness of your career self-concept.

In Chapter 2, “Assessing Your Personality and the Way You Naturally Do Things,” and Chapter 3, “Assessing Your Professional Interests and Skills,” you’ll complete several exercises designed to help you learn more about your personality, interests, and skills. Then, in Chapter 4, “Recognizing the Importance of Your Values,” you’ll have the opportunity to learn how important it is to fully consider your work and core life values when making career decisions.

In Chapter 5, “Exploring Your Life Themes,” you’ll be encouraged to think about your “life story,” creating a narrative to describe some of the more salient themes in your life and how they relate to career decision making. You’ll begin to recognize how other people in your life are essentially characters in your life story, playing important roles in the plot that underlies your story.
Chapter 6, “Integrating Information About Yourself,” you’ll evaluate your career-related self-concept and make some initial career decisions based on the results of assessments and exercises you’ll complete in Chapters 2 through 5. As Chapter 6 concludes, you’ll be encouraged to narrow your list of career options to the four or five that seem most worthy of continued exploration.

Chapter 7, “Methods of Career Exploration,” presents information about multiple resources that can be used for gathering career-related information. The chapter includes descriptions of the online Occupational Outlook Handbook, the comprehensive O*NET system, myriad Internet resources, and over a dozen other sources of information that you’ll find useful throughout the career decision-making process. The chapter also discusses helpful hints and strategies regarding informational interviewing, job shadowing, and the importance of part-time and volunteer work experiences as valuable methods of career exploration.

Chapter 8, “Identifying and Overcoming Barriers,” invites you to think constructively about the role of barriers in the career decision-making process. After learning about the differences between internal and external barriers, you’ll complete a series of exercises to assist you in identifying career-related barriers and developing strategies for overcoming them.

With an increased awareness of your self-concept and a clearer understanding of the career decision-making process, you’ll be prepared to narrow your career options even further in Chapter 9, “Making a Tentative Career Decision.” After emphasizing that career decisions are usually still tentative at this point in the process, the chapter introduces a useful, systematic method of setting career goals and considering educational and training opportunities. Chapter 9 also includes an expanded discussion of selecting a major to help you better understand the link between career goals and college majors. The chapter concludes by introducing the concept of Planned Happenstance, emphasizing the importance of taking advantage of seemingly random events as you continue the process of career development.

This third edition of Making Career Decisions That Count: A Practical Guide includes several new features. This edition provides you with the latest information about the world of work, summarizing contemporary career information resources, and updating all Internet and bibliography references. Perhaps most significant is an expanded coverage of career assessments, with entire chapters devoted to assessments of (a) personality, (b) interests and skills, (c) values, and (d) life themes. The coverage of career narratives and life themes in Chapter 5 represents the latest thinking in the field of career development, helping you recognize the importance of your story in career decision making.

At the end of each chapter, you’ll find a new feature, “Key Concepts to Remember.” These key concepts capture the primary learning objectives associated with each chapter. This feature, coupled with the “Questions for Critical Thought” feature at the end of each chapter, gives you an opportunity to critically evaluate the information presented throughout the book. As college and university professors and researchers have discovered over the years, the more critically you’re able to think about and process new information, the more likely you are to remember and apply that information over time.

For readers who are interested in obtaining part-time, volunteer, or full-time work experience as a means of career exploration, Appendix D summarizes several job search strategies to help you identify and seek employment opportunities. Finally, as in previous editions, Appendix E includes a questionnaire to assist you in evaluating the degree to which your current (or future) employment gives you the satisfaction and enjoyment that you would ideally experience in a job.

Both seasoned veterans who have taught career-planning and exploration courses for many years and rookies who are teaching the course for the first time will appreciate the comprehensive nature of the Instructor’s Manual and Resource Guide. Included in each chapter of the Instructor’s Manual and Resource Guide (corresponding with chapters of the book) are chapter overviews, learning objectives, key concepts, proposed lecture outlines, suggested activities, and additional resource materials. The manual also provides instructors with sample course syllabi, presentation masters, a final exam, contact information for publishers of career resource materials, and an expanded listing of useful Internet sources and World Wide Web sites related to career planning and exploration.

Helping college students make career decisions that will provide them with satisfaction and success was first and foremost in our minds as we worked on this edition of the book. To that end, it is our sincere hope that those who read the book and invest an appropriate amount of time and energy into the process will be well on the road to making career decisions that count!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are indebted to numerous individuals whose assistance during the preparation of this book was invaluable. First and foremost, we are extremely grateful to each and every member of the Prentice Hall staff. Their dedication to the success of this project was apparent at every stage along the way. The guidance and support provided by Sande Johnson is especially noteworthy. We also appreciate the helpful comments of the reviewers of the second edition of the book who provided valuable suggestions for improvement that guided our work on the third edition: Yvette Getch, University of Georgia; Lea Beth Lewis, California State University, Fullerton; Judith J. Pala, Frostburg State University; Patricia Griffin, Fort Hays State University; and Shawn Forney, Idaho State University.

We also wish to thank the many students, professors, career counselors, and clients we have known over the years who have contributed directly or indirectly to the content of this book. We hope you’ll benefit from the incorporation of these ideas into this edition.

Finally, we both wish to dedicate this book to our amazing friends and families for their endless love and genuine support of our efforts to write a book that we truly hope will make a meaningful difference in the lives of those who read it.

—Darrell Anthony Luzzo and Lisa Ellen Severy
Around We Go

THE DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESS OF MAKING CAREER DECISIONS

Online mapping programs make it easy to plug in an address and wait for turn-by-turn directions complete with colorful graphics. Wouldn’t it be great if such a program were available for your life? Just plug in your coordinates, fill up the tank, put it in drive, and off you go! While such a program does not exist as yet, you can develop the tools you need to set your course and plot your destination. As with online mapping, you will also need to learn how to adjust those plans as unforeseen obstacles as well as distracting curiosities grab your attention. If you share the hope that most people do (namely that your career choice will bring you satisfaction, stability, and success), then it’s important to learn how to reach your career destination.

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce you to the developmental process of making career decisions. In particular, you’ll learn about the process of career and life development as conceptualized by the world-renowned Dr. Donald Super. You’ll learn about the various stages of career development that we experience throughout our lives and the tasks associated with each stage. You’ll also have the chance to reflect on your experiences and consider their role in shaping your career interests and values. Finally, you’ll be given the opportunity to determine which stage of career development you’re currently experiencing and which career exploration activities presented in this book are most relevant to your life situation.

THE PROCESS OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Making career decisions is anything but a static process. People you meet and experiences that happen to you as well as the way you respond to those experiences and integrate them into your life all contribute to your career development. Career decision making is a lifelong process that everyone experiences over and over again.

If you had met with a career counselor in the early 1900s, that counselor probably would have given you a few assessments, analyzed the results, and told you which occupations (based on your interests, skills, and values) provided the best fit for you. Odds are...
that you would have followed the counselor’s advice and entered a career that you probably would have remained in for the next 40 years. Luckily career counselors have changed with the times! It is extremely rare for a person to make a career decision around age 18 and stick with it for life. With rapidly shifting changes in the economy and the constant creation of new jobs and technologies, millions of people find themselves reliving the career decision-making process year after year. That’s why many career counselors use the phrases “career development” or “career transitions” when referring to the process of making career decisions. Career changes and transitions involve a developmental process that will recur throughout your lifetime. That’s why it’s so important that you learn about the process involved in making effective career decisions so that you can become your own best career manager.

DONALD SUPER’S THEORY OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT

As with just about any other area of human behavior, counselors and psychologists have developed several theories in an attempt to explain what happens during the career decision-making process. One of the most universally accepted theories of career decision making was developed by Dr. Donald Super, whose theory of career and life development was one of the first to describe career decision making as a developmental process that spans one’s entire lifetime. Super believed that the degree to which a given individual’s career development is successful depends—at least in part—on how well that person is able to identify and implement her or his career self-concept.

According to Super, your career self-concept is directly influenced by your personality, abilities, interests, experiences, and values. Suppose, for example, that you have the natural ability to listen attentively to others while they’re speaking. Suppose that you’re also good at expressing concern for others and helping them find solutions to their problems. These particular attributes suggest that a career in one of the helping professions might be appropriate. However, if you have little or no interest in the helping professions, then spending hours and hours exploring such career options would probably be a waste of time. Super argued that the best career choices people can make are those that provide avenues for implementing as many parts of their self-concept as possible.

Your career self-concept, according to Super, is a product of the interaction of your personality, interests, experiences, skills, and values and of the ways in which you integrate these characteristics into your various life roles. As you experience new situations, meet new people, and learn more about the world of work, you’re likely to develop a new set of interests, unlock new possibilities of expressing your self-concept, and find new ways of integrating your values into the career choice process. If you’re like most people, it’s very likely that throughout your life you’ll find yourself in situations that require you to reconsider your career direction. This may be the result of economic changes or trends. Perhaps it will be related to technological advances. It may simply be “time for a change.” Your interests may change. Your values may change. Even aspects of your personality may change. That’s why it’s so important for you to learn how to make good career decisions. That way, no matter when the need or desire for a career change arises, you’ll be ready to tackle the challenge.

Super described career development as consisting of five distinct stages (summarized in adjacent box). Whether you’re engaging in the career decision-making process for the first time or recycling through the process for the tenth time, you’ll probably be able to determine which stage best characterizes your current situation.
The Developmental Process of Making Career Decisions

Growth

According to Super, the first stage of career development is the growth stage. During this stage, people form attitudes and behaviors that are important for the development of their self-concept and learn about the general nature of the world of work. According to Super, our interactions with the social environment influence our personal expectations and goals. Experiences we have with other people and the work we are exposed to directly affect the development of our career-related attitudes and our beliefs about the world of work. Many adults—especially those who are still learning about career opportunities—find themselves in the growth stage, too.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE</th>
<th>BASIC FOCUS ASSOCIATED WITH EACH STAGE</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>Learning about the world of work as you increase your awareness of your personality, interests, abilities, experiences, and values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>Crystallizing, specifying, and implementing a career choice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishment</td>
<td>Gaining work experiences and evaluating your experiences in occupations associated with your career choice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>Developing stability within a chosen career field as you seek ways to improve working conditions and increase skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disengagement</td>
<td>Exploring new ways to spend your time away from your current work environment; might include a career change or retirement from full-time employment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lauren

Lauren was a 21-year-old woman characteristic of someone in the growth stage of career development. She was in her junior year at a university, where she had been majoring in education. Lauren was the first person in her family ever to go to college. Her mother and father were extremely supportive of her desire to obtain a college degree, but—primarily because of their lack of college experience—they weren’t able to offer Lauren sound advice and direction regarding the educational process.

Nevertheless, Lauren was aware that career counseling and academic advising services were available at the university, so she met with a career counselor to begin that process. One of the first things Lauren talked about was her decision to major in education. She explained to her counselor that she originally decided education would be a good avenue to pursue because there seemed to be a lot of available teaching jobs in the area. It was very...
Chapter 1

Exploration

The second stage of the career development process is exploration, considered by many to be the heart of the career decision-making process. Super described the exploration stage of career development as consisting of three major developmental tasks: crystallizing, specifying, and implementing a career choice.

Crystallizing

During the crystallizing task, career dreaming occurs. Some of the options identified during the crystallizing period might someday be realized, but most of the options identified at this point are more idealistic than realistic.

CASE STUDIES TO CONSIDER

Tempest

Tempest was a star basketball player and sophomore political science major at a large southern university. Her primary goal was to continue her athletics career by playing in the WNBA, but she also wanted to prepare herself for life after basketball. When she first went to counseling she had an impressive list of things she wanted to be from astronaut to zoologist! Her mother was a local politician and her father a physician, and Tempest had the confidence to know that she could do anything she set her mind to. Tempest exemplified the crystallizing stage in that she was dreaming and fantasizing about all kinds of possibilities. Rather than asking her to narrow down her list or “get real” in terms of her goals, the counselor encouraged her to explore and learn more about the fields that held the most curiosity for her. During this exploration period, she learned a great deal about many fields, which eventually helped her discard options in which the reality did not measure up to the idealistic notions she held. Tempest suffered a number of injuries while in college and eventually decided to give up her goal of playing in the WNBA. She took a year off after school to work in various health-care settings and eventually went on to medical school.

Effective career decision making requires an element of dreaming about a variety of career futures. One of your career dreams might be a very unrealistic option. But there usually comes a time when it’s important to shift from several unrealistic career goals to a few more realistic options.

Specifying

The second major developmental task of the exploration stage of career development is specifying. The specifying task of career exploration involves narrowing down career aspirations to a few options worthy of more detailed exploration.
Implementing

The third and final task of the exploration stage of career development involves implementing a career choice. As we begin to narrow career options and work toward making a tentative career choice, we need to strive for an increased understanding of our career self-concept. Taking into account our personality, interests, abilities, experiences, and values, coupled with an informed awareness of the world of work, we’re equipped with the tools needed to make high-quality career decisions. Implementing a career choice means obtaining relevant education and/or training related to an occupation. It’s an advanced phase of career exploration but not the end of it.

For an example of someone who is experiencing the early stages of implementing a career choice, let’s return to Gabriella. After narrowing down her list of career options during the specifying period of exploration, in the implementing phase

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CASE STUDIES TO CONSIDER

Gabriella

Consider the case of Gabriella, a 38-year-old woman whose youngest child recently entered kindergarten. After several years of enjoying a career as a homemaker and dabbling in various types of arts and crafts, Gabriella decided to return to college.

In order to help focus her time and make the best use of her tuition money, Gabriella decided to spend a few months researching several careers that interested her.

Gabriella began the exploration process by looking into nursing, teaching, engineering, and court reporting. She also considered starting up a business of her own. It was apparent to Gabriella that many of the careers she originally considered weren’t very realistic options after all. Some (e.g., teaching and engineering) required more education than she was willing to complete. Others (e.g., court reporting and nursing) didn’t allow her the flexibility that she was seeking in a new career. Gabriella was a prime example of someone working through the specifying task of career exploration.
Chapter 1

CASE STUDIES TO CONSIDER

Roberto

Roberto was in the process of changing careers. After 15 years of working for the same company, Roberto decided that being a draftsman wasn’t as challenging or rewarding as it once was. After several months of career exploration, Roberto decided to pursue a career in radio broadcasting.

Roberto always had an interest in radio and even worked for a commercial radio station part-time during college. When it was time to declare a major, however, Roberto was afraid he might be discriminated against because of his Hispanic background when it came to finding a full-time job in the radio industry. He knew that the job market in radio was extremely tough to break into, and he wasn’t aware of many Hispanic people who ever made it in broadcasting.

After Roberto and his career counselor talked about barriers presented by discrimination and the many avenues for overcoming these barriers (discussed later in this book), Roberto gained some of the confidence he needed to pursue his lifelong interest in radio. Soon thereafter he obtained a newscasting position at a local radio station. During the first few months on the job, Roberto gained a much better sense of what a career in radio broadcasting was all about. He learned about advancement possibilities within the industry, discovered what skills he needed to develop, and gained a clearer perspective about broadcasting careers in general.

During this initial employment phase, Roberto learned that he enjoyed broadcasting even more than he thought he would. Today Roberto is the general manager of one of the most popular radio stations in Los Angeles and has become a role model for other Hispanic broadcasters.

Gabriella

Gabriella focused on careers that would allow her to fully implement her self-concept. She tried to figure out which career options fit best with her personality, abilities, interests, experiences, and values. Careful analysis of information Gabriella gathered helped her conclude that starting up her own arts and crafts business was the best option to pursue. Gabriella attended small-business seminars, acquired skills associated with running a business, and even obtained a small-business loan from the government.

The majority of the chapters in this book focus on the exploration stage of career development. In each chapter, you’ll learn how to integrate your self-concept, your knowledge about the world of work, and your understanding of employment opportunities to make the very best career decisions you possibly can.

Establishment

Once you’ve completed the exploration stage of career development, you’ll enter the establishment stage, where you’ll gain work experience associated with your career choice. It’s a time for trying out your choice to determine if it’s a good one.

Maintenance

The fourth stage of the career development process is the maintenance stage, where stability within a particular career becomes the primary objective. Most persons in the maintenance stage continue to improve working conditions and experience
growth and development within their chosen careers. Others, however, realize that they’re in need of a different career altogether.

**CASE STUDIES TO CONSIDER**

**Janelle**

Janelle was a participant in a career counseling group for college alumni. She had been an elementary school teacher for 12 years and was well established in that role. While she enjoyed the stability of the maintenance stage of her teaching career, she was becoming bored and was frustrated with some of the political aspects of working in public education. Although she had not definitely decided to leave teaching, she wanted to explore other opportunities. Janelle participated in all of the group activities and began listing careers that were related to teaching but that held more excitement for her. She then engaged in research surrounding alternative education for at-risk students and was connected with a wilderness program for youth offenders. Over the next year, she took evening courses in counseling and eventually began working with the same program. While Janelle’s teaching career moved from the maintenance stage to the disengagement stage of development, her youth programming career moved from the implementing stage to the establishment stage.

**Disengagement**

In the last stage of career development, disengagement, there is a reduction in the role that particular work plays in one’s life. Individuals in the disengagement stage make a decision to retire or to change careers altogether. Keeping in mind that career decision making is a lifelong process, it’s important to note that disengagement can occur several times throughout one’s work history. Eventually the disengagement stage is when people retire from work altogether, but for many people disengagement represents a transition from one career to another.

Remember, career decision making is a developmental process that varies from person to person. You may find yourself in the growth stage of development at the same time that one of your friends who’s the same age you are seems to be pretty well established in a career and has moved on to the stage of maintenance. You might be disengaging from a career that you thought you’d be in until retirement. Perhaps you’re now faced with the need to go back and reacquaint yourself with the world of work and begin the process of career exploration all over again. If so, don’t despair. As mentioned earlier, recycling through the stages of career development is becoming more and more of a reality for almost everyone.

**DETERMINING WHERE YOU ARE IN THE PROCESS**

If you learn how to engage in effective career exploration, you’ll master the tools needed for making good career decisions. Learning about the career decision-making process begins as you increase your self-understanding. Exercises 1.1, “Your Career Autobiography,” and 1.2, “Identifying Your Career Needs,” will assist you in determining where you are in the career decision-making process. Then in later chapters you’ll complete several exercises that will assess your personality, interests, abilities, experiences, values, and life themes. Each of these exercises will increase your awareness of your self-concept as you prepare to embark on the important journey of career exploration and planning.
EXERCISE 1.1  YOUR CAREER AUTOBIOGRAPHY

This exercise is designed to help you figure out where you are in terms of the five developmental stages of career decision making.

In the space provided on the next page, write a brief, informal autobiography of experiences in your life that are relevant to your career development. You might begin by describing your career dreams, including occupations you named when you were young and someone asked you, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” Discuss how your career dreams have influenced some of the decisions you’ve made up to this point.

Also be sure to list any jobs, volunteer work, or internships you’ve had. Explain how these experiences provided you with information about your interests and skills. Hobbies, leisure activities, and athletic participation also should be included in your autobiography.

Be sure to mention any significant events that have played a role in previous career decisions. Reflect upon the many ways that your cultural and ethnic background, socioeconomic status, gender, and religious beliefs have influenced your career decisions.

Finally, conclude your autobiography with a discussion of the various career issues you’re facing today and strategies you plan to use to address these issues.

Before you actually begin to write your autobiography, take some time to think about and brainstorm what you want to include in it. Self-reflection is especially important in this exercise.

Many students we’ve worked with over the years claim that there isn’t much for them to include in a career autobiography at this point. They mention that they’ve only held a couple of part-time jobs over the years and don’t have any work experience worth mentioning.

Perhaps you find yourself in the same situation. If so, remember that most of your important decisions could be considered career related. If you are in high school, what extracurricular activities do you do? If you are in college, how did you choose where to attend school? I think about part-time work experiences, things you’ve volunteered to help with, or things you’ve done with family and friends. All of these things are important in your life, so they are important in your story. The degree to which you’ve enjoyed any previous experiences plays an important role in career decision making—whether seemingly insignificant or not—should be included in your autobiography.

Topics to consider as you prepare your autobiography include the following:

- Career dreams
- Previous paid employment experiences
- Volunteer experiences
- Internship activities
- Hobbies
- Leisure interests
- Athletic participation
- Ethnic background and heritage
- Socioeconomic status
- Gender roles
- Current educational status
- Current employment status
- Questions about your future
- Careers that seem interesting to you
- Career-related issues you’re facing
Career Autobiography

(If you need additional space for your story, please attach extra pages.)
EXERCISE 1.2 IDENTIFYING YOUR CAREER NEEDS

By completing your autobiography, you’ve probably learned something about yourself and about your career development up to this point. You can greatly increase your awareness of your self-concept by reflecting on experiences.

To determine which developmental stage you’re in now, go back to your autobiography and highlight (or draw a circle around) any information that describes your current situation. Although most of this material will probably be at the end of your autobiography, there may be reference to your current career status in earlier portions of your autobiography as well. Any information that explains issues you’re facing or the decisions you’re hoping to make in the near future should be highlighted in some way to signify its relevance to your current situation.

Now compare the information you’ve highlighted in your career autobiography with the chart in Table 1.1. Check the boxes that correspond with the stages of career development that you most directly identify with at this time. Once you’ve completed this exercise, you should have a pretty good idea of where you are in the career development process.

The far right column of the table suggests the career needs you’re likely to be facing at this point in your career development, along with the chapters of this book that you’ll find especially helpful in your current developmental stage.

### TABLE 1.1 Summary of career development stages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT</th>
<th>TYPES OF TASKS</th>
<th>SAMPLE AUTOBIOGRAPHY STATEMENTS</th>
<th>CAREER NEEDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>(1) Forming work attitudes and behaviors</td>
<td>“I’m trying to figure out what I really want to do in life.”</td>
<td>Learn about your self-concept (Chapters 1–5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Learning about the world of work</td>
<td>“I’m gathering lots of information about the job market.”</td>
<td>Find out about trends in the labor market (Chapter 7)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Get an idea of future projections for some careers (Chapter 7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Determine your relevant interests and abilities (Chapters 1–6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Familiarize yourself with your work values (Chapter 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>(1) Identifying career dreams</td>
<td>“I’ve always wanted to be a . . .”</td>
<td>Reflect on the careers you’ve always dreamed about (Chapters 1–5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Trying to narrow a list of career possibilities</td>
<td>“There are several occupations that interest me. I need to figure out which are realistic.”</td>
<td>Develop a list of career options (Chapter 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3) Determining your self-concept as it relates to the career decision-making process</td>
<td>“I’m not sure if I’ll be really happy if I pursue this career.”</td>
<td>Narrow your list to realistic options (Chapters 6 and 7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I’m wondering if it will be a career that I will enjoy for years to come.”</td>
<td>Match your self-concept with a career choice (Chapters 6 and 7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gather information about various careers (Chapter 7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT</th>
<th>TYPES OF TASKS</th>
<th>SAMPLE AUTOBIOGRAPHY STATEMENTS</th>
<th>CAREER NEEDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(4) Deciding which career options to research</td>
<td>&quot;Now I need to figure out which careers I need more information about.&quot;</td>
<td>Read about job trends for specific career areas (Chapter 7)</td>
<td>Gather information about options you're pursuing (Chapter 7) Identify potential barriers to career success (Chapter 8) Learn ways to overcome barriers to success (Chapter 8) Make a tentative career decision (Chapter 9) Set some clearly defined career choice goals (Chapter 9) Set up a timeline for realizing your goals (Chapter 9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishment (1) Gaining work experiences related to your career choice</td>
<td>&quot;I'm currently working in a job that will allow me the chance to see if I really want to pursue that career or not.&quot;</td>
<td>Continue the process of self-awareness (Chapters 1–5, 9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Trying to determine the value of your choices</td>
<td>&quot;Now that I'm working in this field, I'm not sure that my job is really meeting my needs.&quot;</td>
<td>Decide whether your values are being addressed in your current job (Chapter 4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Continuing to increase self-understanding</td>
<td>&quot;I'm learning a lot about myself as I continue to work in this field.&quot;</td>
<td>Set goals for gaining new experiences in a career area (Chapter 9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Beginning to stabilize within a career</td>
<td>&quot;I'm satisfied with my current career.&quot;</td>
<td>Evaluate current job satisfaction (Appendix E)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance (1) Determining whether your current career situation is providing adequate satisfaction and fulfillment</td>
<td>&quot;Lately I've been trying to determine whether I'm truly happy doing what I'm doing.&quot;</td>
<td>Determine whether to remain in a current job (Chapters 1–5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Searching for ways to increase job mobility</td>
<td>&quot;I'm starting to think that maybe I should find out about other careers.&quot;</td>
<td>Evaluate current job satisfaction (Appendix E)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Learning about other career options related to your current occupation</td>
<td>&quot;Right now I'm trying to determine whether there is any chance that I might be promoted in the future.&quot;</td>
<td>Learn about other careers related to your job (Chapter 7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disengagement (1) Considering a new job or career change</td>
<td>&quot;I'm pretty sure that I want to find a new job. This one is getting old.&quot;</td>
<td>Determine the appropriateness of a career change (Chapters 6 and 7, Appendix E)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As you can see, the main focus of this book is on the process of career exploration. So, now that you’re aware of how the chapters that follow apply to your particular developmental stage, let the journey begin!

**KEY CONCEPTS TO REMEMBER**

- Career decision making is a lifelong process.
- Your career self-concept is a product of the interaction of your personality, interests, experiences, skills, and values, and the ways in which you integrate these characteristics into your various life roles.
- Learning how to engage in effective career exploration will give you the tools you’ll need for making good career decisions throughout your life.

**QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL THOUGHT**

1. Why is career decision making considered a developmental process?
2. How can you learn more about your self-concept (i.e., your personality, interests, skills, experiences, and values) as it relates to making career choices?
3. What types of experiences are helpful for someone to have during the exploration stage of career development?
4. Why is it important to consider the educational and work-related experiences you’ve had as you begin the exploration stage of career decision making?
As you may recall from Chapter 1, Dr. Donald Super’s theory of career development emphasizes implementing as many parts of your self-concept as possible when making career decisions. In order for you to seek career choices that will provide you with the maximum opportunity to implement your self-concept, you first need to know what makes you who you are. The purpose of this chapter, and several chapters that follow, is to assist you in the process of increasing your awareness of your self-concept by examining your personality, interests, abilities, experiences, and values. Then you’ll be prepared to make career decisions that will maximize your chances of success and satisfaction.

Has anyone ever sent you an email directing you to a website where you answer all kinds of questions and it spits out a description of the type of animal, tree, cartoon character, or even the South Park kid you’re most like? Perhaps you’ve tried one of the websites that tell you that your personality is most like Luke Skywalker, Princess Leia, or Obi-wan Kenobi. As basic and unscientific as they may be, these entertaining activities are actually informal personality assessments. Such programs require you to provide information about yourself and then compare your responses to a set of pre-established criteria before reporting your results to you.

From these informal tests designed for fun to carefully constructed, norm-referenced scientific instruments (often referred to as inventories or assessments), such instruments are designed to help people learn more about who they are. With an enhanced self-concept provided by the results of these types of assessments, it is easier to make satisfying and rewarding career decisions.
Career counselors have long recognized the importance of assessing personality, interests, skills, experiences, and values when working with clients of all ages. It’s not uncommon for counselors to administer several inventories or assessments to clients who seek their assistance. The results of such inventories often provide both the client and the counselor with important information to consider in the career decision-making process.

**CASE STUDIES TO CONSIDER**

**LaTonya**

Several years ago, LaTonya met with a career counselor to discuss some of her career concerns. She was attending a university where she was about to complete her sophomore year, but she was having a difficult time deciding on a major. No matter how hard she tried, she wasn’t able to figure out which major would be the best choice for her.

LaTonya had narrowed down her list of options to three career fields: business, education, and social work. When LaTonya’s counselor asked her how she had arrived at these particular options, she said that her choices had been based on advice from friends and family members. Her mother was encouraging LaTonya to go into business because of the money-making potential. Her father wanted her to become an elementary school teacher because he was confident that she would have a great time working with children. LaTonya’s friends were trying to convince her that she would be a great social worker because of her concern for others and her desire to help people.

The career counselor asked LaTonya what she was hoping to accomplish in her eventual career choice, and she had a rather difficult time explaining precisely what it was that she—independent from family members and friends—really wanted. LaTonya hadn’t ever engaged in an analysis of her own likes, dislikes, skills, and abilities, nor had she considered how some of her experiences could help her make a better career decision.

LaTonya and her counselor worked together for several weeks with the primary purpose of increasing her awareness of her self-concept. She completed several exercises, including assessments of personality, interests, skills, experiences, and values. Then she worked on searching for careers that maximized her chances for implementing as many parts of her self-concept as possible. As it turned out, LaTonya was more interested in a career in public relations than in any of the careers her family and friends were encouraging her to consider. She decided to pursue a career in public relations, and today she is the head of a large public relations firm in New York City.

**THE IMPORTANCE OF CAREER ASSESSMENT**

**CASE STUDIES TO CONSIDER**

**Gonzalo**

Gonzalo was a 37-year-old electrical engineer employed as a shift supervisor at a large engineering firm in the Southwest. After 13 years at the same company, even though he had received promotions over the years, Gonzalo was no longer as satisfied with his career as he had once been.

While he still enjoyed the emphasis on math and science that a career as an electrical engineer provided, he didn’t enjoy working in a supervisory role, and the work wasn’t fun any more.
Our interests aren’t the only aspects of ourselves that change: our job-related abilities and experiences, as well as our values, also change over time. That’s why periodic assessments of all aspects of our self-concept—our personality, interests, abilities, experiences, and values—can be so important when we’re making career decisions.

Whether you’re working with a career counselor, a course instructor, or on your own, you need to remember to use vocational assessments carefully. As with any tool, there are appropriate, helpful ways to use career assessments as well as ways that could cause damage. Vocational assessments are great ways to gather information, but it is important to think about that information critically and decide if the results really fit for you. For example, many vocational assessments are norm referenced, meaning your answers are compared to a group of other peoples’ answers. If you really want to know how you are similar or different from that group, you have to know if that group represents people like you. If you are a female freshman in college who has never held a job and the instrument you are using includes a norm group of men who are getting ready to retire, you would need to look at your results with a more critical eye. This is not to say that norm-referenced assessments cannot be helpful; indeed, they can prompt your thinking about yourself and your needs in many ways, but think of them more as information sources than “answers” to your life questions. Many clients come to career counselors and ask for “that test that will tell me what I should be.” The fact of the matter is that a test that is that powerful and all-inclusive just doesn’t exist. The power of creating your career lies not within a test, but within you!

ASSESSMENT OF PERSONALITY

One of the best ways to begin the process of gathering information about yourself is to consider your personality. Your personality is your way of perceiving the world and the things that happen to you. It’s the way you naturally do things and generally tend to handle things. As you may already know, psychologists have discovered that our personalities are influential in the development of our attitudes and behavior.

One way to learn more about your personality is to complete a personality or temperament inventory. One of
Chapter 2

The most popular measure of personality used to help students make career decisions is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, commonly referred to as the MBTI. If you have the chance to complete the MBTI, you'll probably want to take advantage of that opportunity. Learning more about your personality type will help you increase your awareness of your self-concept.

The MBTI is based on a theory of psychological types developed by Dr. Carl Jung. According to Jung, there are four personality dimensions that interact with one another to determine a person's psychological type. These four dimensions of personality are briefly described in the box below.

Your particular personality or psychological type is determined by combining your preferences in each of these four dimensions. For example, if you're the type of person who focuses your perception and judgments primarily on the external world of actions, objects, and persons (Extraversion), perceives information primarily in terms of meanings, concepts, and relationships (Intuition), makes judgments on the basis of personal, social, and subjective values (Feeling), and prefers flexibility, openness, and a free flow of information when dealing with the external world (Perception), then your psychological type would be characterized as Extraversion-Intuition-Feeling-Perception, or ENFP for short.

The developers of personality assessment instruments have found that certain types of work environments and careers are more attractive to persons of certain personality types. This can be valuable information for individuals exploring career options.

**CASE STUDIES TO CONSIDER**

Mike

Although many people see career counselors individually, others take advantage of career counseling groups. While the issues people bring to the group are diverse in nature, many are simply dissatisfied with their current jobs and beginning to think about how things...
Assessing Your Personality and the Way You Naturally Do Things

Mike embodied that struggle. Mike was a successful businessperson in his mid-40s who had progressively moved up the corporate ladder. While he did not hate his job or the people with whom he worked, he had felt his motivation slipping for years and dreaded the idea of continuing on the current path. When his career group got to the workshop section that focused on personality type, Mike gained insights into why he felt so disconnected. When he began his career, he met often with clients, worked in a team setting with other colleagues his age, and was asked to find solutions to emergencies quickly. As Mike is extroverted and perceptive, these requirements suited him perfectly as he gained energy from his interactions with people and was able to remain flexible and handle new situations. As he advanced in his career, Mike’s new responsibilities were more administrative with a great deal more paperwork and less time with people. His workload also demanded careful planning and organization rather than flexibility. Mike realized that his old position suited his personality and allowed him to do things in a way he naturally did them. He found his tasks easy and enjoyable and was rewarded for his successes. While still successful, his new position forced him to do things in a way that was not as comfortable, which was leading to his distress. Mike decided to look for a new position that was more congruent with his personality and took a job with a small start-up company that required working with many people and handling multiple tasks quickly.

**EXERCISE 2.1**

**WHAT’S MY TYPE?**

**Step I.**

For each of the following pairs of statements, check the option that describes you best. You must select one of the statements in each pair. There are no right or wrong answers.

**SECTION ONE**

1. I like to be around other people. I prefer spending time alone.
2. I prefer working on team projects. I’d rather complete a project on my own.
3. I often ask others for their opinions about decisions I have to make. I usually make important decisions on my own.

**SECTION TWO**

4. I like work that involves precise objectives and clearly defined details. I prefer work that is less defined and requires very little precision.
5. I enjoy routine in the workplace. I dislike doing the same tasks at work every day.
6. I don’t rely too much on inspiration when I’m involved in a project. Inspiration plays an important role in my work.

**SECTION THREE**

7. Most of the decisions I make at work are based on rational thinking and an analysis of the situation. I tend to make decisions at work based on what feels right to me at the time.
8. I don’t usually focus too much on others’ feelings about decisions that I make at work. I am usually very aware of others’ feelings about decisions that I make at work.

9. I’m not too concerned about pleasing other people in the workplace. I enjoy making others feel good about themselves at work.

SECTION FOUR

10. I prefer leaving my options open regarding future plans. I like making definite plans about my future.

11. I don’t like making definite decisions about things. I like making well-defined decisions about things.

12. I’d rather work on a task that’s less clearly defined and allows for flexibility and change. I prefer rigid, clear-cut directions when working on a task.

Step II. Scoring

As you may have figured out while completing Step I of this exercise, each section represents a different personality dimension. Section One statements reflect the Extraversion versus Introversion dimension of personality. The statements on the left side represent Extraversion, whereas the statements on the right side represent Introversion. Section Two statements represent the Sensing versus Intuition dimension, with statements on the left side reflecting a Sensing orientation and statements on the right side reflecting an Intuition orientation. Section Three statements represent Thinking (statements on the left side) versus Feeling (statements on the right side), and Section Four statements reflect Judgment (left side) versus Perception (right side).

To get a rough estimate of your personality type (realizing that your true psychological type can only be reliably assessed by a lengthier assessment, such as the MBTI), determine which personality orientation in each section you tend to associate with by figuring out which types of statements you marked as describing you best. If, for example, you checked off two statements on the left side of Section One and only one statement on the right side, or all three statements on the left side, then you probably have Extraversion (E) dominance on that particular dimension.

Indicate below your preferences based on your analysis of preferences in each domain:

SECTION ONE
Extraversion (E) _______ Introversion (I) _______

SECTION TWO
Sensing (S) _______ Intuition (N) _______

SECTION THREE
Thinking (T) _______ Feeling (F) _______

SECTION FOUR
Judgment (J) _______ Perception (P) _______

Now place the letter of your preference in each dimension (in order) in the spaces below:

Your Type: _______ _______ _______ _______
Section 1 2 3 4
Step III. Careers and Personality Type

Developers of personality assessment instruments have found that certain types of work environments and careers are more attractive to some people than they are to others, depending on personality type. Persons who identify more with Extraversion than Introversion, for example, are probably going to be much more satisfied in a career that involves a lot of opportunity to work with others in a group or team setting. On the other hand, individuals with an Introversion orientation are probably much more satisfied in careers that maximize opportunities to work alone or in one-on-one situations.

Sensing individuals usually like careers that involve concrete facts and data, whereas intuitive types probably find careers with less structure and detail much more rewarding. As you might imagine, individuals with a thinking orientation prefer careers that involve logical reasoning, whereas individuals with a feeling orientation prefer careers that involve feelings and emotions. Finally, it follows that persons who possess a judgment orientation enjoy careers with a high degree of organization, structure, and routine, whereas persons who possess a perceiving orientation prefer careers with a high degree of flexibility and spontaneity.

There are a number of books and other resources available that provide occupational titles for individual personality preferences, including *Do What You Are: Discover the Perfect Career for You Through the Secrets of Personality Type* by Tieger and Barron-Tieger. As you look through a list of occupations that match your psychological type, don’t be surprised if a few of the occupations don’t seem to fit your personality perfectly. Even though you share many aspects of your personality with other people who share your psychological type, you’re not necessarily going to prefer all of the careers that are generally attractive to folks with that type. Remember that psychological preference is different than interest, so just because a career suits your type does not mean you will find it of interest. A list of occupations by personality type is also provided in Appendix A of this text to help you get started.

Choosing a career that is consistent with your psychological type means you will be asked to do things in a way you naturally do them, which tends to lead to greater job satisfaction. You may also be working with people who may share some of the same preferences. At the same time, organizations need diverse personality types in order to function in all situations, so having a personality type that is different from your colleagues may provide the opportunity for you to excel within a company. In other words, there are no “right” or “wrong” careers for each type, but some careers may be a more natural fit.

List below any of the careers that seem to be a good fit for your personality preferences.

In addition to helping you understand how you might like to interact with the world through work, understanding your personality can help you in deciding the easiest, most natural way for you to engage in the career development process. For example, people who have a preference for extraversion would probably enjoy talking to people about their careers while people with an introverted preference may prefer reading about various careers. In addition, thinking people may prefer facts and figures...
related to potential careers like average salaries and anticipated number of openings while feeling people would probably like to know about the types of people with whom they would be working. As you work through your own career planning, use your personality preferences to help you guide the process.

In addition to the specific characteristics of personality preferences, Carl Jung also focused attention on the larger description of archetypes. The basic idea is that there are common roles humans play that recur across cultures and across generations. For example, Jung described a mother archetype as someone who nurtures, comforts, and provides for the needs of others.

While most “type” theorists agree that individual differences account for a great deal of human behavior, the basic premise is that people of similar types will display similar behaviors. We use common descriptions of types of people to organize what we know about the world. For example, in high school, were you the Brain, the Jock, the Musician, the Geek, the Rebel? When people use these descriptions to talk about others, we make assumptions about how they will behave.

CASE STUDIES TO CONSIDER

Beth
Beth was a college sophomore struggling to choose a major. Beth had taken some exploratory classes and did not feel ready to choose a major, but the university required her to make a tentative choice before registering for the next semester. During their first meeting, the counselor asked Beth numerous questions about her interests and the classes she had taken. Her responses were generally short, and it was apparent that she was frustrated by the whole process. She believed that she was the only one struggling with this choice and that everyone else she met seemed so focused and passionate about their future careers. After spending some time talking about how common this issue is for students (whether people talk about it or not), how many students change their major at least once during college, and how majors and careers are often not related at all, Beth and her counselor started discussing the roles Beth tended to play in her life. In talking about high school, Beth became animated in sharing stories about her friends in both choir and her soccer team. Her counselor asked her how people tended to relate to her. She said that she got along with everyone and that by her senior year people encouraged her to take leadership roles like being team captain. That surprised her because there were other people who were much more boisterous and outgoing. Over time she realized that she had become a leader just by listening to people and being supportive. She was the person that other people came to when they had a problem and needed help and support. When asked to come up with a word or phrase that would characterize her role, Beth said “den mother,” which she described as solid, confident, trusted, and wise. Beth enjoyed this role and being thought of in those terms. She agreed that finding a career that would allow her to exhibit those characteristics would be a good fit. As she had enjoyed her introductory psychology courses and saw careers in social services would fit her role, she decided to choose psychology as her tentative major.

Traditional career development tools ask many multiple-choice questions to help you to uncover your archetype. The following activity is designed to help you gain more information about your own personal type.
EXERCISE 2.2
WHAT’S MY ROLE?

Use your imagination to dream about a tribal community. This could be on an island somewhere or perhaps in a different period in history. The focus of the tribe is on daily living and survival. In this tribal community, what role would you play? What would be your contribution to the overall functioning of the tribe? Write a story about the tribal community and your role within it. In what ways could this role or a similar role be played out in the world of work?
Assessing Your Personality and the Way You Naturally Do Things

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL THOUGHT

1. How does your personality influence your beliefs and actions?
2. What role do you play in your group of friends? How does your personality help to determine that role?
3. Why shouldn’t you base your career decisions solely on what you like to do?
4. How do experiences you had as a child and adolescent influence your career decisions as an adult?

KEY CONCEPTS TO REMEMBER

- Your personality is your way of perceiving the world and the things that happen to you.
- Norm-referenced inventories help people think about how they compare with others.
- Career counselors specialize in helping people in all aspects of the career development process.
What Do You Like and Do Well?

ASSESSMENT OF INTERESTS

The most commonly administered career assessments are interest inventories. These types of assessments include popular measures such as the Self-Directed Search, the Strong Interest Inventory, and the Kuder Career Search with Person Match. Interest inventories are designed to help people think about their interests in a variety of recreational activities, academic areas, and work environments. An individual’s particular interests are then compared to the interests of other persons who have completed the inventory and who are satisfied with their career choice.

Say, for example, that a first-year college student named Stacia completes the online version of the Kuder Career Search (KCS) with Person Match by logging on to www.kuder.com. After she completes the inventory, it is immediately scored online. During the scoring process, Stacia’s responses to the various items on the inventory are compared to the answers provided by persons representing hundreds of occupations who completed the same inventory. This comparison group is composed of workers who report a very high level of satisfaction with their careers.

If Stacia’s responses to the KCS with Person Match are similar to the responses provided by an accountant, then the inventory’s online interpretive report for Stacia will suggest that she consider exploring careers in accounting. If, on the other hand, Stacia’s responses differ greatly from the responses provided by an accountant, then the report would not suggest accounting as a possible career field of interest.

There are many ways to organize interests into categories that can help to guide people toward specific work environments. One of the best-known systems for classifying interest preferences was developed by Dr. John L. Holland, whose system includes six primary interest groups: Realistic activities involve working with your hands or
Chapter 3

Investigative jobs entail searching for solutions to complex scientific problems; Artistic activities encourage creativity and personal expression through writing, music, and art; Social interests provide you with the opportunity to teach and help other people; Enterprising interests include tasks in which you manage or persuade others; and Conventional interests are characterized by organization and planning. Holland’s classification system is used by career counselors throughout the world to help people make career decisions. By ranking your top three interest groups and using the first letter of their names, you create a three-letter Holland code. Using the Dictionary of Holland Occupational Codes (available in most college/university and public libraries), you can explore which career environments share the same combination of interests. Exercise 3.1 is a short activity to help you begin thinking about your Holland Code.

EXERCISE 3.1

Pretend you’re about to begin college. You’re moving to a residence hall in a month and have to rank your choices in terms of where you want to live. The following descriptions were provided by the housing office to help you choose. Read the following descriptions and rank order your top three choices:

1. The first residence hall is filled with people who like working with their hands. When things go wrong mechanically, the residents are more likely to fix it themselves than to call someone. A high percentage of student athletes live in this dorm. Many of the cars parked in the lot nearby are in various states of repair. The dorm is well kept and some of the residents have gardening projects going on in the quad. There are also a number of environmentalists who live here. (R = REALISTIC)

2. The next residence hall is filled with people who enjoy solving scientific problems. There are a number of research labs in the basement that are full any time of the day. Although this tends to be a fairly quiet dorm, you can often find small groups of residents in deep discussions related to analyzing, researching, or solving problems. (I = INVESTIGATIVE)

3. The next residence hall is elaborately decorated and you can usually hear various types of music when you walk by. Residents do not seem to keep to a regular schedule and it is not unusual to find a group of musicians in the lounge or a writing group discussing their favorite author. These students tend to prefer courses that explore ideas and creative thinking. They are innovative and prefer thinking outside of the box. (A = ARTISTIC)

4. The next residence hall has a reputation for being the party dorm. In addition, the students often work together on community service projects and social causes. Rather than leading events, they are the first to volunteer to help out. The residents tend to be friendly and have a sincere desire to help other people. Most residents know the other people on their floor and consider them all friends. (S = SOCIAL)

5. The next residence hall houses many of the students who participate in student government. They are natural-born leaders and tend to want to be in control of situations. In addition, there are many residents who work in addition to going to school and some who even have their own businesses already. The debate team all lives in this dorm and you will often find people in the lounges having animated discussions about current events. (E = ENTERPRISING)

6. The final residence hall is very organized and structured. There are signs posted by the elevator and in the kitchen reminding people about the rules. Residents...
As you might imagine, results from interest inventories can provide you with helpful information in making some initial career decisions. By learning which career areas are compatible with your interests, you can explore specific opportunities that exist within those particular areas.

In our culture, careers and work are the ways in which we participate and interact with the world. In fact, a great deal of our personal identity is measured by what we do. How many times has someone you’ve just met asked, “What is your major?” or “What is it that you do?” In that context, choosing a major or career path is the beginning of creating your identity. Like a great novelist, you have the power and responsibility to shape your personal story. Together,

...
interest and personality preferences give you a good start in understanding the main character of your story: you!

**EXERCISE 3.2 CAREER DREAMING**

As you may recall from Chapter 1, Dr. Super used the term *crystallizing* to refer to some of the career decisions we often make when we’re at the beginning of the career exploration process. Perhaps you’re one of the many people who dreamed about being a doctor when you were young. If so, then what you were basically doing was fantasizing about a career that you found interesting at the time. Even at a very young age, most people have at least some idea of what they like and dislike, even though many of us eventually select careers that are very different from our early career fantasies.

This exercise gives you the chance to fantasize again, to consider those careers that you would pursue if there were no barriers whatsoever to prevent you from doing so. It’s time to dream again! Forget for a moment about all of the reasons you shouldn’t pursue a career you’ve found appealing. Instead, allow yourself to dream about the careers you’d go for if there were no reasons at all to stop you from doing so.

List your career dreams in the spaces below:

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 
6. 
7. 
8. 
9. 
10. 

You’ll return to this exercise later in the book as you begin to integrate the results of several career assessments. In the meantime, if you think of any other career dreams in the next few days, be sure to add them to this list.

**EXERCISE 3.3 ACTIVITIES RATINGS**

To complete this exercise, simply rate your interest in each of the following activities. Use the scale shown below to rate your interest:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RATING</th>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>not interested at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>not very interested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>somewhat interested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>very interested</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Visiting a science museum
2. Attending a seminar on public relations
3. Developing an annual schedule of important events
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RATING ACTIVITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Participating in an athletic event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Working for a social service agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Selling real estate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Auditioning for a musical or play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Repairing a broken radio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Reading the Wall Street Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Watching a Supreme Court hearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Going to the zoo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Taking a psychology or human relations course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Fixing a broken computer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As with the other exercises in this chapter, we’ll be scoring and integrating the results of this exercise later in the book.

**ASSESSMENTS OF ABILITIES AND EXPERIENCES**

In addition to personality and interest inventories, skills and experience assessments also are useful career decision-making tools. These types of inventories are designed to evaluate an individual’s abilities in several work-related domains. Some of these assessments are self-ratings of skill and involve nothing more than rating how good you think you are at certain work-related tasks. Other assessments, such as the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) and the Differential Aptitude Test (DAT), involve a detailed analysis of demonstrated work-related skills and abilities.

Career counselors will sometimes suggest that students complete a battery of ability tests to gather information about relevant work-related skills. The resulting information can help you figure out the practicality of various career options, thereby suggesting specific careers that you may not have otherwise considered.
CASE STUDIES TO CONSIDER

Shelley

Consider the case of Shelley, a sophomore attending a large university in Southern California. Shelley took college very seriously. Her family was unable to help her financially, so she had to work 30 hours a week while going to college. She wanted to be very organized in her career planning, so she wasted no time beginning the process of career exploration.

Shelley was fairly sure that she wanted to pursue a career in either medicine or law, but she was having a difficult time deciding. She met with a university career counselor for some guidance about where to start the process of making a choice. When the counselor asked Shelley how she had developed an interest in medicine and law, she described the series of personality and interest inventories (which included the MBTI, Self Directed Search, and the Strong Interest Inventory) that she had completed during her first year in college.

The results of the inventories consistently revealed that careers in medicine and law were directly related to her hobbies and interests. Shelley was especially attracted to professions that would provide her the opportunity to help others, and she was confident after interviewing various doctors and lawyers that either profession would be rewarding.

Until she began working with a career counselor, however, Shelley didn't have a really clear sense of her specific skills associated with law and medicine. Most of the classes she had completed during her first year were general education courses. Although she enjoyed most of her first-year classes, they didn't provide her with the chance to explore her abilities in areas directly related to medicine and law. She agreed that completion of an aptitude assessment would be helpful.

Shelley agreed to take the DAT, an aptitude battery designed to measure a person's ability to learn or to succeed in certain work-related areas. Results of the DAT indicated that Shelley possessed many of the skills associated with a career in medicine. She scored exceptionally high on the Numerical Reasoning and Abstract Reasoning scales, providing evidence of her math and science ability and her ability to solve complex problems.

Although Shelley possessed many of the skills related to a career in law, as revealed by her moderately high scores on the Verbal Reasoning and Language Use scales, she demonstrated somewhat lower skills in many of these areas relative to her performance in the domains related to a career in medicine. Discussions with her career counselor also revealed that Shelley was less confident in her ability to engage in oral arguments and debate than in her ability to diagnose problems and work on investigative tasks. The information about Shelley's skills and abilities gathered from the assessments, along with the many meetings she had with her counselor, helped her make the eventual decision to enroll in the college's pre-med program. Today Shelley is an internist working in the Midwest.

As you engage in the process of making career decisions, it will be helpful for you to assess your strengths and weaknesses and learn to integrate that information into your career choice. As with assessments of personality and interests, if you have access to a reliable and valid assessment of skills and abilities, you should consider completing such an assessment. Exercise 3.4, “Linking the Past to the Present,” and Exercise 3.5, “How Well Do You Do What You Do?,” will help you begin to think about the ways that experiences have helped you acquire various work-related skills.
## LINKING THE PAST TO THE PRESENT

To complete this exercise, simply evaluate how much experience you’ve had with each of the activities listed below. There may be some activities that you’ve not yet experienced, but you probably have at least some experience with most. Use the scale below when rating your experience with each of the following activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RATING</th>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>no experience at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>very little experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>moderate experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>very much experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>lots and lots of experience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Creating artwork
2. Serving other people
3. Promoting new products or services
4. Hiking in the mountains
5. Solving mathematical problems
6. Working with tools to fix things
7. Managing other people’s work
8. Teaching children how to read
9. Playing musical instruments
10. Participating in volunteer work
11. Conducting research studies
12. Planting vegetables in a garden
13. Selling things to customers
14. Drawing or sketching pictures
15. Hunting and/or fishing
16. Debating a political topic
17. Finding answers to legal questions
18. Reading science books
19. Entertaining people
20. Discussing business principles and concepts
21. Repairing broken machines or equipment
22. Collecting scientific data
23. Selling insurance
24. Organizing information into a word-processing document
25. Helping people work through their personal problems
26. Rebuilding an engine or appliance
27. Pondering the meaning of life
28. Convincing people to purchase a particular brand or product
29. Filing important documents
30. Working outdoors
31. Writing a news story
32. Finding answers to medical questions
33. Decorating rooms in a house
34. Building things from scratch
35. Doing your taxes
36. Helping someone figure out which career to pursue
37. Selling cars
38. Designing a new home
39. Harvesting crops
40. Reading about your local town’s history

## HOW WELL DO YOU DO WHAT YOU DO?

To complete this exercise, indicate your skill level for each of the activities listed below. Use the following scale for rating your skills:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RATING</th>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>no skill at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>very little skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>moderate skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>high skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>very high skill</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Tutoring others in a subject you’re good at

2. Working with animals/livestock
3. Understanding a complex legal argument
Chapter 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RATING</th>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Managing people to accomplish a particular task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Promoting a new product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Creating a work of art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Understanding the meaning of philosophical ideas or concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Operating farm machinery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Using a word-processing program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Fixing broken machines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. Designing the interior of a house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. Solving mathematical problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13. Developing new friendships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14. Playing musical instruments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15. Persuading someone to buy a particular brand or product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16. Influencing people to agree with your ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17. Understanding others’ feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18. Describing how a machine works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19. Teaching people to complete a difficult task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20. Managing a database of information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21. Finding solutions to scientific problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22. Presenting a public presentation on a current event topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23. Showing compassion to others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When we get to Chapter 6, we’ll score and interpret the results of these and the other exercises in the chapter. But first you’ll need to explore your values and gain a better understanding of how your values influence your career decisions. This is the focus of Chapter 4.

OTHER TYPES OF CAREER ASSESSMENT

In addition to personality and interest inventories and measures of experiences and skills, test developers have created many other assessments to help us make well-informed career decisions. You may want to meet with a career counselor to find out what career assessments are available to you.

Career counselors are professional counselors who specialize in helping people in all aspects of the career decision-making process. Most career counselors have master’s or doctoral degrees in counseling and have completed several years of professional training. You might find it very helpful to seek the assistance of a career counselor and participate in a thorough evaluation of your personality, interests, skills, values, and life themes. You can enlist help through one-on-one counseling or in career classes or workshops. If you do decide to seek professional career counseling services, it is important to shop around and find the right career professional. Ask about specific services, fees, time expectations, and their credentials. Meet with a couple of counselors before you select one, to make sure you get the right fit. Finding a career professional is easy—you can just open the phone
Assessing Your Professional Interests and Skills

book and find hundreds of options! To narrow down that list, here are some things to consider:

- Most colleges and universities offer some type of career assistance. If you are a college or university student, track down your career services office. If you are an alumnus, contact your alma mater to see if services are available to you.
- Many communities offer Workforce Centers to help you in your career transitions. Not only can these offices provide you with direct services, but they may also be able to help you financially if you decide to engage in more training or education.
- Counselors are credentialed in many ways. You can find a list of master career counselors (MCCs) at the National Career Development Association Web site, www.ncda.org. A list of nationally certified counselors (NCCs) may be accessed at www.nbcc.org. Similarly, a list of licensed professional counselors in your state can probably be found somewhere on your state’s official Web site.
- Many nonprofits, such as churches and community centers, offer career counseling services on a sliding pay scale that varies depending on how much you can afford. For example, some YWCCAs offer complete career centers that are open to the public on a sliding scale.

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL THOUGHT

1. When you have the choice to do anything you want, what activities do you choose?
2. Why is it important for you to identify your career dreams?
3. Why shouldn’t you base your career decisions solely on what you like to do?
4. How do experiences you had as a child and adolescent influence your career decisions as an adult?

KEY CONCEPTS TO REMEMBER

- Your interests are a reflection of things you enjoy and tasks you enjoy performing.
- Interest inventories help people think about interests in recreational activities, academic areas, and work environments.
- By finding a work environment that suits your interests, you will be asked to complete tasks you enjoy doing in a way that comes naturally to you.