

Making a Major or Career Decision

Career Goal Score Card

Students who enter college undecided about a major or career are often unsure how to go about making a decision. They recognize the need to choose a college major in order to select courses that will count toward their degree and that will prepare them for a future career. When choosing a major or career, it's important for students to have (1) an understanding of who they are, what they like, and what they're good at; and (2) an understanding of the majors and careers that match their personality, interests, and skills. Students can use the Career Goal Score Card for Exploring Majors and Careers to work through these two steps. Once students have gathered information by assessing their characteristics and exploring careers, they are ready to analyze that information to make a decision.

*This **Score Card** helps you learn about the decision-making process and gives you tools to help you make a major or career choice.*

Think of it as a three-step GET process: GET Info, GET Focused, and GET Experience!

GET Info

Making a major or career decision is not a simple, one-time "event" but rather is a "process" - a series of steps that takes time as you read, learn, think, analyze and evaluate information. Complete the two activities below to get an overview of the decision-making process and the steps needed to make a decision.

How to Choose a Major tutorial: www.frederick.edu > **Resources** > **Career & Transfer Center** > **Career/Job Search Tutorials** > **Career Exploration** > **Download a PowerPoint presentation of this tutorial**

Now that you have an understanding of what goes into choosing a major or career, take the Career Assessment to determine where you are in the career development process and whether you are ready to make a decision. Remember, you must have information on which to base your decision, and that information comes from assessing yourself (your interests, skills, and abilities), and understanding careers (job duties, education/training needed, employment outlook, salary). Follow the directions for the Career Assessment to help determine if you have enough information to make a decision. Be sure to print your Assessment Results.

Career Assessment: www.frederick.edu > **Resources** > **Career & Transfer Center** > **Career-Students & Alumni** > **Learn About Yourself**

Look at your Assessment results. Do they indicate that you need more information about yourself or careers of interest? If so, use the Assessment's recommendations or use the Career Goal Score Card for Exploring Majors and Careers to GET Info that is needed before you can make a decision.

If your results indicate that you have enough information about yourself and careers to make a decision, you are ready to move on to the next step – **GET Focused**.

Decision Score Card

GET Focused

Start by focusing on Decision-Making Skills. We all make decisions every day, but we each approach our decisions in our own way. As students, we need to make a decision regarding a major or career so that we can complete our education and move into a future occupation. Some students have an idea of the kind of occupation they would like but not the major, while others know the type of courses they want to study but not the careers they can lead to. Still others are totally undecided about both their major and career.

The first step in making a decision is to determine what decision or decisions need to be made. How undecided are you? How do you feel about making a decision? What strategies do you use? What is your decision-making style? Check off all the statements below that apply to you to help you answer these questions.

Which statements best describe your current decision-making status?

- ☐ I am undecided about a major ☐ or career
- ☐ I don't have enough information about different majors/coursework
- ☐ I'm not sure of the jobs I can get with specific majors
- ☐ I'm not sure what I should base my major or career decisions on
- ☐ I have so many interests that I'm not sure how to pick one
- ☐ I don't have any real interests in any majors/careers
- ☐ I find it hard to make decisions in general

Which strategy best describes your approach to decision-making?

- ☐ Procrastinator – I put it off as long as possible!
- ☐ Impulsive – I take the first choice that seems reasonable without looking at other options
- ☐ Fatalistic – I have very little control so whatever will be, will be
- ☐ Agonizing – I feel overwhelmed and cannot decide ("analysis paralysis")
- ☐ Compliant – I want someone else (parent, friend, career counselor) to make the decision
- ☐ Intuitive – I make decisions when it "feels" right
- ☐ Planful – I base decisions on an orderly process, based on information, using thinking and feeling

When I think about making a major or career decision, I feel:

- | | | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Confused | <input type="checkbox"/> Excited | <input type="checkbox"/> Frustrated | <input type="checkbox"/> Pressured |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anxious | <input type="checkbox"/> Disappointed | <input type="checkbox"/> Optimistic | <input type="checkbox"/> Relaxed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fearful | <input type="checkbox"/> Motivated | <input type="checkbox"/> Dejected | <input type="checkbox"/> Stressed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Apathetic | <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral | <input type="checkbox"/> Content | |

How do feelings affect your motivation _____

How you gather information and how you analyze it is your decision-making style:

How do you gather information?

- ☐ Spontaneously: decide quickly; when it feels right; know you can change it
- ☐ Systematically: collect all needed information first then weigh all pros and cons before deciding

How do you analyze information?

- ☐ External: you like to talk with people whose judgment you trust
- ☐ Internal: you think about the situation and make the decision on your own

Which is your decision-making style?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> spontaneous external | <input type="checkbox"/> systematic external |
| <input type="checkbox"/> spontaneous internal | <input type="checkbox"/> systematic internal |

What do your answers tell you about your decision-making skills? _____

What do you think will help you in moving forward with making a major or career decision? _____

Talk with a career counselor if you feel unable to make any decisions or are extremely anxious or discouraged about making a decision. Additional inventories can help you determine the reason for your undecidedness, and counseling can help you become more comfortable with making decisions in general so you can make a major or career decision in the future.

If you're ready to make a decision, review the tutorial on the steps in successful decision making using the navigation below:

Seven Steps to Successful Decision Making: www.frederick.edu > Resources > Career & Transfer Center > Career/Job Search Tutorials > Career Exploration > Seven Steps to Successful Decision Making > Download a PowerPoint presentation of this tutorial

What step are you in (you may be working on more than one)? _____

What do you need to help you continue working through the decision-making process? _____

Decision Score Card

GET Focused

Based on the activities in this Score Card or in the Career Goal Score Card for Exploring Majors and Careers, you should have generated a list of majors or careers you are interested in. Your next step is to analyze the information you've gathered using the tools below.

Research and Analyze

For each possible major, research the following information from professors, your academic advisor, or from the website.

For each major or career you analyze, print a full-page copy of the "Major Facts" or "Occupational Facts" worksheets from www.frederick.edu >

Resources > Career & Transfer Center > Career-Student & Alumni > Decision-Making

Major:

What basic or General Education courses are required for this major?

Which of these basic courses can help you determine if this major is a good match for you?

Are you interested and motivated to take these courses?

Will students who graduate with this major be able to immediately enter the workforce or are they required to transfer for a bachelor's degree first?

What occupations do students go into from this major?

Will this major be a good match for your interests, skills and personality?

Career:

What specific tasks are performed by people in this occupation?

What education and training is required?

What strengths/abilities and talents are necessary for occupational success?

What is the employee outlook & expected rate of growth in this occupation?

What are the entry-level earnings and potential earnings in this field?

Will this career be a good match for your interests, skills and personality?

Narrow Alternatives

Based on your research above, it is likely that you have eliminated some of your initial choices. The remaining majors or careers on your list need to be further analyzed against your values - those things that are most important to you in a major or career in order to be happy with your choice. Using the list of values you developed from the *Career Goal Score Card for Exploring Majors and Careers*, fill out the Decision Grid below to help you further evaluate your alternatives. (If you did not use the *Score Card* above, take the "Work-Related Values Assessment" now at www.frederick.edu > **Resources > Career Resources & Transfer Center > Career-Student & Alumni > Learn About Yourself > Values.**)

Enter your values in the downward column and enter your major or career choices across the top row. Place a check in each box where your values and major/career correspond.

Work
Value

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Make a Tentative Choice

One major or career should now be more attractive than the other alternatives. Weigh this major or career against each of the following statements. Circle each checkmark that confirms your tentative choice.

Major/Career: _____

- ✓ This major/career matches my interests, skills, and personality (from Career Goal Score Card Exploring Majors and Careers).
- ✓ The occupations in this major/career are interesting.
- ✓ My work values correspond with this major/career.
- ✓ I know the courses required for this major/career.
- ✓ I have the ability to do the coursework for this major/career.
- ✓ I have a better understanding of how I gather and analyze information to make decisions.
- ✓ I feel good about my tentative choice of major/career.

Did you circle each checkmark? If you did, congratulations – you've made a tentative major or career choice! You are now ready to move forward and "test" that choice. If you did not, reflect on what statements need clarified and go back through the process to **GET Info** or **GET Focused**, reworking through the previous activities as needed.

Decision Score Card

GET Experience

So far in this **Score Card**, you have been gathering, researching, analyzing and focusing on information. Now we need to make that “information” transform into “knowledge”, integrating it into your understanding of yourself and the world. What is the magical, “transformative experience” that will allow you to truly understand/know what you want to do for a major or career?? Well, it’s exactly that – experience!!!

www.dictionary.com defines experience as “knowledge or practical wisdom gained from what one has observed, encountered, or undergone”. Your next step is to GET Experience by placing yourself in situations where you can learn first-hand, through observing, encountering or undergoing the actual, real-life work related to your major or career. In other words, you need to put your tentative choice through the Reality Test!

Here are a number of ways to Reality Test your choice through experience. Do as many of these experiences as possible!!

Informational Interview <http://www.k-state.edu/ces/students/informationalinterviewingguide.html>

Reality Test your choice through experience:

Internships for college credit <http://www.frederick.edu/current-students/internship-program.aspx>

Volunteer in Community – Student Service Learning <http://www.frederick.edu/current-students/service-learning-volunteerism.aspx>

Student Clubs & Organizations <http://www.frederick.edu/student-resources/get-involved.aspx>

Part-time employment – off campus <http://www.collegecentral.com/frederick/>

Part-time employment – on campus (Work-study) [http://www.frederick.edu/cost-financial-aid/financial-aid/financial-aid-forms-\(1\).aspx](http://www.frederick.edu/cost-financial-aid/financial-aid/financial-aid-forms-(1).aspx)

Student Memberships in professional associations http://www.quintcareers.com/professional_organizations.html

Network with family & friends in careers of interest contact Career Counselor to brainstorm ways to network with family & friends

Based on your experience, have you confirmed your choice? If so, meet with an Academic Advisor to complete a Change of Major form, to review the coursework in the new major, and to develop an Individual College Academic Plan (ICAP) and Academic Planner to map out the completion of your degree. Below are links to Counseling & Advising’s website where you can find the following info:

Advisor Contact List <http://www.frederick.edu/student-resources/counseling-advising/advisor-list.aspx>

Degree Requirements <http://www.frederick.edu/student-resources/counseling-advising/academic-planning.aspx>

Change of Major Form <http://www.frederick.edu/about-fcc/welcome-center/registration-forms.aspx>

Academic Planner <http://www.frederick.edu/student-resources/counseling-advising/advising-forms.aspx>

Academic Milestones <http://www.frederick.edu/student-resources/counseling-advising/academic-planning.aspx>

If the experience you gained did not confirm your major or career choice and you want to “keep on looking”, that’s fine. It’s OK to be undecided as long as you are actively exploring options so eventually you will be able to make a decision. Remember, this is a process that can take time and the steps can be revisited as often as needed. There is no right or wrong way to make a decision; it just has to be right for you.

Revisit your choices on the previous pages and work through the process again. If you find that you still need help, make an appointment to meet with a career counselor in the Career and Transfer Center.

Where to find us:
 **Frederick Community College**
Career and Transfer Resource Center, J201
7932 Opossumtown Pike, Frederick, Maryland 21702
www.frederick.edu - 301.846.2594

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