

Making a decision about what type of work you want to pursue after your education at Amherst College can be difficult. You might be feeling a lot of pressure to figure it all out before you graduate but may not have any clarity about the path you want to pursue. You are not alone! Many Amherst students need help considering or discovering their career options, and the Loeb Center welcomes and supports this type of exploration.

WISH YOU HAD YOUR CAREER ALL FIGURED OUT? DO NOT DESPAIR!

- *You do NOT need to have your career totally figured out before you leave Amherst. Most people change jobs and even careers many times over the course of their lives. You will probably change your mind about what you want to do more than you can imagine now.
- *Beware of choosing a certain career path just because it's clearer or easier. Sometimes the best ideas and opportunities arise out of uncertainty and chaos. Certainty about a career path does not correlate with long-term job satisfaction.
- *Most career paths are winding with unexpected turns that are impossible to predict. Many, if not all, career paths are also impacted by external factors such as falling in love, having a family, finances, health/illness, etc.

HOW SELF-ASSESSMENT CAN HELP

One starting point for exploring your career options is personal self-assessment. Your career decisions affect your lifestyle, health, and overall sense of satisfaction and happiness, and it is important to make informed choices based on who you are, what you value, and what you have to offer the world. The Career Center encourages all students to reflect on their interests, skills, values, personality, and family and cultural influences because it often yields important clues to finding meaningful opportunities that are a good fit..

SELF-ASSESSMENT RESOURCES

The Career Center offers a variety of resources and 1-on-1 advising appointments to help guide you through the self-assessment process.

- 1 ON 1 ADVISING APPOINTMENTS

At any point in your reflection process, you can schedule a 1-on-1 advising appointment with a career advisor at the Career Center. He or she can help you get started in the self-assessment process or help you reflect on the information you've gathered about yourself through these exercises. Schedule your appointments through Quest.

- CAREER BEAM

In addition to the exercises that follow, you have access to the online tool Career Beam. There is a link to this tool from the homepage of the Career Center website. After you sign in to Career Beam with your Amherst login information, go to the Career Exploration drop-down menu and click on Assessing Yourself. From there, you will see a range of exercises that you can do online.

SELF-ASSESSMENT FOR CAREER PLANNING WORKBOOK

APPROACH THE PROCESS THROUGH FOCUSED REFLECTION EXERCISES IN THE FOLLOWING FIVE AREAS:

1. Your interests
2. Your skills
3. Your values
4. Your family and cultural influences
5. Your personality

In each section, you will see **DO** exercises and **REFLECT** questions to help you process the information you are gathering. If you would like to discuss what you are learning with a career advisor, do not hesitate to set up a 1-on-1 appointment. They may be able to help you make observations that are difficult to see because of how familiar you are with your own background.

Try to do as many of the exercises as you can; you may do them in any order and they do not have to be done all at once. The more you learn about yourself, the more you will begin to see what is important to you in life and in your future career. If there are certain exercises that you try but do not find helpful, you can skip them and move onto the next.

SELF-ASSESSMENT CAN BE AN EXCITING, EYE-OPENING EXPERIENCE

ENJOY THE PROCESS!

YOUR INTERESTS

Finding a job that allows you to explore or share your interests in some way is more likely to keep you engaged, motivated, and inspired in your work. Although not all interests lend themselves well to making a living, with a little creativity most people find ways to do what they enjoy in some part of their job or in their life outside work. You may already have a strong sense of your interests or you may feel that you don't have very many interests at all.



DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

Answer any of the questions below that intrigue you or make you think. Pay attention to your responses. You may even find it helpful to answer them with someone else so they can help you recognize any themes or threads that you might normally miss. Comparing your answers may also give you some new insight.

1. What makes you happiest in your life? What excites you?
2. What do you do that makes you feel invincible?
3. What do people thank you for?
4. What do people think you're good at? If you don't know, go ask them.
5. Who do you look up to? Who are your mentors? Who inspires you? Why?
6. What has been your favorite class in high school or at Amherst College? Why did you like it?
7. What are some of your non-academic interests/hobbies? What do you do for fun?
8. Consider your previous jobs, internships, and volunteer or extracurricular activities. What did you like? What didn't you like? Was it a good fit for you? Why or why not?
9. What do you dislike doing or do out of obligation?
10. What social, political, environmental or other issues are important to you? How do you participate in these issues?
11. When was the last time you massively over-delivered on something? What was it and why did you work so hard on it?
12. When was the last time you were in a state of flow, in the zone and totally lost track of time? What were you doing?
13. What are you doing when you feel most like yourself?
14. Imagine you won \$158 million in the lottery. It's now three months later. How will you spend tomorrow?
15. What would you do if you knew you could not fail?
16. What topics do you find yourself continuously arguing or defending with others? What beliefs does your stance represent?
17. What do you love helping people with? How do you most commonly help others?
18. What's your favorite section in the bookstore? What's the first magazine you'd pick up at the grocery store?
19. Out of all your current work roles, what would you gladly do for free?
20. If you were able to be a member of the audience at your own funeral how would you want to be remembered?
21. What are you naturally curious about?
22. Think back to when you were 5 or 10 years old. What did you want to be when you grew up? What were your influences? What skills and metaphors do these represent (i.e., pilot may be a symbol for freedom)?
23. What did you like to spend your time doing as a child? Do you still enjoy doing this activity?
24. What careers do you find yourself dreaming of? What jobs do others have that you wish were yours?
25. What is something you want to make sure to do in your lifetime?

Adapted from Scott Dinsmore's 27 Questions to Find Your Passion

1. What did you learn or remember about your own interests? Were there any surprises or something you hadn't thought about for a while?

2. Did you notice any themes or threads that connected your various interests?

3. What, if any, of these interests do you feel are integral to personal fulfillment?

4. Do you foresee any barriers to exploring certain interests as a career option?

YOUR SKILLS

Knowing what skills you have to offer can help you identify specific industries or organizations where your strengths might be a good match for the employer's needs. How you feel when using these skills is also important. If you enjoy work that requires certain skills, then look for opportunities to use them, even if you have to develop those skills over time. If you have high proficiency in a skill that you do not enjoy using, try to limit how much you'll need to perform these types of tasks. When you excel at a skill but don't enjoy using it, we call it a **"burnout skill."** You don't have to avoid burnout skills altogether but you shouldn't choose a career just because you will be good at your job.



SKILLS INVENTORY

Rate yourself in the following skill categories using the scale below and then circle the skills that you enjoy using and put an X through any "burnout" skills (skills in which you excel and therefore use a lot but do not actually enjoy using)

- 1 = Strong ability in this area**
- 2 = Some ability**
- 3 = Enough ability to get by with help from others**
- 4 = No ability at all**

VERBAL-PERSUASIVE

- Writing:** Express myself in written forms of communication.
- Talking:** Relate easily to people in ordinary conversational settings.
- Speaking:** Deliver a talk or address an audience.
- Persuading:** Able to convince others to believe something I hold to be true.
- Selling:** Convince others to buy a product/service I am selling.
- Dramatics:** Portray ideas or stories in a dramatic format.
- Negotiations:** Bargain/discuss with goal of reaching agreement.

SOCIAL

- Social ease:** Relate easily in situations which are primarily social in nature.
- Dealing with public:** Relate effectively with a variety of people who come to an establishment for information, service or help.
- Appearance/Dress:** Dress presentably and appropriately for a variety of interpersonal situations or group occasions.
- Accepting negative feedback:** Able to cope with criticism.

NUMERICAL

- Working with numerical data:** Comfortable with large amounts of quantitative data and compiling, interpreting, and presenting data.
- Solving quantitative problems:** Reason quantitatively so that problems having numerical solutions can be solved without the aid of a computer or other mechanical device.
- Computer use:** Use computers to solve quantitative problems, have knowledge of programming, computer capabilities, etc.

INVESTIGATIVE

- ___ **Scientific curiosity:** Learn about scientific phenomena and investigate events which may lead to such knowledge.
- ___ **Research:** Gather information in a systematic way for a particular field of knowledge to establish certain facts or principles.
- ___ **Technical work:** Work easily with practical, mechanical or industrial aspects of a particular science, profession or craft.

MANUAL-PHYSICAL

- ___ **Mechanical reasoning:** Understand the way that machinery or tools operate and the relationship between mechanical operations.
- ___ **Manual dexterity:** Skilled in using your hands.
- ___ **Spatial perception:** Judge the relationship of objects in space; manipulate them mentally and visualize the effects of putting them together or of turning them over or around.
- ___ **Physical stamina:** Physically resistant to fatigue and illness.
- ___ **Outdoor work:** Familiar with the outdoors; able to work outdoors without encountering a great many obstacles.

CREATIVE

- ___ **Artistic:** Keenly sensitive to aesthetic values; able to create works of art.
- ___ **Imaginative with things:** Create new ideas and forms with various physical objects.
- ___ **Imaginative with ideas:** Create new ideas and programs through conceptualizing existing elements in new ways; able to merge abstract ideas.

WORKING WITH OTHERS

- ___ **Supervising:** Oversee, manage or direct work of others.
- ___ **Teaching:** Help others learn how to do or understand something; able to provide knowledge or insight.
- ___ **Coaching:** Instruct or train an individual to improve performance in a specific area.
- ___ **Counseling:** Engage in a direct helping relationship with another in situations where the person's concern is not solvable through information-giving or advice.

MANAGERIAL

- ___ **Organization and planning:** Develop a program, project or set of ideas through systematic preparation and arrangement of tasks, coordinating the people and resources necessary to put a plan into effect.
- ___ **Orderliness:** Arrange items in a systematic fashion so that such items or information can be readily used or retrieved.
- ___ **Handling Details:** Able to work efficiently with a great variety and/or volume of information.
- ___ **Making Decisions:** Comfortable in making judgments or reaching conclusions about matters which require specific action; able to accept responsibility for the consequences of such actions.

Adapted from Tufts Career Center

1. Did you discover any new skills that you hadn't recognized before?
2. Do you have any skills that weren't listed above?
3. How do your skills line up with your interests? (e.g., if you have artistic abilities and also enjoy art)
4. List the top 10 skills that you rated most highly. What do you notice? Do you recognize any themes or spot any potential career fields?

5. Identify skills you really enjoy using and/or would like to develop further.
6. Identify any burnout skills. How have you used these skills throughout your life and how might you limit how much you use them in the future?
7. Are there skills you feel like you need to develop to be competitive but that you don't like much? How does this feel? Is it still worth developing them?

YOUR VALUES

Whether you realize it or not, every time you make a choice about doing one thing as opposed to another, you make a value decision. When you have a decision that involves two or more conflicting values that are of major importance to you, the decision can be extremely difficult to make (e.g., career values may conflict with family and friendship values). You can, however, make these decisions more effectively if you have some idea of what your most important values are and the priority that you give to each. If you can bring your actions more into harmony with your values, you will feel more satisfied with the decisions you make, including career decisions. Many people find that the most satisfying and meaningful work is highly compatible with their values.



VALUES ASSESSMENT

The following exercises will help you to understand which work and personal values are important to you, and what priorities you give to them. Because some of our influences change throughout our lives, our values are bound to change as well. What you highly value now may become less of a priority later so it's important to reflect on your values frequently throughout your life.

PART I: WORK VALUES

Rate each work value using the following scale:

- 1 = very important to have in my work
- 2 = somewhat important to have in my work
- 3 = unimportant to have in my work

I WANT WORK CONDITIONS THAT PERMIT OR REQUIRE THE FOLLOWING:

- Independence/Autonomy:** Doing what you want to do without much direction from others.
- Time flexibility:** Arranging your own hours, working according to your own time schedule.
- Change/Variety:** Performing varying tasks in a number of different settings.
- Change/Risk:** Performing new tasks or leading new programs that challenge the established order and may be initially resisted.
- Stability/Security:** Working in a secure job that pays you reasonably well.
- Physical challenge:** Performing dangerous tasks that challenge your physical capabilities.
- Physical demands:** Performing physically strenuous but relatively safe activities.
- Mental challenge:** Performing demanding tasks that challenge your intelligence and creativity.
- Pressure:** Performing in a highly critical environment with constant deadlines.
- Precise work:** Performing prescribed tasks that leave little room for error.
- Decision making:** Making choices about what to do and how to do it.

I WANT TO WORK FOR THE FOLLOWING PURPOSES:

- To pursue truth/knowledge.
- To acquire expertise/authority.
- To use creativity/innovativeness.
- To foster aesthetic appreciation.
- To make social contributions.
- To acquire material gain.
- To seek recognition.
- To promote ethics/morality.
- To seek spiritual/transpersonal gain.

I WANT MY RELATIONSHIPS AT WORK TO INVOLVE THE FOLLOWING:

- Working alone doing assignments by yourself, with minimal contact with other people.
- Public contact interacting in predictable ways with a continuous flow of people.
- Developing close friendships with coworkers.
- Group membership belonging to a group with a common purpose and/or interest.
- Helping others
- Influencing others
- Supervising others
- Controlling others

LIST YOUR THREE MOST IMPORTANT WORK VALUES IN EACH OF THE THREE CATEGORIES.

WORK CONDITIONS	WORK PURPOSES	WORK RELATIONSHIPS
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.

PART II: PERSONAL VALUES

Rank your top five values, with #1 being the most important to you. Then put an “X” next to the five values that are least important to you.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Good Health | <input type="checkbox"/> To be remembered for my accomplishments |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Many close friendships | <input type="checkbox"/> Helping those in distress |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A large family | <input type="checkbox"/> Freedom to live where I wish |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A fulfilling career | <input type="checkbox"/> Time to myself |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A stable marriage | <input type="checkbox"/> Enjoyment of arts, entertainment, and cultural activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A financially comfortable life | <input type="checkbox"/> A life with many challenges |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Independence | <input type="checkbox"/> A life with many changes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creativity | <input type="checkbox"/> Opportunity to be a leader |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Participating in an organized religion | <input type="checkbox"/> To make a major discovery that would save lives |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having children | <input type="checkbox"/> A good physical appearance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A variety of interests and activities | <input type="checkbox"/> Opportunity to establish roots in one place |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Freedom to create my own lifestyle | <input type="checkbox"/> Opportunity for physical activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Owning a house | <input type="checkbox"/> An exciting life |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A happy love relationship | <input type="checkbox"/> A chance to get into politics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fulfilling careers for me and my spouse | <input type="checkbox"/> To live according to strong moral values |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contributing to my community | <input type="checkbox"/> Opportunity to teach others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Abundance of leisure time | <input type="checkbox"/> To write something memorable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ability to move from place to place | <input type="checkbox"/> A chance to become famous |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A stable life | <input type="checkbox"/> To help others solve problems |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A life without stress | <input type="checkbox"/> To make lots of money |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strong religious values | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A chance to make social changes | |



LIST FIVE OF YOUR MOST IMPORTANT PERSONAL VALUES.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Adapted for use from Training for Life: A Practical Guide to Career and Life Planning, Fifth Edition (1994), with permission from the authors, Bernadette M. Black and Fred J. Hecklinger.

REFLECT

1. What was the process of deciding like for you? Was this easy or difficult?
2. Our values change throughout our lifetime, but what observations can you make about your values right now?
3. How important is it to you to live out your personal values in your work life?
4. How have your most important personal values impacted your life choices thus far?
5. How do you think your most important work and personal values will affect your career choice(s)?

YOUR FAMILY & CULTURE

The choices you make every day are influenced by a variety of external factors, and choosing a job or career field is no different. For better or worse, your family and cultural upbringing can impact the type of career or work that you decide to pursue. They also tend to shape the personal values that can serve as an important reference point when weighing your career options. Your awareness of these influences will help you make more informed, thoughtful decisions as you consider your career options.



FAMILY AND CULTURE ASSESSMENT

PART 1: FAMILY CAREER INFLUENCES

Consider the people who have influenced your career perceptions. Write down the work (paid or unpaid) done by your:

	CAREER/JOB
MOTHER	
FATHER	
GUARDIAN(S)	
SISTER(S)	
BROTHER(S)	
COUSIN(S)	
MATERNAL GRANDMOTHER	
MATERNAL GRANDFATHER	
PATERNAL GRANDMOTHER	
PATERNAL GRANDFATHER	
AUNT/UNCLE(S)	

1. Do any career fields or specific occupations show up repeatedly in your family? If so, which ones? Are you interested in continuing these work traditions? What will happen if you do or don't follow the tradition?
2. Do your parent(s)/guardian(s) work outside of the home? If they both worked outside of the home, how did that influence you? If only one works outside of the home, how did/does that influence you?
3. What levels of socioeconomic status are apparent or reflected in your family's work? (examples: blue collar, professional) How does this impact your own thoughts about a job or career?
4. Did your family members choose their careers or did external circumstances affect their choices?
5. What are the work values in your family? (examples: stability, high salaries, helping others)
6. What do your family members say about their work? Is it positive? Negative?
7. Do any family members want you to pursue a specific career? Are you interested in pursuing this career?
8. What other advice does your family give you about your future work or career path?
9. What assumptions or decisions about work might you have made based on what you have heard from or observed in your family?

PART 2: CULTURE ASSESSMENT

1. Recall your earliest career ambition. How old were you when you developed this goal? What important people in your life encouraged/discouraged you in this pursuit?
2. Do you have role models in your culture or community for the kind of work you think you would like to do? If not, where can you find mentors or opportunities to connect with people in the fields that interest you?
3. How does the Amherst College culture impact your career aspirations or thoughts about work?
4. What messages have you received as a male/female about your career considerations or work in general? How have these messages influenced your thoughts about future career choices?
5. What messages have you received from your ethnic group or other identity groups that are important to you about your career considerations or work in general? How have these messages influenced your thoughts about future career choices?
6. How important to you are the desires and opinions of others in your life as you make career decisions? Do you feel comfortable with their level of influence?

Based on the Career-O-Gram (Thorngren & Feit, 2001); and “Reflections” in Finding Your Own North Star, by Martha Beck.
Adapted from Tufts University Career Center.



PART 3: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FAMILY

Consider asking your family members the questions you have just completed in parts 1 & 2. Their responses to these questions will provide you with even more insight into the history of work and careers in your family and how it has impacted career choices for several generations.

YOUR PERSONALITY

Your personality is shaped by many factors, including your family, culture, experiences, and environment. Some fundamental characteristics of your personality are also innate. Regardless of the origin of your personality, it is an important part of your identity that can impact how satisfied or happy you will be working in certain jobs or fields. The better you understand your personality and how you function in the world, the more likely you will be to find jobs or careers that are a good match.

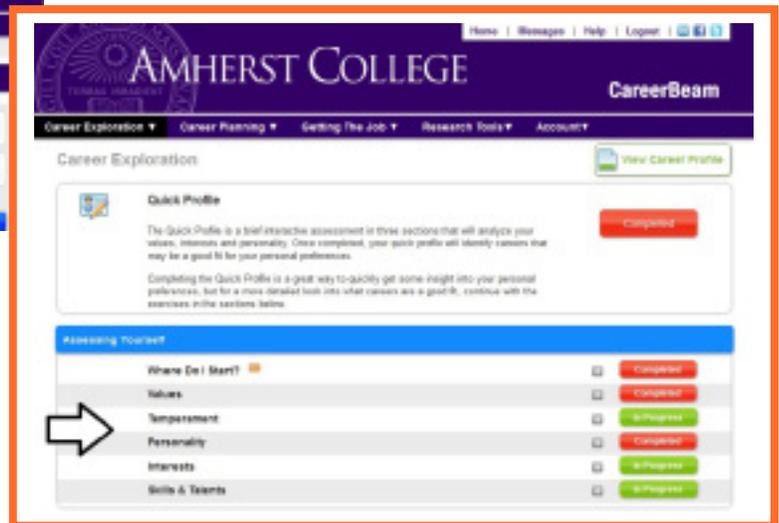


Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)

Complete the MBTI personality assessment. You must meet with a career advisor before you take the assessment to ensure that it is a suitable next step in your self-reflection process. If it is, the advisor will give you more information about this tool and give you the instructions for taking the online version. The online assessment takes 20-30 minutes, and in order to retrieve your results, you must meet with a career advisor. During this one hour appointment, the advisor will help you understand the results and interpret the accompanying Career Report which, among other things, identifies occupations and fields that might be satisfying to your personality type.

Career Beam

This online tool has several exercises on Temperament and Personality to give you an idea of the kind of information you would learn from taking the MBTI assessment. The MBTI is much more comprehensive but the Career Beam exercises are a good place to start. To access these exercises, link to Career Beam from the homepage of the Career Center website. After you sign in to Career Beam with your Amherst login information, go to the Career Exploration drop-down menu and click on Assessing Yourself. From there, you will see a range of exercises that you can do online, including those on Temperament and Personality.



SUMMING IT UP

Now that you've done all this meaningful reflection and self-assessment, take some time to pull together all the pieces of the information you've discovered.



5 INTERESTS YOU WOULD LIKE TO CONTINUE, OR BEGIN TO EXPLORE

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TOP 5 WORK VALUES IN RANK ORDER.

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TOP 5 PERSONAL VALUES IN RANK ORDER.

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LIST 10 SKILLS THAT YOU HAVE AND/OR WANT TO CONTINUE TO DEVELOP.

IDENTIFY ANY MAJOR FAMILY OR CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON YOUR CAREER PLANNING PROCESS.

LIST 5-10 CAREER FIELDS OR OCCUPATIONS/JOB TITLES THAT INTEREST YOU

(FROM YOUR MBTI CAREER REPORT, THE FAMILY AND FRIEND FEEDBACK EXERCISE, OR INFORMATION YOU HAVE GATHERED ELSEWHERE)

