

CAREER EXPLORATION WORKBOOK

FIND A
CAREER
THAT FITS





01 Thinking About Your Career

Get started at finding a career that fits you. Includes career stories and videos from Western alumni.

02 Past

Reflect on your previous experiences with jobs, school, family, and more. Includes questions to get you started on your career exploration.

03 Present

Discover more about who you are and how you're wired by completing a couple of assessments. Learn what types of jobs or environments might help you to be happier and more successful.

04 Future

Research interesting careers. Use decision-making tools to narrow down your future career ideas.

05 Creating a Plan

Once you've selected a career, it's time to create a plan and figure out next steps in order to make it a reality.

Be sure to save this PDF in a location you can find easily. Save your work periodically as you complete the workbook.

HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

This workbook is designed to walk you through the career exploration process, to help you find the next step that feels right to you. You can use the workbook on your own, or if you'd like someone to help you go more in-depth, please contact Western's Career Services.

The workbook is organized according to:

PAST (your previous experiences in work, school, and life)

PRESENT (who you are and where you're at now)

FUTURE (determining what's next and what steps to take).



If you don't have clear ideas of what you might want to do next, or want more insight into who you are, start on the next page.

If you already have some career ideas, start with Section 4 "Future".

THINKING ABOUT YOUR CAREER

Finding a career that fits you can be complicated. Not only do we need to make a living, but we are often searching for something that will fit into our lives, align with our goals, and bring us some level of satisfaction. Such a big decision can bring stress, excitement, worry, or a whole range of feelings.

Which of these are you feeling as you think about this process of finding a career? (check the boxes)

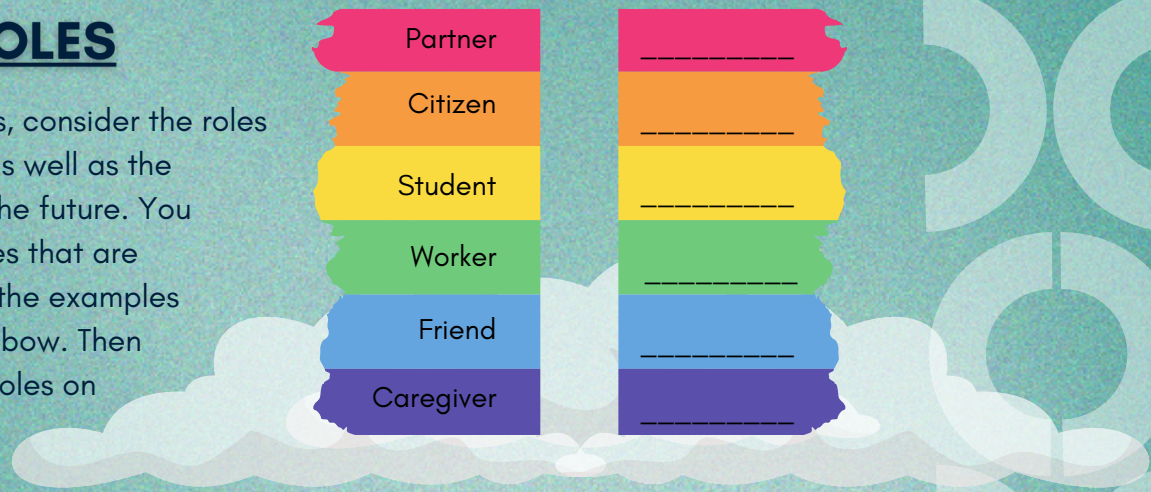
- Excited _____
- Anxious _____
- Empowered _____
- Uncertain _____

- Confused _____
- Hopeful _____
- Prepared _____
- Confident _____

- Curious _____
- Frustrated _____
- Intrigued _____
- Overwhelmed _____

LIFE-CAREER ROLES

As you think about careers, consider the roles you currently play in life, as well as the roles you want to play in the future. You can also consider identities that are important to you. Look at the examples on the left side of the rainbow. Then write down your own life roles on the right side.




LOOKING FORWARD

With your life roles in mind, it's time to look forward. What kind of life do you envision for yourself? Where do you hope to live? Is there a certain financial level you hope to achieve? Do you want a career with lots of flexibility? Think about these and other factors that are important to you and briefly write out a vision for your future below.

In order to make this vision a reality, what information and resources do you need? What questions or concerns do you have?

At any point during your career search, if you need to take a break to process, or to get support, be sure to do that. If you are a current Western student, you can reach out to [Western's Counseling Services](#).



CAREER STORIES

In our experience, the majority of people who are trying to figure out their career path are also feeling pressure about their decision. Many feel as though, *"I have to figure out the one thing I'm going to do with the rest of my life and I better not get it wrong, or I'll be stuck in a career that makes me unhappy."*

We have good news for you. This is not the way most people's careers happen. It's most common for people to create a plan, pursue a career path, and then follow interesting opportunities that pop up, whether they're in that same field or not. This means that you can plan your career and stay open to other possibilities at the same time. *Check out these career stories from Western alumni...*



COMING SOON

Story #1

COMING SOON

Story #2

COMING SOON

Story #3



PAST



You can gain insight into potential career ideas from your previous life experiences. Here are some questions to think about regarding your family and friends, work history, and interests:

COMMUNITY

1. What careers have you seen among the people in your life?
2. How have their choices influenced your own career ideas?
3. Have people ever told you they think you'd be good at a particular career? Which ones?

WORK & VOLUNTEER HISTORY

1. What jobs have you held in the past? Which have you found most interesting?
2. Which jobs have you disliked? What did you dislike about them?

HOBBIES & INTERESTS

1. What do you enjoy doing in your free time? What do you love about those activities?
2. When did you last lose track of time? What were you doing? Why were you so engaged?
3. What would you do if you didn't need to make money?

Now let's take a look at your experiences with school and think about skills that you have:

SCHOOL

1. Which classes or subjects have been easier for you? Which have been most interesting and why?
2. Which classes or subjects have been more difficult? What was challenging about them?
3. Have you studied programs or received training outside of high school/GED?
4. What do you enjoy learning about?

SKILLS

What types of skills do you have? Check the skills that apply to you. *These are just examples. Add any additional skills in the space below. If you're unsure, ask people who know you well for their input.*

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Designing a logo | <input type="checkbox"/> Helping people | <input type="checkbox"/> Building a computer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creating a budget | <input type="checkbox"/> Solving a math problem | <input type="checkbox"/> Giving a speech |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Making decisions | <input type="checkbox"/> Computer programming | <input type="checkbox"/> Supervising people |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Repairing machinery | <input type="checkbox"/> Planting a garden | <input type="checkbox"/> Working with your hands |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Making a sale | <input type="checkbox"/> Negotiating a price | <input type="checkbox"/> Vehicle maintenance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Listening | <input type="checkbox"/> Writing a story | <input type="checkbox"/> Conducting experiments |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Troubleshooting | <input type="checkbox"/> Managing time | <input type="checkbox"/> Problem solving |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching a skill/concept | <input type="checkbox"/> Caring for a sick person | <input type="checkbox"/> Creating a strategy |

Now that you've reflected on some of your past experiences, it's time to assess where you're at in the present, learn more about what makes you unique, and discover potential career matches.

PRESENT

These assessments are designed to give you more information about yourself to help you make an informed decision. They are not meant to "put you in a box", or tell you what you can and can't do.



Not sure where to start when it comes to finding a career that fits? Try PathwayU, a career assessment that provides information about you and what makes you happy and successful. It also includes career matches that might spark some interest in you.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. [Click here](#) to set up your account and take the assessment.
2. Complete the Interests, Values, Personality, and Workplace Preferences assessments. When complete, you can download your results.
3. Explore your results, as well as the Careers, Jobs, and Tools tabs on the website.
4. Click "add to favorites" for any career matches that interest you.
5. Take a look at the My Journey tab to see additional steps and resources.



Want to do a bit more self-discovery? Take this Strengths assessment to discover the unique skills and talents that come naturally to you. Learn how you can use them even more in school, work, and life.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Current students can contact [Western's Career Services](#) to request a code for the assessment. If you are not a current student, you can go to the [CliftonStrengths](#) site to pay and create an account.
2. Follow the instructions to register and to take the assessment.
3. After completing the assessment, review your top 5 Strengths.



The Strengths assessment is available for free for Western students. Alumni and community members may pay to take the assessment.



ARTISTIC: "The Creators" - Prefers to be expressive and like to create new things. Typically does not like structure or conformity. Prefers to use their imagination. Enjoys activities such as: writing, photography, designing, singing, acting, dancing, painting, and reading.

CONVENTIONAL: "The Organizers" - Prefers orderly, systematic work such as keeping records, or organizing materials according to a plan. Likes to see things run efficiently and smoothly. Pays attention to administrative details. May enjoy working with numbers or computers.

ENTERPRISING: "The Persuaders" - Enjoys influencing others and being in a leadership position. Prefers being a part of important planning and decision-making. Often enjoys selling and promoting, having power and status, giving talks and speeches.

INVESTIGATIVE: "The Thinkers" - Has a strong desire to understand cause and effect and solve problems. Often works in jobs that are scientific in nature. Enjoys solving problems, interpreting formulas, and thinking abstractly. Often prefers to work independently.

REALISTIC: "The Doers" - Prefers hands-on work with objects and things. Enjoys being physically active, repairing equipment, solving mechanical problems, and working outdoors. Enjoys creating things with their hands and using tools and machines.

SOCIAL: "The Helpers" - Prefers to work with others, using a team approach to problem solving. Enjoys teaching, caring for others, volunteering, mediating disputes, meeting new people, and working in groups. Cooperative, friendly, and understanding.

INTERESTS (Rank)

ARTISTIC ○.....→

CONVENTIONAL ○.....→

ENTERPRISING ○.....→

INVESTIGATIVE ○.....→

REALISTIC ○.....→

SOCIAL ○.....→

Note your top Interest areas, rank them in the boxes above, and read the descriptions.

Circle or underline phrases that describe you.

List career examples from your Interests assessment results that are intriguing to you:

VALUES (List your top 3)

Three white rounded rectangular input boxes for listing top 3 values.

List some words or phrases from this section's descriptions that connect with you:

Four white rounded rectangular input boxes for listing words or phrases that connect with the user's values.

PERSONALITY

(List your top 3 personality traits from this section of the assessment)

Three white rounded rectangular input boxes for listing top 3 personality traits.

List some words or phrases from this section's descriptions that connect with you:

Four white rounded rectangular input boxes for listing words or phrases that connect with the user's personality.

WORKPLACE PREFERENCES (List your top 3)

Three white rounded rectangular input boxes for listing top 3 workplace preferences.

List some words or phrases from this section's descriptions that connect with you:

Four white rounded rectangular input boxes for listing words or phrases that connect with the user's workplace preferences.



WHAT ARE STRENGTHS?

Strengths are a way of describing the talents and behaviors that come naturally to you. Rather than working on our areas of weakness, Strengths are all about maximizing the talents you already possess.

HOW IS FOCUSING ON YOUR STRENGTHS USEFUL?

People who focus on their Strengths are...



as likely to report having an excellent quality of life



as likely to be engaged in their jobs

MY TOP 5 STRENGTHS:

Five horizontal white rounded rectangular boxes stacked vertically, intended for writing the user's top 5 strengths.

HOW TO UNDERSTAND AND MAXIMIZE YOUR STRENGTHS...

1. Read the descriptions of your top 5 Strengths and highlight the words or phrases that best describe you.
2. Watch these videos describing each of your top 5 Strengths.
3. For each of your top Strengths, think about where you've used those Strengths in life, school, and work.
4. Then consider how you'd like to use those Strengths even more.
5. Talk to friends, family, classmates, etc., about your Top 5 Strengths. They will often have additional insights about how they see those Strengths in you.



Note any insights you have about your Strengths and how you'd like to use them:

A large, empty white rectangular box with a black border, intended for the user to write their insights and how they plan to use their strengths.

CAREER IDEAS



After completing your PathwayU assessments, look through your career matches and make note of any favorites. Make lists here of careers that definitely interest you, might interest you, and absolutely do not interest you. Note any themes you see among these lists.

DEFINITELY INTERESTED

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

MAYBE INTERESTED

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

NOT INTERESTED

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

FUTURE



Once you have some career ideas in mind, it's time to learn more about them and figure out which ones may be a good fit for you. *Check out these resources to find the information you're looking for. Click on the logo to go to a site.*

IN-DEPTH CAREER INFORMATION



A government site containing tons of up-to-date info about careers, including salary, outlook, job duties, education, and much more.



A simplified version of O*Net OnLine. Includes an optional interest assessment and a site specific to Veterans.



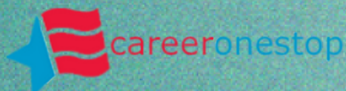
A government site with job info, as well as assessments and tools for career exploration.



"DAY IN THE LIFE" VIDEOS



Watch videos of professionals describing what their occupations are actually like.



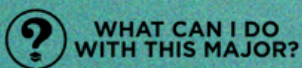
Contains videos on hundreds of different careers.



EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM INFO



Explore Western programs, along with the types of careers each program may lead to.



Features 100+ academic programs and includes info on common career paths, employers in that field, and more. *(Must click link on Western site under "Career Information")*



FUTURE: CAREER INFORMATION

FUTURE

Use the resources on the previous page to look up important information about the careers you're interested in. Record that information below. (O*Net is most helpful for this.)

	Career:	Career:	Career:
SALARY			
EDUCATION LEVEL			
JOB OUTLOOK (Projected growth)			
IN-PERSON OR REMOTE			
PRIMARY JOB DUTIES			
INTERESTS CODE (Found on O*Net)			
YOUR NOTES			

EXPLORING CAREERS FIRSTHAND

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS



An informational interview is a great way to find out more about a career directly from a professional in that field.

STEP 1: Find a contact who works in that field. Ask family, friends, or instructors for ideas. Search for employers on Handshake or LinkedIn.

STEP 2: Call or email and ask to set up a brief time to chat. Specify in-person/remote, as well as time frame (20 min. is common).

STEP 3: Prepare questions to ask. Scan QR code on the left for ideas.

STEP 4: Conduct the interview. Send a thank-you note or email.

JOB SHADOWS

A job shadow goes one step further than an informational interview. It involves going to the business and watching someone perform their job.

Steps are the same as setting up an information interview. However a job shadow often lasts anywhere from a couple of hours to a whole morning or afternoon.

Many of us have a hard time making decisions about what to eat for dinner, let alone what career to pursue. If that's the case for you, try out these tools that can help you make a thoughtful, practical decision.

DECISION MATRIX

Type your top 3 career choices into the boxes on the far left. Score each career from 1-5 according to the criteria below. Total each score in the righthand column. *If you want to compare more than 3 careers, or use different criteria, you can create your own custom matrix.*

	PAY	JOB OUTLOOK	MEANINGFUL WORK	WORK/LIFE BALANCE	AMOUNT OF SCHOOL	TOTAL
(CAREER #1)						
(CAREER #2)						
(CAREER #3)						

PROS & CONS CHART

Simply write positive aspects of a career (Pros) in the lefthand column, and potentially negative aspects (Cons) in the righthand column.

CREATE A PLAN



NEXT STEPS

Once you've decided on a career to pursue, mark the next steps you will take to put your plan into action.

- Connect with Admissions
- Search for schools
- Get more information
- Contact my Advisor
- Begin a job search
- Find a training program
- Share my plan with others
- Set up a job shadow
- Contact Career Services

In order to enter into this career, I need the following education or training:

TIMELINE

	TASK:	WHO TO CONTACT:	COMPLETE BY THIS DATE:
STEP 1:			
STEP 2:			
STEP 3:			

WESTERN RESOURCES

If you plan to pursue a program at Western to help you reach your career goal, here are some helpful links to Western departments and resources:

ADMISSIONS (for those who are not currently enrolled at Western) →



COLLEGE ADVISORS (for those who are currently enrolled in a program at Western) →



CAREER SERVICES (if you need more information about careers) →



WESTERN PROGRAMS (to see all available academic programs) →



FOR MORE ASSISTANCE

CONTACT US



If you are a Western student or alum, or a prospective Western student, and you would like additional support with your career exploration, you can reach out to Western's Career Services department to schedule a one-on-one appointment with one of our certified Career Coaches.

Western Technical College - Career Services

PHONE: 608.785.9440

EMAIL: careerservices@westerntc.edu

You can also set up a virtual appointment with us directly:

<https://www.westerntc.edu/career-services-appointment>



Learn more about the services Western's Career Services department provides:



Our office is located in The SPACE -
Room 222 of the Student Success Center.



For more resources and Career Services events:

www.westerntc.edu/career-services

<https://engage.westerntc.edu>



Western Technical
College

Western Technical College

CAREER SERVICES

westerntc.edu/career-services

(608) 785-9440 | careerservices@westerntc.edu

