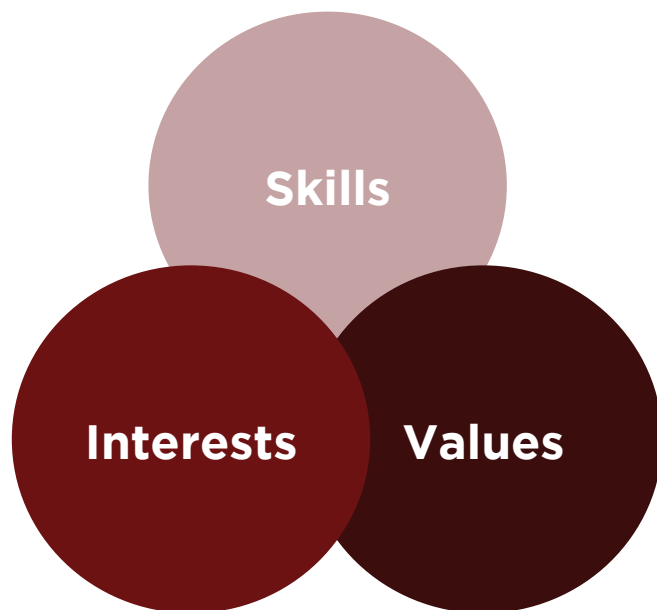


# Identifying Your Skills, Interests, and Values

To find the right career path, you must begin by understanding yourself. What skills do you have? What challenges or problems do you want to tackle? What do you value most in life? The answers to these questions should give shape and meaning to your career trajectory. This handout will walk you through the process of identifying your skills, interests, and values.

**STEP 1. Make a list of the SKILLS that you have acquired through your academic training.** Your list of skills will reflect the unique character of your dissertation research. All UChicago humanities PhDs will gain the skills listed below.

- **Communication:** Writing, speaking, digital, and other forms of expression
- **Cultural Competency:** Understanding the diversity of human experiences across time and space
- **Synthesis and Analysis:** Evaluating, contextualizing, and drawing insights from evidence
- **Problem Solving:** Framing problems, posing good questions, and knowing how to seek solutions
- **Project Management:** Systematically planning, tracking, and completing large projects
- **Teaching:** Transferring knowledge or skills to others through leadership and collaboration
- **Intellectual Confidence:** The ability to apply your skills and knowledge to new areas



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**STEP 2. Make a list of the SKILLS that you have acquired through experiences other than research and teaching.** These experiences could include administrative roles, departmental service, internships, externships, workshops, volunteer roles, or mentorships.

Leadership ▪ Collaboration ▪ Fundraising ▪ Management ▪ Negotiation ▪ Networking ▪ Budgeting  
Graphic Design ▪ Customer Service ▪ Administration ▪ Entrepreneurship ▪ Social Media ▪ Publicity

**STEP 3. Reflect upon your INTERESTS and make a list of the problems (social, political, economic, cultural, scholarly) that you are most interested in tackling.** Do you want to bring the arts to more people? Do you want to help a start-up or nonprofit get off the ground? Do you want to help students navigate the college experience? Do you want to improve public understanding of a certain region or culture? Do you want to help a company adapt to a changing marketplace?

Your interests can guide your career exploration by pointing you towards organizations and roles that will sustain your attention and leave you feeling more satisfied at work.



# Identifying Your Skills, Interests, and Values

## STEP 4. Reflect upon your **VALUES**, especially as they concern your ideal work environment.

- Where do you want to live?
- With what sorts of people do you want to work?
- How much do you value autonomy vs. collaboration?
- How many hours per week do you want to work?
- Do you want a predictable schedule?
- What salary or benefits do you need to live the life you want?
- What does your ideal workplace look like?
- What sorts of responsibilities do you want to have?
- Do you crave variety or stability at work?
- Do you want to work for a prestigious organization or institution?
- Do you want to travel often as part of your job?
- Do you want to manage or mentor others?

## STEP 5. Make ranked lists that prioritize your various **SKILLS, INTERESTS, and VALUES**.

Which of your professional or personal priorities is most important? Is autonomy more important than place? Does having a sense of mission trump all other concerns? Consider using a prioritizing grid like the one found in *What Color Is Your Parachute?*

## STEP 6. Use the results of your self-assessment to guide your **CAREER**

**EXPLORATION.** Seek fields and roles that will allow you to attain your most important professional and personal priorities.

- Talk to alumni about their career trajectories
- Read job descriptions in your field of interest
- Read the personal narratives available through Versatile Ph.D.
- Use an externship, internship, or volunteer experience to learn more about various roles
- Read industry publications and blogs
- Meet with a career advisor to discuss options

**Consider using an ASSESSMENT TOOL.** Online assessments like those listed below can aid self-reflection. (**\$\$** indicates tools that are not free.)

**Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI).** Based on the C.G. Jung personality type theory, this widely used tool places you into one of 16 distinct personality types. **\$\$** A basic, free version of this assessment can be found at 16personalities.com.

**StrengthsQuest.** This online assessment allows you to discover, understand, and maximize your strengths. Users are given a report on their top 5 strengths. This tool may be free for UChicago students; please contact your career advisor for more information.

**DISC.** This behavior assessment tool, developed by an industrial psychologist, centers on four different behavioral traits: dominance, inducement, submission, and compliance. **\$\$**

**Strong Interest Inventory.** This career assessment tool gives insight into your interests, helping you decide on an appropriate career. **\$\$**

**Holland Codes.** This tool draws upon the person-environment fit theory to generate three "Holland" codes, which represent the three personality types that best describe your work personality. Note: the US Department of Labor uses the RIASEC model in the "Interests" section of its free online database, The Occupational Information Network (O\*NET).

**Motivational Appraisal of Personal Potential (MAPP).** This tool is based on motivation and is used to help you pinpoint where to apply yourself so you can choose careers and make life choices that are in sync with your natural motivations. **\$\$**

**Enneagram.** The Enneagram of Personality is a model of human personality that is principally understood and taught as a typology of nine interconnected personality types. **\$\$** A basic, free version can be found at 9types.com.

