**How to Use Self Assessment Tools to Help You Choose a Career**

**Part 1: An Introduction to the First Step in the Career Planning Process**

A career development facilitator helps a client complete a self assessment.. Tetra Images / Brand X Pictures / Getty Images

The most common question I'm asked is this one: "I don't know what I want to do. Is there a [test](https://www.thebalance.com/what-is-a-career-test-526165) or something that can tell me what career is right for me?" The answer is no. You can't take a test that will, as if by magic, tell you what to do with the rest of your life. You can however use a combination of self assessment tools that will aid you in your decision. This article will demystify this phase of the [career planning process](https://www.thebalance.com/the-career-planning-process-524774).

During a self assessment you gather information about yourself in order to make an informed career decision. [A self assessment](https://www.thebalance.com/self-assessment-524753) should include a look at your [values](https://www.thebalance.com/identifying-your-work-values-526174), [interests](https://www.thebalance.com/interest-inventories-526168), [personality](https://www.thebalance.com/personality-type-and-career-choice-526171) and [aptitude](https://www.thebalance.com/what-is-aptitude-526175).

* ***Values:*** the things that are important to you, like achievement, status and autonomy
* ***Interests:*** what you enjoy doing, i.e. playing golf, taking long walks and hanging out with friends
* ***Personality:*** a person's individual traits, motivational drives, needs and attitudes
* ***Aptitudes:*** the activities you are good at, such as writing, [computer programming](https://www.thebalance.com/what-does-a-computer-programmer-do-525996) and teaching. An aptitude may be a natural skill or one you acquired.

Many people choose to hire a [career counselor](https://www.thebalance.com/do-you-need-a-career-counselor-525476) who will administer a variety of [self assessment](https://www.thebalance.com/self-assessment-524753) inventories. What follows is a discussion of the different types of tools you may encounter, as well as some other things to consider when using your results to help you choose a career.

[**Part 2: Value, Interest and Personality Inventories and Aptitude Assessments**](https://www.thebalance.com/self-assessment-tools-choose-a-career-526172)

### **Value Inventories**

Your values are possibly the most important thing to consider when you're [choosing an occupation](https://www.thebalance.com/what-not-to-do-when-selecting-a-career-525489). If you don't take your values into account when planning your career, there's a good chance you'll dislike your work and therefore not succeed in it. For example, someone who needs to have autonomy in his work would not be happy in a job where every action is decided by someone else.

There are two types of values: intrinsic and extrinsic.

[Intrinsic values](https://www.verywell.com/differences-between-extrinsic-and-intrinsic-motivation-2795384) are related to the work itself and what it contributes to society. Extrinsic values include external features, such as physical setting and earning potential. Value inventories will ask you to answer questions like the following:

* Is a high salary important to you?
* Is it important for your work to involve interacting with people?
* Is it important for your work to make a contribution to society?
* Is having a prestigious job important for you?

### **Interest Inventories**

[Interest inventories](https://www.thebalance.com/interest-inventories-526168) are also frequently used in [career planning](https://www.thebalance.com/how-to-make-a-successful-career-change-525508). They ask you to answer a series of questions regarding your (**surprise**) interests. E.K. Strong, Jr. pioneered the development of interest inventories.

He found, through data he gathered about people's likes and dislikes of a variety of activities, objects, and types of persons, that people in the same career (and satisfied in that career) had similar interests. [Dr. John Holland](https://www.thebalance.com/the-holland-code-526166) and others provided a system of matching interests with one or more of six types: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising and conventional.

He then matched these types with occupations. The results of your interest inventory are compared against the results of this study to see where you fit in—are your interests similar to those of a [police officer](https://www.thebalance.com/police-officer-2164307) or to those of an accountant, for example?

A very popular interest inventory is the [*Strong Interest Inventory*](https://www.thebalance.com/the-strong-interest-inventory-526173) (SII), formerly known as the Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory. The SII is administered by a [career development](https://www.thebalance.com/what-is-career-development-525496) professional who also scores it and interprets the results.

### **Personality Inventories**

Many personality inventories used in career planning are based on a theory by psychologist [Carl Jung](https://www.verywell.com/carl-jung-biography-1875-1961-2795546). Jung believed four pairs of opposite preferences—the way individuals choose to do things— made up people's personalities. The pairs are [extrovervision](https://www.thebalance.com/careers-for-extroverts-525392) or [introversion](https://www.thebalance.com/careers-for-introverts-525393) (how one energizes), sensing or intuition (how one perceives information), thinking or feeling (how one makes decisions), and judging or perceiving (how one lives his or her life). An individual's personality type is made up four preferences, one from each pair.

Career counselors often use results from tests based on Jungian Personality Theory, such as the [Myers-Briggs Type Indicator](https://www.thebalance.com/myers-briggs-assessment-526170) (MBTI), to help clients choose careers because they believe that individuals with a particular personality type are better suited to certain occupations. An obvious example would be that an introvert would not do well in a career that requires him or her to be around other people all the time. However, your personality alone shouldn't be used to predict whether you would succeed in a particular career. A [personality inventory](https://www.thebalance.com/personality-inventory-526177) should be used in conjunction with other assessment tools, such as those that look at interests and values.

### **Aptitude Assessments**

When deciding what field to enter, you need to determine what your aptitudes are. An aptitude is a natural or acquired ability. In addition to looking at what you're good at doing, you should consider what you enjoy. You may be very adept at a particular skill, but despise every second you spend using it. Generally speaking, though, you usually enjoy what you do well.

While you're assessing your skills, you should also consider the time you are willing to spend on acquiring more advanced or new [skills](https://www.thebalance.com/what-is-a-skill-set-2062103). A question you could ask yourself is this—if a career holds all the qualities I find appealing but it takes X years to prepare for it, would I be willing and able to make this time commitment?