2 CHOOSING A MAJOR: IS PSYCHOLOGY FOR YOU?

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What to Expect as a Psychology Major
Introductory Psychology/General Psychology
Methodology and Statistics
Breadth Courses
Elective Courses
Capstone Course

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"What's your major?" As a new college student, you'll frequently encounter this question from friends and relatives. It can be frustrating if you haven't chosen a major yet. Don't fret, you're not alone. Choosing a major is one of the most challenging decisions you'll face in college. After all, how do you determine what to do with your life? The good news is that you don't need to have your life plan figured out to choose a college major that suits you.

A common misconception about college is that your choice of major determines your future career. It's no wonder that students who buy into this myth find the task of selecting a major daunting. Luckily, this common belief is not true. In this chapter, we'll explore the process of choosing a major and the skills you can expect to develop as a psychology major. We begin by dispelling a harmful myth about college majors.

COLLEGE MAJORS AND CAREERS

Choosing a major is not the same as choosing a life-long career. For instance, many people assume that students who major in humanities, sciences, and social science fields, including English, history, biology, sociology, and psychology, are limited to careers in those specific areas. This couldn't be further from the truth. A history major doesn't have to become a historian, a biology major doesn't have to become a biologist, and a psychology major doesn't have to become a psychologist to find gainful employment. This is particularly fortunate because each of these professions requires additional years of graduate study beyond the bachelor's degree. Graduates with these majors find jobs in business, research, human services, education, and various other fields (see Chapter 3 for more information about careers with a bachelor's degree in psychology). While the question of what major to pursue may feel overwhelming, your choice of majors does not limit your opportunities.

Within 10 years after graduation, most people work in careers that are not directly tied to their undergraduate majors—and that's not a bad thing. As people gain experience, their interests often change. A strong skill set will help you adapt to your evolving interests and circumstances, as well as build a flexible career. Moreover, new types of jobs emerge each year, and most of us cannot predict what those jobs will be or what

type of education will be necessary to qualify for them. For example, 15 years ago, most people had never heard of an app developer, patient advocate, or social media coordinator. Without a doubt, other careers will evolve over the coming years. Consequently, career counselors recommend that college students focus on developing general transferable skills that employers value, such as proficient writing, speaking, problem-solving, technology use, and teamwork. These are skills that you can cultivate with any major. Therefore, choose a major that aligns with *your* interests and abilities and provides you with opportunities to develop these generalizable skills as well as those that are unique to your chosen field. The exercises in this chapter will help you to learn more about yourself; assess your interests, skills, and abilities; and determine which major is right for you.

HOW TO CHOOSE A MAJOR

As you begin the process of selecting a major, remember that there is no bad choice. Every college major offers opportunities to develop skills in communication, information management, and critical thinking. However, majors differ in the specific set of competencies they emphasize. For instance, the psychology major's emphasis on scientific reasoning, problem-solving, and understanding of human behavior makes it stand out from other majors.

Take the time to carefully consider your options, your skill set, and your interests. At the end of this process, you may find that psychology is the major for you—or you may make another choice. Listen to yourself and make the decision that is right for you, but also remember that many students change their major at some point during their college years so it is not set in stone. However, changing your major can delay your progress toward completing your degree. Follow the advice in this chapter to ensure that you're true to yourself in choosing the college major that is right for you and one that you'll stick with throughout your college years.

Determine Your Options

The first step in making any decision is to determine your options. What majors does your college offer? Some majors, such as psychology, English, and economics, are available at all colleges and universities. Other majors, such as engineering, can be found only at some institutions. What options does your college offer? One way of learning about these options is to review the student handbook and website. Every college has a student handbook that is typically found on the "students" tab of the school's homepage or through the search function. The handbook lists the available majors at your school.

Another way to learn about your options is to examine each academic department individually (my preferred option—it's thorough!). Navigate to your school's homepage

and locate the section listing academic departments or use the search function to find this page. Take the time to click on each department, reviewing their programs one by one. You'll probably want to do this in more than one sitting because you'll encounter a great deal of information. Scan each department's webpage, even if at first glance you think it isn't interesting or right for you.

You might spend just a few minutes studying most programs, but some will likely strike your interest and lead you to probe further. It is important to review a wide range of programs—even those that you think you might not like. Sometimes we have preconceived biases and incorrect information about a discipline or major. For each major, ask yourself the following questions and quickly jot down your responses so that you can revisit your work and compare majors later.

- What are some of the required classes?

- Are any clubs or activities associated with the major?

- Who are the faculty members? What are their research interests? Does it look like students are involved in their research?

- Is any information available about graduates' employment?

After scanning all the academic departments and majors, create a list of the majors that caught your interest, without passing judgment. Then, for each potential major, gather additional information to complete the checklist of questions in Exercise 2.1. If you are unable to answer a question, it's time to move beyond internet research and seek advice from others who can provide insight and guidance.

EXERCISE 2.1

LEARNING ABOUT MAJORS: QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

☐ What is this field? What does it study?
☐ How interested am I in this topic? Is it a new interest or a long-standing one? Do I enjoy the subject?
☐ Do I have any experience in this area?
☐ Have I taken a class in this subject? If so, what did it cover? What was the class like?
☐ How motivated am I to study this subject? Is it inherently interesting or fun? Do I dread classes or homework in this area?
☐ Are there any prerequisites or admission requirements that I need to fulfill for this major?
☐ What classes can I expect to take as a major?

☐ What other experiences do majors typically obtain—for example, internships and/or research experiences?

☐ What specific skills or competencies will I develop with this major?

☐ What are the potential career paths associated with this major?

☐ What jobs have recent graduates obtained?

Prompt

After considering the preceding questions, respond to the following: What do you know about the field? What are your experiences in this area? What can you expect as a major during college and after graduation? What aspects of this major and field excite you? What's your gut feeling?

PRO TIP
GIVE IT A SECOND CHANCE

As you go about the process of considering majors and your experiences in various fields, remember that sometimes a particular class or professor can influence your perception of a discipline. For example, an introductory course taught by a professor who you find unappealing may make a subject that you'd otherwise find intriguing seem dull. When you evaluate a field negatively, it's worth taking a moment to reflect on the experiences that have contributed to this evaluation. If it's primarily based on a single classroom experience, consider giving the discipline another chance before dismissing it.

Seek Information From Current Students, Graduates, and Professionals

Internet research can only take you so far when it comes to gathering information about majors and career options. To get a comprehensive understanding, consult knowledgeable sources. Current students, graduates, career counselors, and professors can offer invaluable information and perspectives to aid your decision-making process.

Current Students

Talk with students in your general education classes. What are their majors? Do any match your interests? Informally interview current students who have majors that you're considering. Ask them how they chose their major and why they think it's a good

choice. Ask the questions in Exercise 2.2 to gather information about their major. Aim to interview several students to get different perspectives on the major.

EXERCISE 2.2

LEARNING ABOUT MAJORS: WHAT TO ASK CURRENT STUDENTS

- ☐ Why did they choose their major?
- ☐ What do they like most about their major? Least?
- ☐ What courses are required?
- ☐ Which courses did they like best? Why?
- ☐ What are the most difficult courses? Why are they considered the most difficult?
- ☐ What are the professors like?
- ☐ What kinds of interactions do they have with professors outside of class?
- ☐ What extracurricular activities are available? Clubs?
- ☐ Have they had any internships or applied experiences related to their major? How have these experiences influenced their understanding of the field?
- ☐ Have they had any opportunities to work on research projects or collaborate with professors?
- ☐ What are some career paths related to this major?
- ☐ What advice do they give for choosing a major?
- ☐ If they could do it again, what major would they choose? Why?
- ☐ What advice do they give for a student entering the major?

Prompt

Discuss students' responses. If you interviewed multiple students, compare their responses. What are the requirements for the major? What courses are most challenging? What opportunities are available outside of class? What do they like most and least about their major? What advice do they give for choosing a major and what advice do they give for new majors in their field? What do you take away from these interviews? What's your gut feeling?

Recent Graduates

Connect with recent graduates about their experiences. Ask them some or all of the questions you asked current students. Also ask about their experiences after graduating. If you don't know any recent graduates personally, visit the department and/or your college's career center. They often maintain records of recent graduates and may be able to put you in contact with a few graduates to help you learn more about their work and career experiences.

EXERCISE 2.3

LEARNING ABOUT MAJORS: WHAT TO ASK RECENT GRADUATES

☐ What did they like most about their major? Least?
☐ What was the job search like?
☐ What kinds of jobs did they seek?
☐ How were they received by potential employers?
☐ Where were they hired?
☐ How well does their job match their expectations?
☐ What are the positive and negative features of their work?
☐ What role, if any, did their major play in their job search and career?
☐ Do they feel that their major prepared them you for their jobs?
☐ Did they complete any internships or applied experiences related to their major? How did those experiences influence their career prospects?
☐ Are there any specific courses or professors in their major that they found particularly influential?
☐ Have they encountered challenges or surprises in their career that they attribute to their college major?
☐ What advice do they give for choosing a major?
☐ If they could do it again, what major would they choose? Why?
☐ What advice do they give for a student entering the major?

Prompt

Discuss alumni responses. What jobs do recent graduates hold? What was their job search like? How do recent graduates view their college major as preparation for their current job? What advice do they give for choosing a major and for new students entering the major? What do you take away from these interviews? What's your gut sense?

Career Professional

Visit your college's career center to seek guidance from career counselors. Share what you have learned about yourself through completing the exercises in this chapter. Career counseling professionals can help you narrow your choice of majors and assist you further by providing additional opportunities to learn about yourself through personality and interest assessments. Take advantage of this valuable (and free) resource.

Professors

Don't overlook the insights professors can provide. Visit the office hours of a professor in whose class you are enrolled, who seems approachable, or who works in a field of interest to you. Do some homework beforehand to ensure that you ask informed

questions. It will be easier to know what to ask if you know a little bit about the program and professor. Read the department website to learn a little bit about the major, basic course requirements, and what courses the professor teaches. Visit the professor's website to learn more about their courses and research. You might begin by explaining that you're thinking about becoming a major and would like to know more about the field. Ask questions about the undergraduate major and what kinds of jobs recent graduates hold. Students sometimes feel uncomfortable approaching a professor, but remember that office hours are times specifically allocated to interacting with students. Take advantage of this time to ask the questions that will help you determine if a given major is for you.

EXERCISE 2.4

LEARNING ABOUT MAJORS: WHAT TO ASK PROFESSORS

☐ What are some of the requirements for the major? What is the recommended timetable for completing specific courses or experiences?

☐ Are there any specialized tracks or concentrations within the major?

☐ Are there formal opportunities to work closely with faculty, such as courses with small enrollments, research classes, or independent study courses?

☐ Do many students interact with faculty outside the classroom—for example, assisting with research?

☐ Do students tend to participate in clubs and outside activities, such as group trips to conferences?

☐ What do graduates do?

☐ Are there opportunities to participate in off-campus applied activities, such as internships?

☐ How did the professor choose his or her major?

☐ Any advice on choosing a major?

☐ What characteristics do successful students share?

☐ What advice would the professor give to a new student in the major?

Prompt

What are some of the opportunities and recommended experiences for majors? What jobs do recent graduates hold? What advice or experiences did the professor share about choosing a major? What advice do they have for new students?

As you can see, there are multiple sources of information about any given major. Approach the task of choosing a major as if you were solving a puzzle. Each source contributes a unique bit of information and perspective. Sources may have differing viewpoints on specific qualities or characteristics of a major. Compile all of the information and weigh it based on the person's perspective (as student, graduate, or faculty, for example), perceived accuracy (Does the information seem accurate? What is the

source's perspective?), and perceived similarity to your own views. Once you have gathered information and decided on several majors that may be a good fit for you, it's time to shift your attention inward and learn about yourself.

EXERCISE 2.5

LEARNING ABOUT MAJORS: SUM UP WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

After evaluating one or more majors and speaking with degree-seekers, degree-holders, and professionals, what have you learned? Consider each major, then compare your responses across majors.

1. What majors did you evaluate?
2. What are the common reasons students chose a particular major?
3. What types of jobs do graduates with this major hold? Compare responses from students, graduates, and professors.
4. What are some of the opportunities for students and graduates in this major, according to students? According to professors?
5. Do students and professors share the same views on the benefits and challenges of this major? If not, where do they diverge? Why do you think they disagree?
6. What are the most important commonly mentioned positive and negative features of this major?
7. How might you overcome challenges associated with this major?
8. What do you think is the most positive aspect of this major?

Prompt

Comparing majors, what similarities and differences do you see? How well do your own interests and preferences align with the information gathered for each major? Assess your interest in each: Would you like to learn more about this field? Why or why not? Which majors do you rule out? Why? Which will you continue to study? Why?

HOW TO LEARN ABOUT YOURSELF

To choose a major that aligns with your interests and aspirations you must understand yourself. However, learning about yourself can be tricky. How do you know what you truly want? How can you anticipate your future interests? How do you approach the daunting task of choosing a field of study? Let me be honest: Learning about yourself and uncovering your interests and aspirations isn't easy and may even feel uncomfortable at times. This is especially true if you view it as a pressing task with a strict deadline. Don't force it. You have time to explore and find what truly resonates with you.

Learn About Yourself Through Reflective Writing

If you have completed the exercises in this chapter and book, you may have noticed that writing is a useful way of organizing your ideas and recording what you learn about various majors. It is also a powerful tool useful for learning and organizing what you know about yourself. Understanding yourself is crucial to choosing a major that will satisfy your intellectual curiosity and fulfill your career goals. Consider keeping a log of your thoughts and experiences, a record of reflective writing. Some might call this record a log, journal, or diary. Whatever you call it, reflective writing—capturing your thoughts and perspective in writing—can help you learn about yourself.

Your log is a collection of your creative activity and can be saved in a simple notebook, computer file, or even your phone. It is a personal space where you can reflect on yourself, your experiences, goals, dreams, and anxieties and learn more about who you are. Recording your thoughts can serve many purposes and can aid you throughout college and your career. As you progress through college, you might use your log to record ideas for papers and, if your program requires it, thesis topics. There is a benefit to being mindful, and your log can help you become more aware of yourself and the world around you. If you are still wondering what writing and maintaining a log of your thoughts can do, let's consider some of the uses of reflective writing.

Uses of Reflective Writing

Sometimes we're not aware of our thoughts and feelings until we capture them in written form. Expressing your ideas in words compels you to focus your thoughts, identify your opinions and values, and clarify your sense of identity. Here are ways that you can use regular self-reflective writing.

Record your experience. A reflective log acts as a record of your life and your thoughts. Days, weeks, and months pass all too quickly. Memory is fallible. Most people look back fondly on their college years, recognizing their role in shaping their identity. Revisit your writing to help you to recall events, experiences, emotions, and intentions. Your log is a place to record accomplishments, hopes, and dreams as well as to retain minute details that you would probably otherwise forget.

Reduce stress and gain self-insight. Do you find yourself stewing over arguments or conflicts, repeatedly thinking about what you should have said hours or even days later? Writing can help you process your experiences and move past ruminating past events that you cannot change. Instead of rehearsing your inner dialogue in your head, write it down. Review what you have written. Is it complete? There's no need to keep recycling negative thoughts; you've recorded them, so there is no need to keep them in mind. Letting go provides you with the space to move on. Therefore, after a long day or a trying experience, reflective writing offers you a private opportunity to explore your feelings and release stress. From a therapeutic perspective, looking back over your writing weeks, months, or years later allows you to reflect on patterns of experience,

interaction, and emotion, offering valuable insight into yourself and your perspective on life. How have you changed and grown? Also, remember that *you don't have to reread what you've written*; it can simply be a way to blow off steam.

Reflective writing as an organizational tool.   Your writing doesn't have to be particularly deep or profound. Some people use their reflection logs for creating lists and plans, sometimes referring to them as "bullet journals." Perhaps the easiest way to begin keeping a log is to use it as a place to record lists of immediate tasks to be accomplished. With regular use, writing becomes a habit that can extend beyond making lists to include reflection, planning, and goal setting. You can write about your goals and document the steps needed to achieve them, as well as your progress. In this way, your log becomes an organizational tool to help you navigate daily life and plan for the future.

Reflective writing as a problem-solving tool.   Writing is an effective means of problem-solving because writing is thinking. The next time you're faced with a problem or a big decision, try writing about it. Explain the problem. What do you know about it? Discuss your feelings about the problem and analyze it. Writing can lead you to brainstorm potential solutions and analyze each one. Expressing ideas in written form requires a different thought process than mere thinking. We think in new ways when we write, which enables us to conceptualize problems differently and arrive at solutions more quickly.

Tips for Starting a Reflection Log

Your log can take various forms. It might be a plain notebook, text or word processing file on your computer or synced in a cloud service, or an app on your phone. What matters most is that it is readily accessible and easy for you to use. The cardinal rule of reflective writing is to remember that your log is for your eyes only. Don't let spelling, handwriting, and grammar be major concerns. Focus on expressing your feelings and experiences in writing, using any means necessary. No one else will review or grade it. To get started, consider the following tips.

Don't overthink it: Just write.   There are no rules. You can write about anything that comes to mind, whether it's ideas for papers and projects, everyday tasks and accomplishments, or even creative writing, such as story or poetry ideas. Feel free to write about your problems or everyday frustrations. Observe your life. If you're having difficulty writing, you might even write about the struggle of finding words to write.

Try a third-person perspective.   If you are having trouble getting started, try writing about events that are happening to you or around you from a third-person perspective, using pronouns such as *he, she*, or *they*, as if you are observing someone else. For instance, begin writing with the phrase, "It was a time when . . .," and then describe the situation in detail, engaging all of your senses. What sounds, smells, sights, and feelings are present? This exercise helps you gain perspective; it is especially effective when writing about life changes (like the transition to college), relationships (like that argument

with your boyfriend or girlfriend), and events that you found upsetting (like finding out that you didn't do so well on that test).

Write for brief periods, often. The goal of keeping a reflective log is to capture your thoughts. The more often you write, the more you'll learn about yourself. Keep your log close at hand. If you have 15 minutes between classes, write. You can reflect on what you learned in your prior class and how it relates to your experience, which can help you learn and retain the material. Or write simply about what you're thinking or feeling in the moment, whether it's hungry, tired, or antsy. Get into the habit of writing each day, even for just a few minutes. Try writing before bed or immediately after waking. It doesn't take much time. You'll be surprised at how much you can capture in just a few minutes if you let your thoughts flow without censorship. Also aim for some longer entries that give you time and space to flesh out your thoughts and discover insights about yourself.

Avoid expectations. Your log is a personal creation. It does not have to be filled with descriptions of monumental experiences. Entries don't have to be perfectly written or scholarly. Don't let these beliefs rob you of the chance to benefit from reflective writing. Remember that reading your log is not a requirement. Some people reread their logs as chronicles of their lives. Others rarely read their logs but instead, use writing to process their thoughts. The information is always there should you choose to read it, but it is not obligatory.

Try reflective writing. It can help you explore who you are and discover who you aspire to become. Through writing and reflection, the mundane can transform into something profound. Throughout this book, you'll find plenty of topics and ideas to write about, which will help you learn about yourself and make plans for your future. Take a chance and explore yourself through writing.

Learn About Yourself Through Self-Assessment

Understanding yourself is critical to choosing a major that retains your interest over your college years. While reflective writing is an invaluable tool, selecting a major requires a thorough self-assessment. It might sound technical, but *self-assessment* is simply the process of examining your skills, abilities, motivations, interests, values, experience, and accomplishments. It's a means of learning about yourself that will help you make informed decisions about your major. The following exercises will help you to better understand yourself, but remember that an effective self-assessment does not happen instantaneously. It requires time, hard work, and most importantly, honesty.

Assess Your Traits

Who are you? What qualities describe you best? Understanding your unique personality traits will help you to choose a major that is right for you and, later, a job that complements your characteristics and is rewarding. Exercise 2.6 will help you to get a better understanding of your personality, which is essential to choosing a major that suits you.

EXERCISE 2.6

ASSESS YOUR PERSONAL TRAITS

Check off those traits that describe you. Brainstorm additional traits if needed. Take your time to evaluate each and be honest with yourself.

☐ Academic	☐ Extroverted	☐ Practical
☐ Active	☐ Fair-minded	☐ Private
☐ Accurate	☐ Farsighted	☐ Productive
☐ Adaptable	☐ Feeling	☐ Progressive
☐ Adept	☐ Firm	☐ Protective
☐ Adventurous	☐ Flexible	☐ Prudent
☐ Affectionate	☐ Forceful	☐ Punctual
☐ Aggressive	☐ Formal	☐ Quick
☐ Alert	☐ Frank	☐ Quiet
☐ Ambitious	☐ Frugal	☐ Rational
☐ Analytical	☐ Future-oriented	☐ Realistic
☐ Appreciative	☐ Generous	☐ Receptive
☐ Articulate	☐ Gentle	☐ Reflective
☐ Artistic	☐ Good natured	☐ Relaxed
☐ Assertive	☐ Gregarious	☐ Reliable
☐ Astute	☐ Hardy	☐ Reserved
☐ Athletic	☐ Helpful	☐ Resourceful
☐ Attentive	☐ Honest	☐ Responsible
☐ Balanced	☐ Hopeful	☐ Reverent
☐ Brave	☐ Humorous	☐ Risk-taker
☐ Broad-minded	☐ Idealistic	☐ Sedentary
☐ Businesslike	☐ Imaginative	☐ Self-confident
☐ Calm	☐ Impersonal	☐ Self-controlled

☐ Candid	☐ Independent	☐ Self-disciplined
☐ Capable	☐ Individualistic	☐ Self-starter
☐ Caring	☐ Industrious	☐ Sensible
☐ Cautious	☐ Informal	☐ Sensitive
☐ Charitable	☐ Initiator	☐ Serious
☐ Cheerful	☐ Innovative	☐ Sincere
☐ Clean	☐ Intellectual	☐ Sociable
☐ Clear	☐ Intelligent	☐ Sophisticated
☐ Competent	☐ Introverted	☐ Stable
☐ Competitive	☐ Intuitive	☐ Strong
☐ Congenial	☐ Inventive	☐ Strong-minded
☐ Conscientious	☐ Jovial	☐ Structured
☐ Conservative	☐ Judicious	☐ Subjective
☐ Considerate	☐ Just	☐ Successful
☐ Consistent	☐ Kind	☐ Tactful
☐ Conventional	☐ Liberal	☐ Talented
☐ Cooperative	☐ Likable	☐ Tenacious
☐ Courageous	☐ Literary	☐ Thorough
☐ Creative	☐ Logical	☐ Thoughtful
☐ Critical	☐ Loyal	☐ Tolerant
☐ Curious	☐ Mature	☐ Trusting
☐ Daring	☐ Methodical	☐ Trustworthy
☐ Decisive	☐ Meticulous	☐ Truthful
☐ Deliberate	☐ Mistrustful	☐ Understanding
☐ Delicate	☐ Modest	☐ Unexcitable
☐ Democratic	☐ Motivated	☐ Uninhibited
☐ Dependable	☐ Nurturing	☐ Verbal

☐ Detail-oriented	☐ Objective	☐ Versatile
☐ Diligent	☐ Observant	☐ Vigorous
☐ Discreet	☐ Open-minded	☐ Warm
☐ Distinctive	☐ Opportunistic	☐ Wholesome
☐ Dominant	☐ Optimistic	☐ Wise
☐ Dynamic	☐ Orderly	
☐ Eager	☐ Organized	
☐ Easygoing	☐ Original	
☐ Effective	☐ Outgoing	
☐ Efficient	☐ Patient	
☐ Eloquent	☐ Peaceable	
☐ Emotional	☐ Perceptive	
☐ Empathetic	☐ Persistent	

Prompt

Examine the list of personality descriptors that you have selected. Carefully consider each. How well does each adjective describe you? Choose three to five adjectives that you find most relevant.

1. Why did you choose the descriptors? Provide examples from your experience that illustrate how each word describes you.
2. Think back to your childhood dreams. Do you remember being asked by friends and family "What do you want to be when you grow up?" How did you typically respond? What careers did you select as a child? Why?
3. Consider your childhood career goal. What traits are needed to succeed in that career?
4. Do you still have the same career-related dreams? How have your interests changed?
5. Consider the characteristics listed in Question 1. How do these traits compare with those needed for the career of your childhood dreams? How do they fit with your revised-adult view?

Identify Your Occupational Interests

Another way to apply your self-knowledge to select a major is to identify your occupational interests. By paying attention to your interests, you can determine the work environment that is most appealing to you. Holland (Holland, 1959, 1997) proposed that

people's interests and the matching work environments can be loosely categorized into six themes or codes: Realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional. Although created half a century ago, the Holland Occupational Codes remain a widely used assessment of career interests (Ruff et al., 2007). Complete Exercise 2.7 for a brief insight into your career interests.

Another option is the *O*NET Interest Profiler*, a brief self-assessment inventory that applies Holland codes to help people identify their work-related interests (Lewis & Rivkin, 1999). The *O*NET Interest Profiler* is a free computer program sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor/Employment and Training Administration and the American Job Center Network and available at http://www.onetcenter.org/CIP.html. A short paper-and-pencil version of the O*NET Interest Profiler is also available: https://www.onetcenter.org/IP.html#paper-and-pencil. These tools are a good starting point, but an accurate career assessment is conducted by a career professional using specialized tools. The career development center at your college can help you determine and interpret your Holland Code.

EXERCISE 2.7

IDENTIFY YOUR HOLLAND PERSONALITY TYPE

Realistic

☐ I am mechanically inclined.
☐ I am athletically inclined.
☐ I like working outside with tools, plants, or animals.
☐ I like creating things with my hands.
☐ I am practical.
☐ I like to see direct results of my work.
☐ I am a nature lover.
☐ I am systematic.
☐ I am persistent.
☐ I am calm and reserved.
☐ I am independent.
☐ I dislike vagueness and ambiguity.

Investigative

☐ I like learning, observing, problem-solving, and working with information.
☐ I like solving abstract, vague problems.
☐ I am curious.
☐ I am logical.
☐ I am reserved.
☐ I am introspective.
☐ I am independent.

☐ I am observant.
☐ I am interested in understanding the physical world.
☐ I like working alone or in small groups.
☐ I like to be original and creative in solving problems.
☐ I enjoy intellectual challenges.

Artistic

☐ I am imaginative and creative.
☐ I like to express myself by designing and producing.
☐ I prefer unstructured activities.
☐ I am spontaneous.
☐ I am idealistic.
☐ I am unique.
☐ I am independent.
☐ I am expressive.
☐ I am unconventional.
☐ I am compassionate.
☐ I am bold.
☐ I prefer to work alone.

Social

☐ I am compassionate.
☐ I like helping and training others.
☐ I am patient.
☐ I am dependable.
☐ I am supportive.
☐ I am understanding.
☐ I am perceptive.
☐ I am generous.
☐ I am idealistic.
☐ I am cheerful, well liked.
☐ I am people-oriented and friendly.
☐ I am concerned with the welfare of others.
☐ I am good at expressing myself and getting along well with others.

Enterprising

☐ I like to work with people.
☐ I like persuading people.
☐ I like managing situations.
☐ I like achieving organizational or economic goals.
☐ I am a leader.
☐ I am talkative.
☐ I am extroverted.
☐ I am optimistic.

☐ I am spontaneous and daring.
☐ I am assertive.
☐ I am energetic.
☐ I am good at communicating.
☐ I am good at selling and persuading.
☐ I prefer tasks that require quick action.

Conventional

☐ I am good with numbers.
☐ I like to work with data and carry out tasks in detail.
☐ I am persistent.
☐ I am practical.
☐ I am conforming.
☐ I am precise.
☐ I am conscientious.
☐ I am meticulous.
☐ I am adept.
☐ I am frugal.
☐ I am stable and dependable.
☐ I am well controlled.
☐ I prefer task that are structured.
☐ I prefer to know what's expected.
☐ I prefer a well-defined chain of command.

Prompt

Count your checkmarks to determine which sets of descriptors best match your characteristics.

Most students find that two or more sets of qualities fit them. Which did you choose? Give an example of an experience or ability that illustrates each set of descriptors you chose.

Source: Adapted from Holland (Holland, 1966, 1997).

Understanding your career interests can make it easier to choose a major because some majors are better suited to particular constellations of interests than others. Table 2.1 lists college majors, organized by Holland Code. However, keep in mind that this is simply a guide. Not all possible careers are listed, and the categories are much more fluid than they appear. Notice that many college majors fit more than one Holland Code. College majors tap multiple interests and abilities—and most foster similar skills in students, such as critical thinking and communication skills.

TABLE 2.1 ■ Careers by Holland Personality Type

Realistic	Investigative	Artistic
Agriculture/Forestry	Animal Science	Advertising
Criminal Justice	Anthropology	Art History
Engineering	Astronomy	Art Education
Health and Physical Education	Biochemistry	Architecture
Plant and Soil Sciences	Biological Sciences	Communications
Architecture	Chemistry	English
Recreation and Tourism Management	Computer Science	Foreign Language
Environmental Studies	Engineering	Graphic Design
Geology	Geography	History
Medical Technology	Geology	Interior Design
Exercise Science	Mathematics	Journalism
Sport Management	Medical Technology	Music
Engineering	Medicine	Music Education
	Nursing	Speech/Drama
	Nutrition	
	Pharmacy	
	Philosophy	
	Physical Therapy	
	Physics	
	Psychology	
	Sociology	
	Statistics	

Social	Enterprising	Conventional
Audiology	Advertising	Accounting
Counseling	Broadcasting	Business
Criminal Justice	Communications	Computer Science
Elementary Education	Economics	Economics
History	Finance	Finance
Human Development	Industrial Relations	Mathematics
Library Sciences	Journalism	Statistics
Occupational therapy	Law	
Nursing	Management	
Nutrition	Marketing	
Philosophy	Political Science	
Political Science	Public Administration	
Physical Education	Speech	
Psychology		
Religious Studies		
Sociology		
Social Work		
Special Education		
Urban Planning		

Source: Adapted from Holland (Holland, 1966, 1997).

Assess Your Skills

In addition to your interests, your choice of major should align with your skills and abilities. What are your skills? What activities do you do best? If you're unsure, use your log to write an experiential diary to get a better grasp on your skills. This experiential diary should list all the jobs, leadership positions, and extracurricular activities that you're involved in and all the tasks comprising each of these activities and jobs. Once you've created a master list, identify the skills required to perform the tasks on your list. For example, if the task was answering the phone, it probably entailed the following skills: communication (the effective use of language), problem-solving, and the ability to direct inquiries. Also identify specific skills that you've learned, like the ability to use computer programming languages or speak a non-native language. Even with an experiential diary, it is sometimes difficult to list and remember all of your skills and abilities. Exercise 2.8 will help you identify your skills.

EXERCISE 2.8
ASSESS YOUR SKILLS

Check off all of the skills that apply to you, then complete the activity below.

☐ Acting or performing	☐ Illustrating
☐ Administering	☐ Implementing
☐ Advising	☐ Improving
☐ Analyzing data	☐ Initiating with strangers
☐ Applying	☐ Innovating
☐ Arranging social functions	☐ Interpreting
☐ Budgeting	☐ Interviewing
☐ Calculating	☐ Investigating problems
☐ Checking for accuracy	☐ Judging
☐ Coaching	☐ Leading
☐ Collecting money	☐ Listening to others
☐ Communicating	☐ Managing
☐ Compiling statistics	☐ Measuring
☐ Conceptualizing	☐ Mediating

☐ Controlling	☐ Motivating
☐ Coordinating events	☐ Navigating
☐ Counseling	☐ Negotiating
☐ Creating new ideas	☐ Observing
☐ Decision-making	☐ Organizing
☐ Designing	☐ Painting
☐ Dispensing information	☐ Persuading
☐ Dramatizing ideas or problems	☐ Photographing
☐ Editing	☐ Planning
☐ Entertaining people	☐ Problem-solving
☐ Evaluating	☐ Programming
☐ Expressing feelings	☐ Promoting
☐ Finding information	☐ Proofreading
☐ Fund raising	☐ Questioning
☐ Generalizing	☐ Reading
☐ Goal setting	☐ Reasoning
☐ Handling complaints	☐ Recording
☐ Identifying problems	☐ Record keeping
☐ Recruiting	☐ Teaching or training
☐ Researching	☐ Team building
☐ Scheduling	☐ Thinking logically
☐ Selling	☐ Tolerating ambiguity
☐ Singing	☐ Translating
☐ Sketching	☐ Troubleshooting
☐ Speaking	☐ Visualizing
☐ Supervising	☐ Writing
☐ Synthesizing information	

Prompt

1. What skills did you check?
2. Can you think of examples of how each skill has developed or how you've used it to achieve a goal?
3. Consider your choices. Select your top three to five skills and explain your choices. These skills are your strengths.
4. Now look at all of the skills that you checked:
   a. Do any of these skills need further development?
   b. Which of these skills do you prefer using? Why?
   c. Which are you interested in using in the future? Why?
   d. Do you dislike using any of your skills? Why?
5. Are there any skills that you don't currently have but would like to develop? Explain.

By now, it should be clear that you already possess an array of skills. Are you interested in using and developing them? We tend to like and be drawn to activities in which we excel. Is that true for you? You may not be skilled in a particular area, but if you find it interesting, you can seek the education and training to acquire those skills. Don't let your current level of competence dictate your choices. With dedication and hard work, you can make great strides and learn many skills that can help you meet your career goals.

Use Career Assessment Tools

While you can learn a lot about yourself through reflection and surveying your own interests, a visit to the career center at your college can offer an objective and detailed profile of your interests. A career counselor can administer several inventories to help determine what career path is right for you. The two most commonly administered inventories are the Strong Interest Inventory (Strong et al., 2004) and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers et al., 1998).

Available at your college's career center, the Strong Interest Inventory contains 291 items that survey your occupational interests and values. It takes about 40 minutes to complete and yields a detailed report that includes your Holland Code, list of your top interests and what you find most motivating and rewarding, and comparisons of your interests with those of people working in 122 occupations. The Strong Interest Inventory also lists occupations that match your interests. It highlights your preferences regarding work style, learning environment, leadership style, risk taking, and team orientation. A summary shows a graphic representation of your results, which the career counselor will discuss with you. Remember that although several compatible careers will probably be listed, you are free to pursue any career that appeals to you. The Strong Interest Inventory provides a more detailed look at the aspects of career assessment that we have discussed in this chapter. It's especially

useful for students who have tried the activities in this book and are still unsure of their interests.

Another assessment option available in your college's career center is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). Consisting or over 100 items, the MBTI assesses individuals' perceptions, preferences, and judgments in interacting with the world (Myers et al., 1998). Created by mother and daughter, Katharine Cook Briggs and Isabel Briggs Myers, the MTBI is based in Carl Jung's theory that people can be categorized into 16 personality types based on their preferences along four dimensions or subscales.

- *Extraversion/Introversion:* How do you interact with the world? Are you oriented outward, toward people and actions (extraversion), or inward, the internal world of thoughts and ideas (introversion)?

- *Sensation/Intuition:* How do you prefer to gather information? Do you focus on reality, facts, and details that you sense, what you can see and hear? Or do you pay attention to patterns, impressions, and hunches?

- *Thinking/Feeling:* How do you make decisions using the information you have gathered? Do you rely on logic and reasoning, emphasizing facts and objective information? Or do you focus on emotions, people, and circumstances?

- *Judging/Perceiving:* How flexible are your plans and decisions? Do you prefer structure, organization, and stick to your decisions? Or are you more flexible, open to change, and adaptable?

The MTBI categorizes individuals into a "personality type" based on their responses to the four scales. If you choose to take the MBTI, remember that it is simply a tool to help you understand yourself. In fact, some psychologists argue that despite its popularity, there is insufficient research to conclude that the MBTI is an effective measure of personality (Pittenger, 2005). Ultimately, it's up to you to determine if the results resonate with you.

Examine Your Values

Keep your values in mind as you consider potential careers. Values represent what is important to you, what you consider desirable in life. How do you define success? Would you rather live in a city or in a rural area? Is personal time and flexibility important to you? Do you envision having a family (and if so, large or small)? Is financial success important to you? What do you want out of life? Take time to think about your priorities. Reflective writing can aid in understanding and clarifying your values. Consider the following collection of values, categorized by theme. Check off the ones that appeal to you.

EXERCISE 2.9

VALUES

Service

- [ ] Active in community
- [ ] Help others
- [ ] Help society and the world
- [ ] Work with and help people in meaningful way

Adventure

- [ ] Excitement
- [ ] Risk taking
- [ ] Travel
- [ ] Drama
- [ ] Exciting tasks
- [ ] Good health

Leadership

- [ ] Influence people and opinions
- [ ] Supervise others
- [ ] Power, authority, and control
- [ ] Make decisions
- [ ] Direct work of others
- [ ] Leadership
- [ ] Coordinate people, data. and stuff
- [ ] Hiring and firing responsibility

Creativity

- [ ] Aesthetic appreciation
- [ ] Artistic creativity
- [ ] Creative expression
- [ ] Develop and express new ideas
- [ ] No routine
- [ ] Work on own or as creative team
- [ ] Flexible working conditions

Relationships

- [ ] Organization affiliation
- [ ] Work friendships
- [ ] Family
- [ ] Work with others/ teamwork
- [ ] Public contract
- [ ] Friendly work atmosphere
- [ ] Work with people you like

Financial Reward

- [ ] High earnings
- [ ] Commission-based work
- [ ] Material possessions
- [ ] Very high salary
- [ ] Extra pay for extra work
- [ ] Long hours

Prestige

- [ ] Recognition
- [ ] Status
- [ ] Respect stature
- [ ] Professional position
- [ ] Responsibility
- [ ] Responsibility and pay are related to education and experience

Meaning and Purpose

- [ ] Spirituality
- [ ] Personal fulfillment
- [ ] Work related to ideals
- [ ] Make a difference
- [ ] Express inner self in work
- [ ] Integrate belief system into work

Variety

- [ ] Changing work responsibilities
- [ ] New projects
- [ ] Varied tasks
- [ ] Meet new people
- [ ] Range of settings and situations

Security	Independence	Physical Activity
☐ Stability	☐ Time freedom	☐ Outdoor work
☐ Predictably	☐ Autonomy	☐ Physical challenge
☐ Low pressure	☐ Work alone	☐ Physical fitness
☐ Job assurance guaranteed annual salary in secure stable company	☐ Set own pace and working conditions, flexible hours	☐ Desk job
☐ Retirement benefits	☐ Choose team or work alone	
☐ Live in familiar location		

Intellectual Challenge	Productivity	Advancement
☐ Address challenging problems	☐ Competence and proficiency	☐ Promotions
☐ Pursue/Obtain knowledge	☐ Fast paced work	☐ Work under pressure
☐ Constant updating of information and ability to deal with new ideas	☐ Efficient work habits	☐ Competition
☐ Work with creative and intellectually stimulating people	☐ Hard work is rewarded	☐ Limited only by energy and initiative
☐ Acknowledged expert	☐ Quality and productivity rewarded by rapid advancement	
☐ Research and development		

Prompt

1. What values did you check? Do your selected values cluster into a few areas?
2. How have these values influenced your choices and behaviors? Consider your extracurricular activities and interests.
3. How might these values inform your career choices?

An effective way of examining your interests and values is to write about your personal history. Exercise 2.10 helps you to identify your strengths and is a fantastic self-esteem builder because it focuses on your accomplishments—the things that make you unique. By understanding which achievements you cherish, you'll have a better idea of your interests and values, which is essential to choosing a major or career that's right for you.

EXERCISE 2.10
REVIEW YOUR PERSONAL HISTORY

1. List and discuss all of the times that you can think of when you have encountered a problem, no matter its size, and have taken action to solve the problem. List as many as you can. Don't stop when it becomes difficult; probe further.
2. Explore your achievements. They may be connected to the problems you listed in Item 1. If you're stumped, try free writing about your achievements. Write whatever thoughts come to mind, without censoring or editing them. Keep the ideas flowing. Reviewing the exercises in this chapter may provide inspiration. Remember that accomplishments can be small, and they don't have to be recognized by other people. Write about the achievements that are personally relevant to you and of which you are most proud.
3. Examine the problems you have solved and your accomplishments. Which have brought you the most satisfaction? Which do you value most highly? Why?
4. What lessons have you learned? Reflect on the problems you have encountered and the actions you took to solve them. What insights or valuable lessons did you gain? How has your approach to problem-solving or decision-making changed?

Draw Conclusions

Now that you have examined your traits, interests, skills, and values, compile this information to get a comprehensive view of yourself. Review the lists and descriptions of majors in your college handbook and the notes you've made about each major. Do any seem to fit your set of traits, skills, and interests? Some majors and careers will match many of your personal traits and skills, and others will not. Review what you have learned about various majors and about yourself. If you are still undecided over what major to choose, list the two or three top contenders. Use the college handbook and department websites to find additional information for each of these. Once you have narrowed down your choice of majors, consider the pros and cons of each major. Consider the questions listed in Table 2.2.

The happiest and most successful students choose majors that they find engaging and that match their traits, skills, interests, and values. Some students select a major before they understand themselves. They take courses for a semester or two and then realize that they've chosen a major in which they have minimal interest or ability. Engaging in self-assessment early in your college career can save you from changing majors and wasting time.

TABLE 2.2 ■ Comparing Majors

Choose a potential major (or two or three, if you're still searching) and determine the following:

1. How interested am I in this topic? Is it a new interest or a long-standing one? Do I enjoy the subject?

2. Do I actively seek out other students and faculty in this department for discussions and other informal interactions?

3. What does the curriculum entail? What classes are required?

4. How well does the major align with my skills and abilities? Can I perform well in this subject? Is it too easy or too challenging for me?

5. Which professors teach this subject? Do I know any of them personally? Have I taken courses with them before?

6. How motivated am I to study this subject? Is it inherently interesting or fun? Do I look forward to classes and find them enjoyable, or do I dread the coursework and assignments?

7. Does this major offer opportunities for internships, research projects, or other hands-on experiences related to the field?

8. What types of jobs do graduates with this major hold? Will pursuing this major prepare me for the kind of career I desire?

CHOOSING PSYCHOLOGY

After completing the exercises in this chapter, speaking with others, seeking outside information, and doing some careful thinking, you may have narrowed down your choice of majors. If that's true for you, that's fantastic! If not, keep working, exploring, and thinking, and you'll find what's right for you. All majors offer valuable educational opportunities, so there is no "wrong" major. That said, there are some majors that will better fit your interests and aspirations than others. Let's take a closer look at psychology: What skills and knowledge can you acquire as a psychology major?

Skills and Knowledge You'll Develop as a Psychology Major

The psychology major prepares graduates for "lifelong learning, thinking, and action" (McGovern et al., 1991). Like other liberal arts majors, psychology students develop valuable thinking and communication skills. Psychology education, however, stands out because it emphasizes learning and applying principles of psychology to understand human behavior. As a psychology major, you will have the opportunity to develop the following competencies.

Knowledge of Human Behavior

Undergraduate education in psychology exposes students to the major facts, theories, and issues in the field. Understanding human behavior involves learning about

physiology, perception, cognition, emotion, development, and more. This broad knowledge base serves as the conceptual framework for lifelong learning about human behavior as well as the capacity to apply this understanding in everyday situations.

Information Acquisition and Synthesis Skills

The knowledge base of psychology is constantly advancing. Successful psychology students learn how to gather and synthesize information. They learn how to use a range of sources, including the library, computerized databases, and the internet to gather information about an area of interest. More important, psychology students learn how to weigh and integrate information into a coherent and persuasive argument. In addition, successful psychology students apply their advanced understanding of cognition and memory to enhance their own processing and recall of information.

Research Methods and Statistical Skills

Psychology students learn to apply scientific methods to investigate questions about human behavior. They learn how to identify a problem, devise a hypothesis, choose and carry out scientific methods to gather information about the problem, conduct statistical analyses to evaluate a hypothesis, and interpret data summaries to devise a conclusion. In other words, psychology students develop the ability to pose and answer questions about human behavior and experience.

Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills

Exposure to the diverse perspectives within psychology trains students to think flexibly and to accept some ambiguity. Introductory psychology students often ask for the "right," definitive, answer; they soon learn that answers often aren't black or white but many shades of grey. Psychology students acquire skills in thinking critically about complex problems. They learn to weigh multiple sources of information, determine the degree of support for each position, and make a reasoned decision about which position has more merit and how a problem is best solved.

Reading, Writing, and Speaking Skills

Psychology students develop reading, writing, and presentation skills for effective oral and written communication. They learn how to think critically about what they read, understand and present arguments from a psychological standpoint, and construct clear arguments. Information derived from psychology regarding cognition, memory, listening, persuasion, and communication enhances psychology majors' ability to communicate orally and in writing.

Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Skills

Psychology students develop the ability to communicate their ideas and use their knowledge of human behavior to lead, collaborate with others, and work effectively

in groups. Psychology students are primed to be effective communicators because they are trained to be sensitive to issues of culture, race, class, and ethnicity. Students of psychology also develop intrapersonal awareness, or self-knowledge. They can monitor and manage their own behavior, which is critical for academic and interpersonal success.

Adaptability

Psychology students quickly learn that the perfect experiment is an unattainable goal to which all researchers strive. Students learn how to design the best research studies possible, given limited resources. The ability to evaluate and adapt to changing circumstances is highly valued in today's volatile economy and workplace.

An undergraduate education in psychology will give you the opportunity to develop these skills, which, incidentally, is not an exhaustive list. The psychology major fulfills the objectives of a liberal arts education, which include critical and analytical thinking, independent thinking, leadership skills, communication skills, understanding how to learn, being able to see all sides of an issue, and understanding human diversity (Roche, 2010). However, it is the training in research design and statistical analysis as well as human behavior that makes the psychology major unique among liberal arts degrees.

Psychological Literacy

If you decide to pursue a major in psychology, you will expand your knowledge of human behavior and develop a range of skills. You'll learn to discriminate relevant information from trivial details. You'll learn how to gather, organize, and analyze information from a variety of sources, what professors often refer to as *synthesis*. You'll learn about psychological theories, concepts, and terms that will help you to understand and influence the world around you. In essence, you will demonstrate *psychological literacy*, the ability to apply psychological knowledge in everyday life to improve lives, your own and others' (Cranney et al., 2012; McGovern et al., 2010). Individuals who are psychologically literate have the following skills:

- Have basic knowledge and vocabulary of psychology

- Value and apply critical thinking and creative problem-solving

- Apply psychological principles to address issues at home, work, and in the community

- Act ethically

- Can gather and effectively evaluate information

- Can use technology effectively

- Can communicate effectively with different audiences

- Demonstrate sensitivity, understand, and foster respect of diversity

- Are self-reflective

Psychological literacy develops as individuals progress from learning facts about psychology to applying bodies of knowledge and modes of thinking. It includes the ability to (1) critically analyze psychological phenomena and research findings, considering biases or limitations; (2) use scientific methodology and principles to investigate real-world issues, drawing upon an understanding of human behavior and cognition; and (3) communicate an understanding of psychological processes to others with concise, evidence-based solutions to real-world issues (Newell et al., 2022).

The undergraduate psychology curriculum is designed to provide students with opportunities to develop psychological literacy. The American Psychological Association (American Psychological Association, 2023) has outlined five broad goals for psychology education. The psychology department at your college likely models the psychology curriculum on the APA goals.

Goal 1: Content Knowledge and Application
1.1   Describe key concepts, principles, and theories in psychology.
1.2   Develop a working knowledge of psychology's major subfields.
1.3   Represent significant aspects of the history of psychology.
1.4   Apply psychological content to solve practical problems.
1.5   Relate examples of psychology's integrative themes.

Goal 2: Scientific Inquiry and Critical Thinking
2.1   Exercise reasoning to investigate psychological phenomena.
2.2   Interpret, design, and evaluate basic psychological research.
2.3   Incorporate sociocultural factors in scientific research practices.
2.4   Use statistics to evaluate quantitative research findings.

Goal 3: Values in Psychological Science
3.1   Employ ethical standards in research, practice, and academic contexts.
3.2   Develop and practice interpersonal and intercultural responsiveness.
3.3   Apply psychological principles to strengthen community and improve quality of life.

Goal 4: Communication, Psychological Literacy, and Technology Skills
4.1   Interact effectively with others.
4.2   Write and present effectively for different purposes.
4.3   Provide evidence of psychological information literacy.
4.4   Exhibit appropriate technological skills to improve communication.

Goal 5: Personal and Professional Development

5.1 Exhibit effective self-regulation.

5.2 Refine project management skills.

5.3 Display effective judgment in professional interactions.

5.4 Cultivate workforce collaboration skills.

5.5 Demonstrate appropriate workforce technological skills.

5.6 Develop direction for life after graduation.

Do you notice a correspondence among the APA goals for psychology education, the characteristics of psychological literacy, and the competencies developed with a psychology major? Many psychology departments structure their programs based on the APA goals, aiming to promote psychological literacy. Psychology students develop lifelong skills that are relevant to their personal and professional lives.

What to Expect as a Psychology Major

So what can you specifically expect as a psychology major? Like all college students, you can expect to complete a range of courses mandated by the university, often referred to as General Education requirements because they're intended to provide you with a broad education covering many subjects that are essential to becoming a well-rounded and capable thinker. Whereas the General Education curriculum provides breadth of knowledge, your major will offer depth of knowledge in a specific area. As a psychology major, you can expect to learn about human behavior and the methods that psychologists use to study human behavior. Specific major requirements may vary by university; however, you can expect to take a range of courses, including the following.

Introductory Psychology/General Psychology

Your first course in psychology offers a whirlwind fast-paced tour of the field, including all of the subdisciplines discussed in Chapter 1.

Methodology and Statistics

It is the methodology courses that will teach you how psychologists learn about human behavior. Students learn the research methods that psychologists use to ask and answer questions about behavior. They also learn statistics and the methods psychologists use to compile and draw conclusions from the information that's collect. Finally, students gain experience in designing and carrying out research studies that give them practice in asking and answering questions about human behavior.

Breadth Courses

Just as the general education curriculum is designed to provide students with a broad knowledge base for a well-rounded education, the psychology breadth requirement imparts psychology majors with a well-rounded education in human behavior. The

specific sets of requirements vary across psychology departments, but all will include courses in the clinical, developmental, cognitive, biological, and social/personality subfields. Common courses offered by psychology departments are listed in Table 2.3.

TABLE 2.3 ■ Psychology Courses	
Applied Psychology	**History, Methods, and Statistics**
Family Psychology	Research Methods
Health Psychology	Experimental Psychology
Industrial Psychology	Psychological Statistics
Organizational Psychology	History of Psychology
Psychology and Law	**Learning and Cognitive**
Sport Psychology	Psychology of Learning
Consumer Psychology	Psychology of Creativity
Biological and Neuropsychology	Educational Psychology
Physiological Psychology	Behavior Modification
Sensation and Perception	Cognitive Psychology
Psychopharmacology	Cognitive Neuroscience
Clinical Psychology	**Personality, Social Processes, and Measurement**
Clinical Psychology	Group Dynamics
Abnormal Psychology	Social Psychology
School Psychology	Psychology of Motivation
Developmental	Psychology of Personality
Adolescent Psychology	Psychological and Educational Testing
Adulthood and Aging	Psychology of Adjustment
Life-Span Development	Psychology of Gender
Developmental Psychopathology	Psychology of Women
Child Psychology	Cross-Cultural Psychology

These courses may be grouped and organized in several ways, depending on department. Some psychology courses are required for majors at nearly all schools, while others are electives found at a handful of schools.

Elective Courses

You can expect to take several elective courses in your major—courses of your choice. These are opportunities to explore your interests or gain knowledge and skills that you think will be helpful in the future.

Capstone Course

The capstone course is intended as the crowning achievement for majors, representing the culmination of their learning journey. It is an advanced course that requires students to synthesize and demonstrate mastery of the material. Students must integrate their knowledge of how to study psychological phenomena, including how to formulate research questions, devise methods to address research questions, and draw meaningful conclusions. The specific requirements of the capstone course vary by university or program. You might conduct an independent research study, write a

lengthy review paper or senior thesis, or complete another culminating assignment. Reach out to your professors to learn more about the capstone course. Seek advice to help you plan ahead and choose the courses and activities that will best prepare you for this experience.

PRO TIP
PLAN AHEAD FOR YOUR CAPSTONE COURSE

Most departments offer a handful of capstone courses in different subfields of psychology. For example, one department may offer capstone seminars in developmental psychology, cognitive psychology, social psychology, and experimental psychology. It is important to note that these capstones often have specific prerequisites associated with them. The developmental psychology capstone may require students to have completed certain courses in developmental psychology, and the same goes for the other capstone courses. To ensure that you can enroll in the desired capstone, be mindful of these requirements early on. By planning ahead and understanding the prerequisites, you can ensure that you complete prerequisite courses to gain admittance into the capstone course you desire.

EXERCISE 2.11
INTERNET SCAVENGER HUNT

Use the internet to answer each of the following questions about specialties in psychology. Provide the search terms used, the website, and your response.

1. In what states can psychologists prescribe medication?
2. How is forensic psychology different from psychology and the law?
3. Identify three applied psychology subfields.
4. During World War II, psychologists used their skills in new ways to help the war effort. In what ways did psychologists contribute? What field of psychology developed from these contributions?
5. What is Principle A of the American Psychological Association Ethics Code?
6. What subfield(s) is (are) concerned with a biopsychosocial model? What is a biopsychosocial model?
7. When was the PsyD born?
8. Discuss two subfields of experimental psychology.
9. Identify three ways in which psychologists can contribute to businesses and corporations.
10. What is Eye on Psi Chi? What did it replace?

What major is right for you? Is it psychology? Only you can answer that question. Psychology offers many opportunities, but other majors offer different sets of opportunities. You are the expert in choosing your major. No one else can do it for you, and no test will give you all the answers. While parents, friends, professors, and counselors might offer assistance and advice, ultimately this is *your* decision. Your major will not lock you into one career path—there are many roads, and a psychology major can be the first step toward a variety of careers.

REFLECTION PROMPTS

Why Choose Psychology?

What are some reasons that make psychology a compelling choice for a major? What are the aspects or benefits of psychology that appeal to you most? Conversely, what aspects do you find least appealing? Why? Do you plan to major in psychology? If so, what are your reasons behind this choice? If other majors also capture your interest, what attracts you to them? In what ways are they similar or different from psychology?

Self-Review

Once you've amassed several days, weeks, or months' worth of entries, you can use your log to reflect on how you're changing. Take the time to read earlier log entries. How have you changed over time? Have you developed new interpretations of events? Do you disagree with an earlier entry? Track the evolution of your thinking and how your views have changed. Can you draw conclusions about yourself based on what you've written?

Motivations for College

Why did you decide to attend college? What were your hopes and expectations when you started? What have you learned since beginning college? Do you still have the same reasons for attending or have they shifted over time? Consider the factors that drive your college journey.

Psychological Literacy

How does the concept of psychological literacy resonate with you? In your view, what does it mean to be psychologically literate? How would you explain it to a friend? Give examples from your personal or academic life where you applied psychological principles or when applying them could have improved the situation