

CHOOSING A MAJOR GUIDEBOOK



CENTER FOR CAREER & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

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Moravian College Center
for Career and Civic
Engagement



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4 MYTHS ABOUT CHOOSING A MAJOR

1. My Major Will Determine My Career

False: While certain majors such as education, computer science, nursing, and accounting prepare students for specific career paths, your Moravian College major provides background and skills that are transferable to many career fields. *The major predictor of career path lies more in the chosen experiences (internships, volunteer, externships, research, etc.) that are gained during college.* Regardless of major, career opportunities are available.

2. I Can Ensure Employment After Graduation by Choosing a Major in a “High Demand” Field

False: The job market moves in cycles. Jobs that are considered “hot” right now may not be when you graduate. Focus on building and developing skills that will make you competitive for the changing job market.

TOP TRANSFERRABLE

SKILLS

1. Problem-solving skills
2. Ability to work in a team
3. Communication skills (written)
4. Leadership
5. Strong work ethic
6. Analytical/quantitative skills
7. Communication skills (verbal)
8. Initiative
9. Detail-oriented
10. Flexibility/adaptability

According to National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), 2018

3. It’s a Good Idea to Focus on My General Education Courses First and Decide on a Major Later

False: General education requirements can vary greatly from major to major. So, it is essential that you begin to explore majors as early as possible in your college career. Work closely with your faculty advisor each semester to choose courses. Remember that any delay in choosing/changing a major may extend your graduation date beyond four years, especially in majors that have a very structured course sequence.

4. The Best Way to Find a Major is to Take Courses in Different Areas Until I Find One That Really Interests Me

False: Exploring majors by sampling courses and eliminating potential majors one course at a time is both time-consuming and expensive. You can learn a lot about majors by reviewing course descriptions and program requirements, talking with faculty and students in various majors, and participating in student organizations related to your major of interest.

4 STAGES OF CHOOSING YOUR MAJOR

Choosing a major is a process that involves assessing, researching, and evaluating your options. Because it takes some time to work through the steps, it is important to start this process as soon as possible. This guide will help you navigate the challenge of exploring, choosing, and declaring a major that is the best fit for you.

Know that the Center for Career and Civic Engagement can meet you wherever you are in this process.

STAGE 1. LEARN ABOUT YOURSELF

Self-assessment is an essential element in making informed and realistic decisions about your major and career. The following resources help you to identify and explore important aspects of your personality and create a clear picture of your career preferences.

A. Career Assessments and Inventories

Career assessments help you to identify your skills, abilities, interests and values. The results obtained can help you more clearly identify and target both majors and careers that complement your personality.

The Center for Career and Civic Engagement offers the following career assessment instruments:

- **Type Focus:** An interactive online career and educational planning tool.
- **Strong Interest Inventory (SII):** An assessment which outlines work-related interests across six occupational themes.

Other resources such as the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), are available upon request.

Note: Please consult with a member of our staff if interested in completing an assessment. You can make an appointment to review your personal results and learn how these results can be utilized in the major selection process. After reviewing, we can better strategize what your next steps might be.

B. Reflection

Reflection is defined as fixing your thoughts on something, or considering it. Learning about yourself and your preferences requires some quiet space to reflect on your past experiences and future aspirations. Some questions to consider include...

- How do you define success?
- What activities do you engage in, or talk about, that cause you to lose track of time?
- If money was not a concern, what work would you be willing to do for FREE?
- What ONE thing would you dare to attempt if you knew you could not fail?
- What type of issues, needs, and opportunities motivate you and seem to give you energy?
- Describe the “perfect job” (not life) in terms of duties and responsibilities.

STAGE 2. GATHER INFORMATION

Having a greater understanding of specific majors and careers will help you narrow down your options and make informed decisions about your future.

Strategies for exploring majors

- **Read the descriptions of courses offered at Moravian College** (moravian.edu/departments). This can give you valuable insight about majors you may be considering or pique your interest in areas you may not have considered.
- **Gain a better understanding of majors from your classmates.** Informational interviews are a great way to get practical information about a specific major. Sample informational interview questions include:
 - Why did you choose this major?
 - What do you like most about this major?
 - What do you like least about this major?
 - What type of skills do you think are needed to be successful in this major?
 - Describe a typical class in regard to class size, academic demands, and expectations.
 - What advice do you give to someone interested in pursuing this major?
- **Become involved in the student clubs and organizations directly related to specific majors and careers.** Involvement in one of these groups may help you to meet and interact with students and faculty with interests similar to your own. *To learn more about Moravian student clubs and organizations, visit moravian.edu/student-involvement.*
- **Gain experience through volunteer activities, part-time jobs, and summer employment.** These may help you determine the suitability of a particular major. *Visit the Center for Career and Civic Engagement to learn more about these opportunities.*
- **Test your interest in an occupation by job shadowing with a professional currently working in a field.** You will learn more about the occupation, understand what a particular job is like on a daily basis, develop professional contacts, and experience the culture of an organization. *The Center for Career and Civic Engagement can help arrange job shadowing experiences with an alum in your field of interest!*

Research Majors/Careers

- **What Can I do with a Major in...?** (whatcanidowiththismajor.com/major/majors): Outlines common career areas, potential employers and strategies designed to maximize career opportunities.
- **Occupational Outlook Handbook** (bls.gov/ooh): Provides information on a wide range of occupations and includes job outlook projections, average earnings, and educational requirements.
- **O*Net** (onetonline.org): Provides extensive information on hundreds of occupations including daily tasks and occupational overviews.

STAGE 3. EVALUATE YOUR OPTIONS

With knowledge of both potential majors and careers, you are ready to evaluate your options and make a decision.

A. Prioritize your options

Weigh the advantages and disadvantages of each option based on your research. Be sure to keep in mind your own interests, values and motivated skills.

B. Talk with someone

Speak with a faculty advisor, a staff member in the Center for Career and Civic Engagement, your family, and friends about your ideas and options. Expressing your ideas and talking with others will help you gain new perspectives and perhaps new possibilities.

C. Visit academic departments

Visit the department of your intended major and speak with faculty to learn more about who they are, their current research interests, and how you can map out your remaining college years to fulfill course requirements. Browse through the academic department webpages to learn more: moravian.edu/departments.

D. Take an introductory course

Take an introductory-level course in a major you are genuinely considering. This is different than using introductory courses from all majors as your only evaluation tool for interest. Through a more targeted exploratory approach, as outlined in this guide, you limit the number of courses you are taking as 'exploration,' saving you time and money.

STAGE 4. DECLARE YOUR MAJOR

Congratulations! You've taken your time and done your research and are ready to declare your major! To do so, make sure to follow the following steps:

1. Go to the academic department of your intended major to declare your major.
2. Meet with a departmental faculty advisor to review the guidelines for your new major.
3. Continue to meet with your advisor to select courses each semester.
4. Work with the Center to explore opportunities for internships, volunteer work, and summer employment.