Choosing a Career Based on What you Like and Dislike

The meaning of interests is straightforward.
- What kind of activities do you like?
- What types of hobbies do you enjoy?
- What topics do you enjoy talking about?
- What kind of people do you enjoy being around?

Specifically, your interests are those things that grab your curiosity, the activities that give you pleasure. They are the sum of your preferences that give definition to who you are. Exploring different courses or types of activities are great ways to try out new interests.

There is an infinite number of subjects or activities in which you might develop an interest. Here are a few examples: animals, art, books, business, computers, engineering, entertainment, environment, fashion, gardening, health, history, law, machines, mathematics, media, museums, music, outdoors, people, photography, school, science, sports, theatre, travel, and world affairs.

At first glance, assessing and identifying your skills, values, and interests may seem to be a simple method for matching people to career fields. Ultimately, your career choice will involve a complex evaluation of many factors about you including personality traits and aspirations.

In 1927 Edward K Strong, a psychologist, developed the first interest inventory, a tool used to measure individuals' interests and compare them to the interests of those working in various occupations. It is still in use today, but there are others as well, including the Kuder Occupational Interest Survey, the Campbell Interest and Skill Survey, and the Self-Directed Search by John Holland.

How to Take an Interest Inventory.

A career counselor or other career development professional can administer an interest inventory as part of a complete self-assessment which should also look at things such as your personality type, skills and work values.

You will be asked to complete a questionnaire containing a series of items about your likes and dislikes. These items may measure, for example, your interests regarding leisure activities, work-related activities, people with whom you prefer to work and school subjects. In order to get the most accurate results, it is important to respond to each item with as much honesty as possible. There are no right or wrong answers and no one will judge you.

When responding to items related to work-related activities, do not worry about whether or not you have training or a particular skill. For the purposes of completing an interest inventory, that is not important. All you are being asked at this point is whether that activity is of interest to you. There will be plenty of time later on, as you begin to explore your options, to decide whether or not you want to become skilled in a particular area.

Getting and Understanding Your Results.

Your report should include a list of occupations that may be suitable for someone with your interests. Some of the occupations on the list may appeal to you while others will not.

It is important to remember that just because an occupation shows up in the results of an interest inventory or other self-assessment tool that does not necessarily mean it is the best choice for you.

It is essential that you carefully explore any occupation you are considering regardless of what list it turns up on. Your interests may indicate that a particular occupation may be suitable for someone who shares your interests, but it may not be suitable for you for a variety of other reasons.