

DOING THE HOMEWORK: RESEARCHING MAJORS AND ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

While many of us may have different preferred learning styles and preferred sources of information, please use any or all of the following strategies listed below when researching the majors you are considering.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

READ your college publications, [course catalogs](#), degree requirements, advising guidelines, and web sources, including the department's website.

DISCUSS your possible majors with a variety of individuals. Departmental faculty, academic advisors (both general advisors and departmental advisors), admissions representatives, current students, and program graduates may all be great sources of information.

TAKE CLASSES in majors that you are considering. While you probably would not want to rule out a major based on your experience in a 100 level class, you may get a better sense of the quality and priorities of the faculty in the department. Also, consider shadowing upper level courses for additional feedback and information.

GET EXPERIENCE in the career field or major through paid part time work, student organizations, or volunteer activities.

ATTEND informational and pre-professional programs for the academic department or career you are exploring.

QUESTIONS TO ASK: THE MAJOR CHOICE CHECKLIST

Very often, students are tempted to simply ask, "What can I do with a major in _____?" Keep in mind, however, that ANY major can, in theory, lead to ANY career. Take time to dig deeper using the following questions:

1. Where have graduates of your program gone? What specific organizations have hired them and for what positions? Do any of these areas represent a good fit for my own needs and goals?
2. What specific prerequisites are required for admission to this major? Is there a GPA requirement? What is the admissions process?
3. What courses and experiences are required to complete this major? Are there internship or practicum requirements? How about research opportunities? Does the department offer a listserv that I can join?
4. Which courses that I have already taken will apply to this major? Toward General Education requirements? Which further coursework will be required? Can I Finish in 4 years?
5. What other programs does the department offer? Minors? Joint majors? Combined degrees? Other programs? Which of these options fit my needs best?
6. What skills and competencies will I develop through this major?
7. What might I dislike about this major?
8. Where do my strengths need to be to do well in this major?
9. What is the department's class size?
10. Who can I contact with future questions?
11. Can I look through required textbooks and course syllabi of courses necessary for the major?

THE BOTTOM LINE: The degree to which you LIKE your major and ENJOY your classes is perhaps the best single indicator of how you'll do academically. And how well you do during your college experience is one of the best single predictors of your success in the world of work. If you have explored and given careful thought to your own goals and the majors you are contemplating, have confidence in your choice! Look forward to participating in the many student organizations and pre-professional activities that will prepare you to begin your career.