

# SELF- REFLECTION GUIDE



Middlebury College  
*Center for Careers and Internships*

# GETTING STARTED

Spending time reflecting on your personality, skills, interests, and values can not only help you think about what your future might hold but also help you figure out how to get the most out of your time at Middlebury. It is important to make informed choices based on who you are, what you value, and what you can offer to the world.

As you make discoveries about yourself, you will most likely begin to notice patterns, threads, and connections that might not have been obvious before. This can often lead to clarity as you make decisions about your major, which classes to take, which cocurricular activities to participate in, how to spend your summers, and eventually which internship or job you wish to pursue.

These decisions are all steps along the way to your future career path.

## SELF-ASSESSMENT RESOURCES

CCI offers one on one advising appointments to help you learn more about yourself in relation to your career goals, exploration, and ambition.

### Advising Appointments

You can schedule a one-on-one advising appointment with a career advisor. They will help you start the self-assessment process and help you reflect on the information you gather about yourself using the following exercises. Learn about the advisors and schedule an appointment via Handshake: [go/handshake](#).

### This Guide

What follows is a directed process of focused reflection exercises in the following five areas:

1. Interests
2. Skills
3. Values
4. Family and culture

In each section, you will see exercises to complete and questions to reflect on to help you process the information you gather. If you would like to discuss what you are learning with a career advisor, please request an appointment. Advisors may be able to help you uncover details that are difficult for you to see on your own.

Try to complete as many of the exercises as you can; you may do them in any order and they do not have to be done all at once. The more you learn about yourself, the more you will begin to understand what is important to you as you contemplate internships, jobs, and your future. If there are certain exercises that you try but do not find helpful, you can skip them and move on to the next.

Self-reflection can be an exciting, eye-opening experience. Enjoy the process!

## DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

Although not all interests lend themselves well to the workplace, with a little creativity you can find ways to do what you enjoy in some part of your work or life outside work.

Answer any of the questions below that intrigue you or make you think. Pay attention to your responses. You may find it helpful to do this exercise with a trusted friend who may recognize themes or threads you might normally miss.

1. What was your favorite class in high school or at Middlebury? Why did you like it?
2. What are some of your nonacademic interests/hobbies? What do you do for fun?
3. What makes you happiest in your life? What excites you?
4. What do you do that makes you feel invincible?
5. What do people thank you for?
6. What do people think you're good at?
7. Who do you look up to? Who are your mentors? Who inspires you? Why?

8. Consider your previous jobs, internships, and volunteer or extracurricular activities. What did you like? What didn't you like? Was it a good fit for you? Why or why not?
9. What do you dislike doing or do out of obligation?
10. What social, political, environmental, or other issues are important to you? How do you participate in these issues?
11. When was the last time you "over-delivered" on something? What was it and why did you work so hard on it?
12. When was the last time you were in a "state of flow" and totally lost track of time? What were you doing?
13. What are you doing when you feel most like yourself?
14. Imagine you won \$200 million in the lottery. It's now three months later. What will you do tomorrow?
15. What would you do if you knew you could not fail?
16. What topics do you find yourself continuously arguing or defending with others? What beliefs does your stance represent?

17. What do you love helping people with? How do you most commonly help others?
18. What's your favorite section in a bookstore? What websites are you naturally drawn to?
19. Out of all your current and previous work roles, what would you gladly do for free?
20. How do you want to be remembered?
21. What are you naturally curious about?
22. Think back to when you were 5 or 10 years old. What did you want to be when you grew up? What were your influences? What skills and metaphors do these represent (e.g., pilot may be a symbol for freedom)?
23. What did you like to spend your time doing as a child? Do you still enjoy this activity?
24. What careers do you find yourself dreaming of? What jobs do others have that you wish were yours?
25. What is something you want to make sure to do in your lifetime?

26. What stories resonate with you?
27. When you imagine the world you want to live in, what three words come to mind?
28. What issues or ideas are deeply compelling to you?

### **REFLECT**

1. What did you learn or remember about your own interests? Were there any surprises or things you hadn't thought about for a while?
2. Did you notice any themes or threads that connected your various interests?
3. What, if any, of these interests do you feel are integral to personal fulfillment?
4. Do you foresee any barriers to exploring certain interests as a career option?

*Adapted with permission from Scott Dinsmore's "27 Questions to Find Your Passion" at [www.liveyourlegend.net](http://www.liveyourlegend.net).*

## SKILLS INVENTORY

Knowing what skills you have to offer can help you identify specific industries or functional roles that might be a good match. Rate yourself in the following skill categories using the scale below, and then circle the skills that you enjoy using and put an X through those you don't:

1 = Strong ability in this area

2 = Some ability

3 = Enough ability to get by with help from others

4 = No ability at all

### Verbal-Persuasive

- Writing: Express myself in written forms of communication
- Talking: Relate easily to people in ordinary conversational settings
- Speaking: Deliver a talk or address an audience
- Persuading: Able to convince others to believe something I hold to be true
- Selling: Convince others to buy a product/service I am selling or promoting
- Dramatics: Portray ideas or stories in a dramatic format
- Negotiations: Bargain/discuss with the goal of reaching agreement

### Social

- Social ease: Relate easily in situations that are primarily social in nature
- Dealing with public: Relate effectively with a variety of people who come to an establishment for information, service, or help
- Appearance/dress: Dress appropriately for a variety of interpersonal situations or group occasions
- Accepting feedback: Accept constructive criticism openly with an eye to improving performance

### Numerical

- Working with numerical data: Comfortable with large amounts of quantitative data and compiling, interpreting, and presenting data
- Solving quantitative problems: Reason quantitatively so that problems having numerical solutions can be solved without the aid of a computer or other mechanical device
- Computer use: Use computers to solve quantitative problems, have knowledge of programming, computer capabilities, etc.

### Investigative

- Scientific curiosity: Learn about scientific phenomena and investigate events that may lead to such knowledge
- Research: Gather information in a systematic way for a particular field of knowledge to establish certain facts or principles
- Technical work: Work easily with practical, mechanical, or industrial aspects of a particular science, profession, or craft

### Manual-Physical

- Mechanical reasoning: Understand the way that machinery or tools operate and the relationship between mechanical operations
- Manual dexterity: Skilled in using your hands
- Spatial perception: Judge the relationship of objects in space; manipulate them mentally, and visualize the effects of putting them together or of turning them over or around
- Physical stamina: Physically resistant to fatigue and illness
- Outdoor work: Familiar with the outdoors; enjoy working outdoors in a variety of elements

### Creative

- Artistic: Keenly sensitive to aesthetic values; able to create works of art
- Imaginative with things: Create new ideas and forms with various physical objects
- Imaginative with ideas: Create new ideas and programs through conceptualizing existing elements in new ways; able to merge abstract ideas

## Working with Others

- \_\_\_ Supervising: Oversee, manage, or direct work of others
- \_\_\_ Teaching: Help others learn how to do or understand something; able to provide knowledge or insight
- \_\_\_ Coaching and mentoring: Instruct, train, or encourage an individual to improve performance in a specific area
- \_\_\_ Counseling: Engage in a direct helping relationship with another in situations where the person's concern is not solvable through information-giving or advice

## Managerial

- \_\_\_ Planning: Develop a program, project, or set of ideas through systematic preparation and arrangement of tasks, coordinating the people and resources necessary to put a plan into effect
- \_\_\_ Organization: Arrange items in a systematic fashion so that such items or information can be readily used or retrieved
- \_\_\_ Handling details: Able to work efficiently with a great variety and/or volume of information
- \_\_\_ Making decisions: Comfortable in making judgments or reaching conclusions about matters that require specific action; able to accept responsibility for the consequences of such actions

*Adapted with permission from Tufts Career Center.*

## REFLECT

1. Did you discover any new skills that you hadn't recognized before?
  
2. Do you have any skills that weren't listed above?

3. How do your skills line up with your interests (e.g., you have artistic abilities and also enjoy art)?

4. List the top 10 skills that you rated most highly. What do you notice? Do you recognize any themes or spot any potential career fields?

- |          |           |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____  |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____  |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____  |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____  |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ |

5. Identify skills you really enjoy using and/or would like to develop further.

6. Identify any skills you have but do not enjoy using. How have you used these skills throughout your life and how might you limit how much you use them in the future?

7. Are there skills you feel like you need to develop to be competitive but that you don't like using much? How does this feel? Is it still worth developing them?

## FAMILY AND FRIEND FEEDBACK EXERCISE

Use the knowledge and insights of the people who know you best to help you get to know your strengths better. Pick three or four people and ask them for 20 minutes of their time to answer the following questions about you:

- What do you appreciate about me?
- What am I good at? What are my strengths?
- What kind of job/career do you think would be a good fit for me?

In this exercise, they talk and you write. As much as is possible, write exactly what they say. Don't editorialize or comment; just write it down like a court reporter.

### REFLECT

1. What did you learn from their comments?
2. Were any of their comments a surprise? Why?
3. Were there any similarities between the responses from different people? If there were major differences, why do you think this was the case?
4. Did you have any noticeable emotional reactions to the information they shared with you (e.g., disbelief, anger, pride, joy, etc.)? Where do you think these feelings are coming from?

## VALUES ASSESSMENT

Many people find that the most satisfying and meaningful work is highly compatible with their values. However, the decision can be extremely difficult to make (e.g., career values may conflict with family and friendship values). When you have to make a decision that involves two or more conflicting values that are of major importance to you, you can make these decisions more effectively if you have some idea of what your most important values are and the priority that you give to each.

The following exercises will help you to understand which work and personal values are important to you, and what priorities you give to them. Because some of our influences change throughout our lives, our values are bound to change as well. What you highly value now may become less of a priority later so it's important to reflect on your values frequently throughout your life.

### Part I: Work Values

Rate each work value using the following scale:

- 1 = Very important to have in my work
- 2 = Somewhat important to have in my work
- 3 = Unimportant to have in my work

### Work conditions may permit or require the following:

- Independence/autonomy: Doing what you want to do without much direction from others
- Time flexibility: Arranging your own hours, working according to your own time schedule
- Change/variety: Performing varying tasks in a number of different settings
- Change/risk: Performing new tasks or leading new programs that challenge the established order and may be initially resisted
- Stability/security: Working in a secure job that pays you reasonably well
- Physical challenge: Performing dangerous tasks that challenge your physical capabilities



- Physical demands: Performing physically strenuous but relatively safe activities
- Mental challenge: Performing demanding tasks that challenge your intelligence and creativity
- Pressure: Performing in a highly stimulating environment with constant deadlines
- Precise work: Performing prescribed tasks that leave little room for error
- Decision making: Making choices about what to do and how to do it

**Individuals work for the following purposes:**

- To pursue truth/knowledge
- To acquire expertise/authority
- To use creativity/innovativeness
- To foster aesthetic appreciation
- To make social contributions
- To acquire material gain
- To seek recognition
- To promote ethics/morality
- To seek spiritual/transpersonal gain

**Relationships at work may involve the following:**

- Working alone on assignments, with minimal contact with other people
- Public contact interacting in predictable ways with a continuous flow of people
- Developing close friendships with coworkers
- Group membership: belonging to a group with a common purpose and/or interest
- Helping others
- Influencing others
- Supervising others
- Controlling others
- Collaborating with others to accomplish shared goals

**List your three most important work values in each of these three categories:**

- | Work Conditions | Work Purposes | Work Relationships |
|-----------------|---------------|--------------------|
| 1. _____        | 1. _____      | 1. _____           |
| 2. _____        | 2. _____      | 2. _____           |
| 3. _____        | 3. _____      | 3. _____           |

**Part II: Personal Values**

Rate each personal value using the following scale:

1 = Very important as part of my life

2 = Somewhat important as part of my life

3 = Unimportant as part of my life

- Good health
- Many close friendships
- A large family
- A fulfilling career
- A stable marriage/relationship
- A financially comfortable life
- Independence
- Creativity
- Participating in an organized religion
- Having children
- A variety of interests and activities
- Freedom to create my own lifestyle
- Owning a house
- A happy love relationship
- Fulfilling career
- Contributing to my community
- Abundance of leisure time
- Ability to move from place to place

- \_\_\_ A stable life
- \_\_\_ A life without stress
- \_\_\_ Strong religious values
- \_\_\_ A chance to make social changes
- \_\_\_ To be remembered for my accomplishments
- \_\_\_ Helping those in distress
- \_\_\_ Freedom to live where I wish
- \_\_\_ Time to myself
- \_\_\_ Enjoyment of arts, entertainment, and cultural activities
- \_\_\_ A life that is stimulating
- \_\_\_ A life with many changes and much variety
- \_\_\_ Opportunity to be a leader
- \_\_\_ To make a major discovery that would save lives
- \_\_\_ A good physical appearance
- \_\_\_ Opportunity to establish roots in one place
- \_\_\_ Opportunity for physical activities
- \_\_\_ An exciting life
- \_\_\_ A chance to get into politics
- \_\_\_ To live according to strong moral values
- \_\_\_ Opportunity to teach others
- \_\_\_ To write something memorable
- \_\_\_ A chance to become famous
- \_\_\_ To help others solve problems
- \_\_\_ To make lots of money

List five of your most important personal values.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

*Based on Training for Life: A Practical Guide to Career and Life Planning, Fifth Edition (1994)*

## REFLECT

1. How did you find the process of selecting values from this list? Easy or difficult?
  
2. Our values change throughout our lifetimes, but what observations can you make about your values right now?
  
3. How important is it to you for your personal values to align with work life?
  
4. How have your most important personal values impacted your life choices thus far?
  
5. How do you think your most important work and personal values will affect your career choice(s)?

## FAMILY AND CULTURE ASSESSMENT

Your awareness of these influences will help you make more informed, thoughtful decisions as you consider your career options.

### Part 1: Family Career Influences

Instructions: Consider the people who have influenced your career perceptions. Write down the work (paid or unpaid) done by the following people:

Mother:

Father:

Guardian(s):

Sister(s)

Brother(s)

Cousin(s)/Same-generation family members

Maternal Grandmother

Maternal Grandfather

Paternal Grandmother

Paternal Grandfather

Aunt(s)/Uncle(s)

### REFLECT

1. Do any career fields or specific occupations show up repeatedly in your family? If so, which ones? Are you interested in continuing these work traditions? What will happen if you do or don't follow the tradition?
2. Do/did your parent(s)/guardian(s) work outside of the home? If so, how has that influenced you? If only one works/worked outside of the home, how has that influenced you?

3. What levels of socioeconomic status are apparent or reflected in your family's work? How does this affect your own thoughts about a job or career?
4. Did your family members choose their careers or did external circumstances affect their choices?
5. What are the work values in your family (e.g., stability, high salaries, helping others)?
6. What do your family members say about their work? Is it positive or negative?
7. Do any family members want you to pursue a specific career? Are you interested in pursuing this career?
8. What other advice does your family give you about your future work or career path?
9. What assumptions or decisions about work might you have made based on what you have heard from or observed in your family?

*Based on the Career Genogram Exercise by Sears, B.J. & Gordon, V.N. (2002), and Building your Career: A Guide to Your Future (3rd ed.). Prentice-Hall: Upper Saddle River. Adapted with permission from Tufts University Career Center.*

## Part 2: Culture Assessment

1. Recall your earliest career ambition. How old were you when you developed this goal? What important people in your life encouraged/discouraged you in this pursuit?
2. Do you have role models in your culture or community for the kind of work you think you would like to do? If not, where can you find mentors or opportunities to connect with people in the fields that interest you?
3. How does the Middlebury College culture impact your career aspirations or thoughts about work?
4. What messages have you received based on your gender identity about your career considerations or work in general? How have these messages influenced your thoughts about future career choices?

5. What messages have you received from your ethnic group or other identity groups that are important to you about your career considerations or work in general? How have these messages influenced your thoughts about future career choices?
6. How important to you are the desires and opinions of others in your life as you make career decisions? Do you feel comfortable with their level of influence?

*Based on the Career-O-Gram (Thorngren & Feit, 2001); and "Reflections" in Finding Your Own North Star, by Martha Beck. Adapted with permission from Tufts University Career Center.*

## Part 3: Questionnaire for Family

Consider asking your family members the questions you have just completed in parts 1 and 2. Their responses to these questions will provide you with even more insight into the history of work and careers in your family and how it has impacted career choices for several generations.

## SUMMING IT UP

Now that you've completed this self-assessment and meaningful reflection, take some time to summarize all the pieces of the information you've discovered.

List 5 interests based on your discovery question answers that you would like to continue or begin to explore.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

List your top 5 work values in rank order.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

List your top 5 personal values in rank order.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

List 10 skills that you have and/or want to continue to develop.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

Identify any major family or cultural influences on your career planning process.

List 5-10 career fields or occupations/job titles that interest you based on all that you have learned about yourself. You should also consider using our Career Exploration Guide to identify others.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

## **REFLECT**

Look at your summary, consider the discoveries you've made throughout this workbook, and take a moment to reflect on all this information as a whole. Then decide what your next steps will be as you move forward in your career exploration process.

1. What connections do you see between your interests, skills, values, and potential career fields? Are there any occupational themes that are becoming clear to you?
2. Can you draw any conclusions about the information that will help you narrow down or expand your career options?
3. What new questions have these exercises sparked and how will you begin to answer them?
4. What are your next steps as you consider your internship or job options? If you want to explore some of the occupations or career fields, see the CCI Career Exploration Guide to get started.

