

## Mind-Mapping: A Tool to Identify Career Paths

One vital component of exploring careers involves reflecting on yourself including your interests, strengths, and motivations. Here's a quick activity you can do to get ideas floating in your head down on paper which will bring you one step closer to being able to articulate your career goals:

### What is a mind-map?

Mind maps are a brainstorming tool that help us to get ideas down on paper while removing the normal filtering process we tend to engage in when considering career paths. Working in a less restricted way often results in helping us to identify interest themes that we might otherwise have missed in considering potential paths.

### How to make one:

1. Get out a single sheet of paper (a large one if you can) and markers or pens of a few different colors.
2. Make a circle in the center of the page and write your name inside it.
3. Set a timer for 5 minutes.
4. One the paper surrounding your name, begin writing down interests or goals you have, whether they be professional, academic, recreational, personal. Don't limit yourself to only your academic or professional life or goals. This is a brain dump of all the things that make you tick and that you'd like in the future whether that be time with family, being in nature, cooking, talking to friends on the phone, reading the news, learning a new subject, work-life balance, financial stability, helping others, etc. Feeling stuck? Read through the below prompts to get the ideas flowing. Stop when the timer beeps!
  - a. What have been your favorite courses?
  - b. In your previous jobs, internships, or extracurricular experiences, what tasks did you enjoy most?
  - c. What are the things you find yourself doing and enjoying, even though you don't have to do them?
  - d. What local, societal, or world problems interest you?
  - e. If you were a writer, what subjects would you want to tell stories about?
  - f. If you could teach a course on any subject, what subjects would you teach?
  - g. What do you do for fun? To relax and unwind?

5. Take a look at the items you wrote down and look for themes that emerge on the page and jot them down on a separate sheet of paper. For example, if you wrote down “caring for animals” or “helping my family” one of your themes could be “**Helping Others**”. If you wrote down “reading” or “following the news” one of your themes could be “**Learning new things**”. There is no right or wrong here.
6. Assign a color to each category. For example, if one of your themes was “**Financial Security**”, you could assign the color purple to that theme and then circle all items on your mind map that fall into that category in purple. Do the same for each identified theme and item on your mind map.
7. Now take a look at your map. Which themes emerge the most? Which would you weight more heavily than others? On the piece of paper where you recorded your theme names, circle the top three that matter to you. This is your starting point when evaluating fit as to whether or not job descriptions you read about or hear about might be a fit for you.

### Having trouble identifying your themes or making sense of your mind map?

Show it to a friend or family member! Often others see patterns in information that we are too close to to see. You can also schedule a 1:1 Career Coaching appointment with the Office of Career Services to reflect on your interests and skills. [Book an appointment online now!](#)