

5

Making

decisions that

work for you



As you move closer to making decisions about your future, the material in the next part will help you weigh the benefits of several possible options, some of which you may already be considering. Before you lock yourself into something, however, why not spend some time really thinking things through? This part can help you with some of your thinking.

This chapter is divided into three sections:

- self-assessment;
- research and gathering information; and
- decisionmaking and goal setting.

Self-Assessment

Whether we heard or read it, whether we heeded or ignored it, nearly all of us have at some time received this message: Know who you are. Before plunging into your plans for the

future, spend some time getting to know yourself a little better. The questions and tasks here can help you do that. As you go through them, try to be as honest with yourself as you can; see if you can become the person who knows you best.

QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS:

- What opportunity will you look for personally and professionally? Will it be school, a job, or something else entirely?
- What are the ideal qualities and components that you would like in your next opportunity?

TASKS TO COMPLETE:

- Identify your values, skills, interests, accomplishments and personal considerations.
- Begin to describe generally what you are seeking in your next opportunity.

Values

Values are principles or standards that influence the way we live our lives. Our values are the things that matter to us. Here are some examples of things people may value—family, friends, children, community, wealth, good health and physical activity, material possessions, power and/or prestige, education, interconnectedness, religion, and social justice. Not everyone values all of these items, and those who care about some of the same things might differ in the degree to which they care. As you

move ahead with your life, you may find that you share certain values with those around you and don't share others.

Our values come from our life experiences. When we are young, we often learn values from our parents

and other important adults in our lives; as we age, our friends, spouses, teachers, and co-workers influence our values as well. Although values sometimes change over time, the shift is not always dramatic. Usually, value changes reflect changing circumstances and experiences. For example, sometimes people's values undergo a modification as a result of their AmeriCorps service.

During transitional periods, values become particularly significant because they form the basis for both decisions and actions. If your next opportunity is to be satisfying, it must fit into your value system. Even though the following exercise was designed for people thinking of an employment opportunity, it will be helpful to you regardless of your next step.

values are particularly significant because they form the basis for both decisions and actions

WORKSHEET

Work values exercise

(Adapted from D. Borchard, J.J. Kelly, and N.P.K. Weaver, *Your Career: Choices, Chances, Changes*, 1980, 1982, 1984, 1988, 1992 by Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company. Reprinted with permission of Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.)

Read the definitions of the work values listed in the three categories below—work conditions, work purposes, and work relationships. As you read, think about how they are relevant to you. Then rate them using the following scale:

1 = Unimportant in my choice of career/in my work

2 = Somewhat important in my choice of career/in my work

3 = Very important in my choice of career/in my work.

Place the number corresponding to your rating in the box to the left of each work value.

WORK CONDITIONS

- 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 way things are usually done and may be initially resisted
- Stability/Security—performing regular, predictable tasks in a job you are sure of and that pays you reasonably well
- Physical challenge—performing dangerous tasks that challenge your physical capabilities and involve risk
- Physical demands—performing physically strenuous, but relatively safe activities

- Mental challenge—performing demanding tasks that challenge your intelligence and creativity
- Pressure/Time deadlines—performing in a highly critical environment with constant time deadlines
- Precise work—performing prescribed tasks that leave little room for error
- Decisionmaking—making choices about what to do and how to do it

WORK PURPOSES

- Truth/Knowledge—pursuing knowledge and understanding
- Expertise/Authority—seeking recognition as an expert or leader in a particular area
- Creativity/Innovation—developing new and different ideas, programs, and/or structures
- Aesthetic appreciation—seeking out the appreciation of beauty in all of its various forms
- Social contributions—seeking to improve the human condition
- Material gain—accumulating money or other material objects
- Achievement/Recognition—seeking public recognition for your work contributions
- Ethical/Moral—acting according to a set of moral and ethical standards
- Spiritual/Transpersonal—looking beyond ordinary consciousness to a more spiritual plane

WORK RELATIONSHIPS

- Working alone—doing assignments by yourself with minimal contact with other people
- Public contact—interacting in predictable ways with a continuous flow of people
- Close friendships—developing strong relationships with the people at work
- Group membership—belonging to a group with a common purpose and/or interest
- Helping others—assisting other people directly to obtain information and/or resolve problems
- Influencing others—affecting others in ways designed to change attitudes or opinions
- Supervising others—being in a position to oversee the work of other employees
- Controlling others—maintaining some control or power over the destinies of other people

List below your top three or four most important work values in each of the three categories. Add any others that are important to you but were not listed earlier.

Work Conditions

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Work Purposes

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Work Relationships

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Now list your three or four most important work values on the "Next-Step Summary Sheet" on page 35.

Skills

Skills come in a variety of forms. We all have them, although they differ from person to person. Skills may be described as:

...any of the widest possible variety of attributes that represent your strengths, your key abilities, the characteristics that give you your greatest potency, the ways in which you tend to be most successful when dealing with problems, tasks, and other life experiences. There can be little doubt that you do some things better than other things. You are more comfortable in certain situations than in others. You consistently prefer particular tasks over all others. Your strengths reveal much of what makes you unique, a person who is different from any other individual alive.

(H. Figler, *The Complete Job Search Handbook*. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1988, p. 57)

Put a shorter way, a skill is something you do well.

Self-Management Skills. Certain personality traits, developed through experience and rooted in your temperament, are those you use to manage yourself—whatever the setting. These traits can and do affect work habits. Sometimes self-management skills are also known as adaptive skills or personality traits. (In speech, they are often expressed as adjectives.) In the exercise on page 23, you will evaluate yourself against a fairly long list of self-management skills.

Transferable Skills. Among the skills you now have are those you can transfer. Transferable skills—skills related to performance and ability—can be used in (transferred to) many different types of work and organizations. These skills, which apply to people, data, and things, are often called functional skills. (In speech, they tend to be expressed as verbs.)

Special-Knowledge Skills. The third type of skills addressed in this self-assessment are special-knowledge skills. These skills, learned through education, training, and/or on-the-job learning, relate to special work situations. For example, a budget analyst may be required to have accounting skills. Accounting is a special-knowledge skill—not everyone has it, and it is not necessarily transferable to many other types of work. Other examples of special-knowledge skills are emergency medical assistance, personnel administration, child development, plumbing, natural resource management, law enforcement, heavy-equipment maintenance, and newsletter design skills. (Special-knowledge skills are usually expressed as nouns.)

WORKSHEET

Self-management

skills exercise



(Adapted from D. Borchard, J.J. Kelly, and N.P.K. Weaver, *Your Career: Choices, Chances, Changes*. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1992, pp. 32-33. Reprinted with permission of Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.)

1. Read through this list of skills. Then circle the skills, or traits, you now possess.

Alert	Diplomatic
Ambitious	Dynamic (high-energy)
Assertive	Easygoing
Authentic ("real")	Enthusiastic
Calm	Ethical
Careful	Fast
Cautious	Flexible
Cheerful	Friendly
Conforming	Hard-working
Cooperative	Helpful
Determined	Honest
Dependable	Humorous

Independent	Resilient
Kind	Responsible
Loyal	Results-oriented
Mature	Self-controlled
Motivated	Self-confident
Optimistic	Sincere
Orderly	Spontaneous
Patient	Strong-willed
Persistent	Tactful
Poised	Thrifty
Polite	Tolerant
Prompt	Trustworthy
	Versatile

2. Read through the list again. Now, put checks next to any self-management skills you need or want to develop. (We all have habits or ways of dealing with others that need to be improved. Admit to yours by placing checkmarks next to them.)

3. Look again at the self-management skills you checked—the skills you need or want to develop. Although there are many ways to develop better self-management skills, doing so will require that you set goals and stick to them. For example, if you believe you need to become more orderly, a good way to achieve this might be to create a plan and then stay with it until orderliness becomes a habit. As part of your campaign, enlist colleagues or supervisors. Let them know what you're trying to do, and ask them to make suggestions whenever they see an opportunity for improvement. Sometimes just making yourself aware of the need for new self-management skills helps. For example, being aware and reminding yourself regularly of the need to be more tactful may make you more likely to become so.

4. Think about people who might be evaluating you for your next step. Then list six self-management skills you would most want these people to know you possess.

5. Transfer the list of skills from the previous question to the "Next-Step Summary Sheet" on page 35.

6. List the self-management skills you don't want to use or develop more. For example, you may be very flexible but would like your next work site to be more orderly, with a greater emphasis placed upon planning. Or you may want your next environment to be one that tolerates, or even values, nonconformity.

Below, list the top five self-management skills you want to improve upon. How might you develop them?

SKILLS

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

You may be surprised by the number of self-management skills you possess. It is often true that other types of skills get you hired at a workplace, but self-management skills are the ones responsible for most promotions within a workplace.

SKILL Possess Like to Use Good At

Innovative/Original

Use imagination to create	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Design graphically	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use intuition	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Design programs, events, activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Originate ideas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Act/Perform	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Write creatively	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Think of many possibilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have artistic sense	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Draw/Design artistically	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Move creatively/Dance/Mime	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Put facts and ideas together in new, creative ways	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Innovate/Invent something new or different	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Compose music, songs, lyrics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Social/Interpersonal

Listen skillfully	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Develop rapport, understanding	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Counsel/Help/Guide/Mentor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Draw people out/Interview	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Instruct/Train/Educate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Put others at ease	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Facilitate groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SKILL Possess Like to Use Good At

Communicate with tact	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Serve/Respond	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide information/Advise	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cooperate with others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Show warmth and caring	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support and cooperate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Heal/Nurse/Nurture/Cure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Managing/Influencing

Administer program or resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Direct/Supervise others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make business-related decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Negotiate/Contract with others or groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sell/Persuade/Influence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Convince others through force of personality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Oversee programs, projects, activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organize/Set group goals/Plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Undertake entrepreneurial activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organize and manage activity, task, or project	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Exercise leadership in a group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Take risks in a public setting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Negotiate deals or transactions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Coordinate people and activities to work together	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SKILL Possess Like to Use Good At

Detail/Data

Work with numerical data	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Proofread/Edit/Write technically	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inspect/Examine/Inventory	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Type/Word processing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Follow directions, procedures accurately	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Be careful and accurate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do math quickly and accurately	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Schedule/Organize activities or events	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Complete details on schedule	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Keep track of data or numbers/Accounting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Categorize/Sort/Place items in right places	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Remember numbers or specific facts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attend to details	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
File/Classify/Record/Retrieve	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. In the first column below, list the transferable skills that you marked all three times. These are the skills you possess, like to use, and are really good at. If your next step is to seek employment, you probably will want to look for jobs that use these skills. (Be sure that prospective employers know you have them!) Even if you're not looking for employment as your next step, you probably will want to let people know you possess these skills in order to apply them.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Copy your list of transferable skills onto the "Next-Step Summary Sheet" on page 35.

5. Determine whether your skills focus on people, data, or things. Do this by writing People, Data, or Things next to each skill you put down in number 4. If you are unsure, ask yourself, "Who or what would these skills be used with—data, people, or things?" You may have a strong preference for one or more of the areas. After completing this exercise, indicate whether you prefer People, Data, or Things on the "Next-Step Summary Sheet" on page 35.

6. Check to see which three categories (e.g., manual/technical) you marked most often. List them below, starting with the category that has the most marks. These three categories represent your major transferable skill areas.

7. Finally, look at the master list to see which skills you possess and/or are good at that you do not want to use. These would be the transferable skills you want to avoid using to a great extent. For example, you may be a great writer but may not enjoy writing. List your ten to fifteen least-preferred transferable skills below.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

WORKSHEET

Special-knowledge skills exercise



Think about the special knowledge you have that many others do not. For example, one skill you may have developed through your AmeriCorps service is community development. You may have gained this knowledge through AmeriCorps training sessions and experienced it in your work. If you have trouble coming up with a list of your special-knowledge skills, ask your AmeriCorps colleagues and supervisors to help. What special-knowledge skills do they think you have? As you work on your list, try to be neither too arrogant nor too humble.

1. List your special-knowledge skills.

2. Circle the skills you would like to use after AmeriCorps.

3. Write the circled skills on the "Next-Step Summary Sheet" on page 35.

4. Are there special-knowledge skills you need or want to develop? Have employers, AmeriCorps supervisors, teachers, or other significant people in your life encouraged you to develop certain special-knowledge skills for your future, like fundraising skills, business-development skills, or counseling skills? In the space below, list the special-knowledge skills you need now. Do the same on the "Next-Step Summary Sheet." (As you move through the exercises in this workbook, you may find your list either growing or diminishing.)

Interests

The third major area of self-assessment concerns interests. How do you spend time when you can do what you want to do? What would you do with your time if you won a lottery and didn't have to earn money any longer?

According to research conducted by John Holland (*Making Vocational Choices*, 2nd Edition, Odessa, Fla.: Psychological Assessment Resources, 1994), we develop preferences for certain related activities during our early years. These preferences largely determine our likes and dislikes throughout life. Holland has identified six personality styles, which he describes as Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional. Nearly everyone has characteristics of each type.

Holland's theory stipulates that persons are attracted to roles in work environments that meet their personal needs and provide them with satisfaction (Zunker, V.G., *Career Counseling*, 5th Ed. Pacific Grove, Calif.: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co., 1998, p. 53).

That makes sense, doesn't it? Try to match your needs with the work situation/type work that you will do. In Holland's scheme, the match leads to occupational satisfaction. In other words, the more compatible your Holland style is with your activities, organizations, and work, the more satisfied you will be.

Here's some general information about what types of work environments each "pure" Holland type is most attracted to. Remember that no one is a pure Holland type, however (Zunker, p. 54).

- Realistic types like skilled trades such as plumber, electrician, and machine operator; they like to use skills such as those needed by airplane mechanics, photographers, draftspersons, and some service occupations.
- Investigative types like scientific-related work such as chemist, physicist, mathematician, laboratory technician, computer programmer, and electronic worker.
- Artistic types like artistic work such as sculptor, designer, artist, music teacher, editor, writer, and musician.
- Social types like education pursuits such as teacher and college professor, and social service positions such as social worker, rehabilitation counselor, and professional nurse.
- Enterprising types like managerial and sales positions such as personnel, production manager, and life insurance, car, or real estate salesperson.
- Conventional types like office and clerical work such as teller, accountant, secretary, receptionist, and credit manager. The following table describes and compares each Holland type further.

Comparison of the Holland Personality Types

	Realistic	Investigative	Artistic	Social	Enterprising	Conventional
CHARACTERISTICS	Stable Physical Practical Frank Self-reliant	Analytical Independent Curious Intellectual Precise	Imaginative Idealistic Original Expressive Impulsive	Cooperative Understanding Helpful Tactful Sociable	Persuasive Domineering Energetic Ambitious Flirtatious	Conscientious Orderly Persistent Conforming Efficient
LIKES	Outdoor work Mechanics Athletics Working with plants, tools, and animals	Abstract problems Science Investigation Unstructured situations Working alone	Ideas Self-expression Creativity Unstructured situations Working alone	People Attention Discussion Helping Socializing	Power People Status Influencing Managing	Order Carrying out details Organizing Structure Working with data
DISLIKES	Educational activities Self-expression Working with people	Repetitive activities Rules Working with people	Structure Rules Physical work Details Repetitive activities	Physical work Working with tools Working outdoors	Systematic activities Precise work Concentrated intellectual work	Unsystematized activities Lack of structure Ambiguity
ORIENTATION	Hands-on activities	Problemsolving	Idea creating	People assisting	People influencing	Detail and data
PREFERRED SKILLS	Building Repairing Making and growing things	Problemsolving Analytical reasoning Developing models and systems	Creating Visualizing Unstructured tasks Imagining	Interpersonal activities Establishing rapport Communicating Helping	Leading Managing Persuading Motivating others	Detailed tasks Following directions precisely Repetitive tasks
PEOPLE WHO CHARACTERIZE THE STYLES	Thomas Edison The Wright Brothers Antonio Stradivari Chris Evert Lloyd Johannes Gutenberg Neil Armstrong Amelia Earhart Arthur Ashe Michael Jordan Jackie Joyner-Kersey Nancy Lopez	Albert Einstein Sherlock Holmes George Washington Carver Madam Curie Sigmund Freud Charles Darwin Admiral Grace Hopper Charles Drew W.E.B. Dubois Thurgood Marshall Dr. Taylor G. Went	Alex Haley Beverly Sills Ludwig von Beethoven Michelangelo Buonarroti William Shakespeare Mikhail Baryshnikov Emily Dickinson Frank Lloyd Wright Maya Angelou Emilio Estevez Duke Ellington Janet Jackson Sinbad	Helen Keller Joyce Brothers Carl Menninger Kenneth Clark Florence Nightengale Mother Teresa Mahatma Gandhi Albert Schweitzer Jaime Escalante Jocelyn Elders Coretta Scott King Desmond Tutu	Henry Ford Winston Churchill Martin Luther King Margaret Thatcher Lee Iacocca Laura Ashley Golda Meir Cesar Chavez Connie Chung Barbara Jordan Nelson Mandela	E.F. Hutton Dr. Watson (Sherlock Holmes' assistant) Noah Webster (dictionary) Melvil Dewey (Dewey decimal system) Herman Hollerith (keypunch card) Carolus Linnaeus (botanist) Clarence Thomas

WORKSHEET

Interests exercise



Your Holland type becomes important as you begin to make choices about your future. By understanding your Holland type you may be better able to focus on the learning, service, work, and leisure activities you prefer. The interests exercise that follows may help you to determine which Holland type fits you best.

1. Based upon the Holland table, list the personality types you think best describe you. Are you Realistic? Investigative? Artistic? Social? Enterprising? Conventional? List the three that come closest.

Most Like You: _____

Second Most Like You: _____

Third Most Like You: _____

Review the two columns that follow. They show how the skill categories discussed in the transferable skills exercise relate to the six Holland types.

TRANSFERABLE SKILL CATEGORIES	Holland Types
Manual/Technical	Realistic
Analytical/Problemsolving	Investigative
Innovative/Original	Artistic
Social/Interpersonal	Social
Managing/Influencing	Enterprising
Detail/Data	Conventional

2. In this part of the exercise, you will relate the three major categories of transferable skills you listed in number 5 of the transferable skills exercise to a Holland type. For example, let's say that one of your major transferable skills is to "construct/build." Looking at the skills matrix, you see that construct/build falls under the "Manual/Technical" category, which relates to the "Realistic" Holland type. If one of your skills is to "design graphically," you will find that skill under the category of "Innovative/Original" on the matrix. "Innovative/original" relates to the "Artistic" Holland type. Now write your top three transferable skills to the space below. Check the matrix to see its category, and then find the related Holland type in the right column above.

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS CATEGORY	Holland Type
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____

3. Compare your two lists (numbers 1 and 2 above). Do you have the same three skill categories in each response? In the same order? _____

4. No matter which assessment method is used, you are the best evaluator of yourself. Given what you have read in the table about the six Holland types, which three types best fit you and why?

1. _____

Why? _____

2. _____

Why? _____

3. _____

Why? _____

5. List your three Holland types and explain why you are like each type in the space at number 5 on the "Next-Step Summary Sheet" on page 35. Then, using the first letter of each of your three types, write your Holland Code in the space provided. (For example, if your Holland types are Artistic, Investigative, and Enterprising, your Holland Code is AIE. If your types are Realistic, Enterprising, and Social, your Holland Code is RES.)

A final note: Because this interest assessment is fairly simple, it may not satisfy your need to understand the extent and applicability of your interests. If you need more help, consult a career counselor who can administer and interpret a formal and in-depth assessment. *The Self-Directed Search* (Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc., Odessa, Fla.) and the *Strong Interest Inventory* (Consulting Psychologists Press, Palo Alto, Calif.) are two common interest assessments based on the Holland types.

Career counselors can be found in many places. High schools sometimes call them guidance counselors. All colleges and universities, state and local job services/employment agencies, some county or local governments, and certain community organizations (such as the American Association of Retired Persons and the Jewish Social Service Agency) may offer the services of career counselors. The phone book is another good source to locate people in the private practice of career counseling. You may request information about state licensure or national certification, as well as references, from prospective counselors. A good starting point is your local community college. If its career office doesn't offer assistance to community members, ask the career staff to refer you to a community resource.

Accomplishments

The fourth major area of self-assessment is accomplishments. You have had many opportunities to work hard and accomplish a lot as an AmeriCorps member. Sometimes, however, it is difficult for alumni to describe their service in terms understood by employers, admission officers, and others who are unfamiliar with AmeriCorps. The purpose of this section is to help you think and write about your accomplishments as an AmeriCorps member in language that most people will understand.

A. GATHER YOUR SOURCES

A lot of work toward the goal of describing your accomplishments has already been done. The first step in identifying your AmeriCorps accomplishments is to gather the various sources that already describe them in detail. Those sources might be:

Training descriptions and certificates

Training conducted by you

Training received by you

Weekly/quarterly/monthly reports of activity

Project completion reports

Your journal, if you have kept one

Ambassadorship/special events reports

Site reports

Awards

Conference attendance/subject areas

Your job description(s)

Your responses to the "what you've learned" and "rewards of service" exercises in Chapter 4 and the previous skills exercises of this chapter

What sources of accomplishment descriptions do you have? Where are they? Find them and take copies of them with you as you leave your AmeriCorps service. List your sources of descriptions of accomplishments and their locations here:

B. CATEGORIZE YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

From the various sources gathered above, categorize your accomplishments by skill area. Some examples of skill areas might be training/teaching, environmental, educational, supervisory, communication, computer, youth development, community development, etc. Into what general categories do your accomplishments fit? Name them below. If you are having trouble naming your general skill categories, refer to pages 25 to 27. Transferable skills categories and special knowledge skills may be helpful. List your accomplishment categories below:

C. USE ACTION VERBS AND NUMBERS

The next step is to write accomplishment statements. This will take time. Start by just writing as much as you can in each category of accomplishments you have identified. Then rewrite each statement using action verbs and numbers, when possible.

Refer to page 69 for a list of action verbs. Begin each accomplishment statement with an action verb. If the list is not adequate, find a resume guide at your local public library that may have a much longer list.

A key to describing accomplishments is to use numbers. Concentrate on the results of your work, not the problems and problemsolving processes. Issues and processes are appropriate for discussion during interviewing, but accomplishment statements are the most attention-getting for initial contacts.

EXAMPLE: You might start with the following draft accomplishment statements.

Education/Teaching

- ✦ Work in after-school program
- ✦ Plan activities

Community Development

- ✦ Determine what needs to be done

Then rework the accomplishment statements several times, adding detail, action verbs, and numbers, and making the statements accurate and strong. The above statements might then look like this.

Tutoring

- ✦ Tutored 15 fifth-grade students in reading and math, two hours a day, five days a week for nine months after school. Students' average reading scores increased 40 percent and average math scores increased 15 percent.

Materials Development

- ✦ Created 35 reading and math exercises and activities to keep disinterested grade school students who were chronically poor achievers interested in reading and math.
- ✦ Developed tutoring materials from music, magazines, television shows, and movies of interest to the students. For example, used the lyrics from a popular CD for a phonetic pronunciation exercise.

Community Development

- Created needs assessment instrument containing 20 open-ended questions through research of five other such instruments.
- Assessed needs of community by talking with/interviewing 20 informal leaders, 10 formal leaders, 20 randomly selected households, and 10 service providers in community.

Now it is your turn. Get a notebook and begin to go through the sources of accomplishments you have found. List your accomplishments from each source in common language, categorize them, and then rework them several times. Take time out between reworking sessions. Ask your colleagues for assistance.

Although this exercise focuses on your AmeriCorps service, you will want to determine your accomplishments prior to service as well.

D. PACKAGE YOUR LIST OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR SPECIFIC NEEDS

Finally, keep a long list of your accomplishments in your notebook or on a personal computer disk. Then pull from that list each time you need to cite or address your accomplishments.

Make each use of accomplishment statements specific to the situation for which you need it. Concentrate on what is most important for that specific situation. If you are applying for private sector employment, for example, you want to present your management, communication, and computer accomplishments in a resume and/or interview. If you are applying for a graduate program in social work, however, you want to emphasize your social service, human resources, and community development accomplishments in a personal statement or admission interview.

Don't sell yourself short. Be accurate, not humble, about your accomplishments. Talk about them whenever and wherever appropriate. Sell yourself to prospective sites for your future.

Finally, add your basic accomplishments categories to the "Next-Step Summary Sheet" on page 35.

Personal Considerations

Each person's personal considerations are unique; yours will influence your next step after AmeriCorps. For example, are you committed to staying where you are, or can you relocate? Do you need child care? What salary level do you require? Do you have special medical, social, and/or personal needs that can be met only in certain areas? Do you need to live near family members for a particular reason? What will you seek in your next step, and what can you not do without?

List your personal considerations under number 7 on the "Next-Step Summary Sheet" that follows.

NEXT-STEP SUMMARY SHEET



Your Name: _____

Current Month/Year: _____

1. VALUES

My three most-important work values for my next step are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

2. SELF-MANAGEMENT SKILLS

The six most-important self-management skills I want employers (or people who will influence my next step) to know I have are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

3. TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

The transferable skills I like to use and am really good at are:

I prefer working with (mark preference: 1 is most preferred, 2 is next, 3 is least preferred):

People Data Things

The transferable skills I want to avoid in my next step are:

4. SPECIAL-KNOWLEDGE SKILLS

The special-knowledge skills I will take to my next job are:

The special-knowledge skills I would like to develop at my next job are:

5. INTERESTS

According to the Holland typology, my three top preferences and the reasons I choose them are:

Type	How I Am Like That Type
------	-------------------------

a. _____	_____
----------	-------

b. _____	_____
----------	-------

c. _____	_____
----------	-------

Therefore, my Holland Code is _____

6. MAJOR CATEGORIES OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

My major categories of accomplishment have been:

7. PERSONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Personal considerations for my next step are:

WORKSHEET

Self-assessment

summary



The self-assessment includes two tasks. You have just completed the first—identifying your values, skills, interests, and personal considerations for your next opportunity.

To complete the second task, write a paragraph describing in general terms what you are seeking in your next step. Use your “Next-Step Summary Sheet” as a guide. The following example may help you get started. (Note, however, that this example relates to a next step that involves a job search. If your next step is something different—such as serving full-time for another year, getting more education or training, or starting a business—your own paragraph will read somewhat differently.)

EXAMPLES :

➤ **Values:** I want a job in an organization that helps people, preferably children and their parents, and will let me have some independence. I want to be able to learn a lot while working.

➤ **Skills:** I will bring to this job a good attitude, sincerity, a caring manner (self-management skills); the abilities to administer a program, to organize and plan, and to exercise leadership skills (transferable skills); and a basic knowledge of childhood development and good parenting skills (special-knowledge skills).

➤ **Interests:** I helped my parents raise my siblings and enjoyed that experience a lot. Now that I am a parent, I have a great interest in improving my own and others’ parenting skills. I am basically a Social Holland type, someone who assists others.

➤ **Personal Considerations:** I want to stay in San Jose, to make a minimum salary of \$16,000 per year, and to get employer-paid health insurance for my children and me.

NOW IT’S YOUR TURN....

Write your self-assessment summary in the space that follows.

Research and Gathering Information

When you've completed your self-assessment, you are ready to look outside yourself to research, identify, and explore your options. You will be looking for activities and endeavors that incorporate the values, interests, skills, and personal considerations you identified in your self-assessment.

QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS:

- ☛ What areas offer most of the ideal qualities you identified in the self-assessment process?
- ☛ Is employment available in those areas? (If a job search will be your next step.)
- ☛ Are your skills and experience competitive in those areas? If not, what additional training and/or experience do you need? How and where can you get the additional training and/or experience you need?

TASKS TO COMPLETE:

- ☛ Match the results of the self-assessment with options that now offer most of the ideal qualities identified in the assessment, or may do so in the future.
- ☛ Develop a list of many possibilities through your research.

- ☛ Begin to reduce the number of possibilities through more research.

STRATEGIC GUIDELINES:

- ☛ Commit yourself to spending the time needed to complete your research. Don't expect results too quickly.
- ☛ Read as much as you can.
- ☛ Ask a lot of questions.
- ☛ Visit local libraries and career centers.
- ☛ Make an appointment with a career counselor.
- ☛ Do whatever you have to do to make connections between what you have outlined in your self-assessment and what you are reading and hearing during this stage.

Strategies and Resources

If you have no idea what next-step options "fit" you, here are some basic strategies and resources to consider. Although these relate specifically to a job search, you can adapt them to other pursuits as well.

Using Your Holland Code. The three-letter Holland code you identified in the previous section on self-assessment translates to specific occupations in the *Dictionary of Holland Occupational Codes* (Gary D. Gottfredson and John Holland). The reference section of your local public library either has a copy or can get it for you.

- 1. **Locate your code (or codes) in the Holland dictionary and see which occupations correspond. Write down the title of every occupation that sounds interesting and/or the occupations you know little or nothing about. Note the "DOT codes" as well, which are listed in the Holland dictionary, but are from the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT)*, published every two years by the U.S. Department of Labor. (Look for the DOT at your public library.) You may also want to check the occupations listed under a Holland code that is similar to yours. For example, if your Holland code is SAE and both the "S" and "A" are strong, transpose your strengths and then also check the Holland code ASE in the dictionary. Choose no more than thirty-five occupations, to keep from overwhelming yourself.**

Holland Code: _____

OCCUPATIONS

DOT Codes

OCCUPATIONS	DOT Codes
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
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OCCUPATIONS

DOT Codes

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2. For each occupation on your list, read the quick description in the Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT). In the DOT, you will find occupations listed by their DOT codes (such as the ones you found in the Holland Dictionary). Look up the positions on your list. Then choose those that still interest you after reading their descriptions—trying to narrow your list to between one-half and three-quarters of your original entries.

Write your new list below.

Second List

OCCUPATIONS

DOT Codes

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▶ **3. Read about each occupation on your second list in the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*. Also published by the U.S. Department of Labor, the handbook outlines the education and/or training needed to work in occupations and the current demand for these occupations. You will see, for example, that the current occupational outlook for dental hygienists is much brighter than for blacksmiths! Using the information you derive from the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, reduce your list to a maximum of ten possibilities. Most public libraries have a copy of the handbook.**

TEN POSSIBLE JOBS

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

NOTE: The U.S. Department of Labor hopes to have an improved DOT on-line in 1999. It will be called O*Net: *The Occupational Information Network*. It will be found at www.doleta.gov/programs/onet.

Five Sources of Information for Research

In researching your list of possibilities, be sure to make use of five important sources of information:

- ☛ Print and Video
- ☛ Computerized Career Information Systems
- ☛ World Wide Web

- ☛ On-Site Experience
- ☛ Information Interviews

Print and Video. Some people find it helpful to first read about an occupation, making notes as they go, and then watch a video about it. By reading about a career field, you can get a background and begin to think of questions. (Be sure to keep your notes!) Sometimes, videos “shadow” a worker in a specific occupation, giving the viewer a chance to see what workers

▶ in that particular field do during a typical day.

A good place to find these resources is your local public library or a nearby college library, both of which probably have career-related books and videos. You can probably find the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* and *Occupational Outlook Handbook* there. United Way descriptions of area employers, government employment guides, and files about local private employers are common resources in local libraries. Another possibility would be to visit the guidance counselors at local high schools, who might be able to give you information or tell you where to get it.

Many smaller libraries can borrow resources from larger libraries. So if you can't find what you need, ask the research librarians for help in identifying and securing resources that can help you.

A word of caution: Some libraries may have outdated career resources. Although these books may offer good basic information, they may also be misleading about both the nature of certain fields and their future prospects. For example, much manufacturing is now computerized, a fact probably not mentioned in a 1970s book on manufacturing. Always check the date of the book or video you are using, and judge its information accordingly. Generally, information more than ten years old should be double checked with another source.

Computerized Career Information Systems. Another way to identify prospective occupations and/or career fields is through computerized career-information systems. Some libraries may have databases of private sector employers nationally and in your geographic

area. Ask about what's available. Other types of computerized career information systems also exist in career centers and libraries nationwide.

Some of these systems can match people's self-assessment information with possible occupations and/or career fields. Such systems can suggest occupations and career fields to consider, given the information with which the computer has been supplied. Use these systems, such as DISCOVER or SIGIPLUS, to supplement your own self-assessment, research, and instincts. Remember that no computer can tell you for sure what occupation or career field is best for you; that's a decision only you can make.

World Wide Web. So much is happening on the World Wide Web and the Internet that it is difficult to keep up. Cyberspace makes it much easier to do career-related research than it used to be, however. Take advantage of the possibilities. Here is a partial list of what can be done on the World Wide Web and/or through the Internet about careers: find out about job vacancies, self-assessment, resume advice, applying for vacancies by placing your resume in a databank, organizational information, and labor market information.

There are many sites—with varying usefulness—to help you research career-related decisions. In fact, it can be overwhelming. Take the advice of the experts who have already checked out most of the sites. Following are cyberspace addresses and a short description of what can be found in each. The first three “review” many other sites for you.

www.jobhuntersbible.com

Richard N. Bolles, author of the *What Color is Your Parachute?* series, is on-line through this

address. He candidly reviews many other sites—job vacancies, career counseling, and other related sites for you. Check it out and take his advice seriously.

www.dbm.com

This is the well-known “Riley Guide.” This site contains links to many other sites, including population- and occupation-specific resources. It offers excellent advice about how to use the Internet for career planning and job searching.

www.jobweb.com

This site is offered by the National Association of Colleges and Employers. It contains links to many other sites, including employment centers that are listed by field (education, business, government, health care, not-for-profit) and regions of the United States.

www.monster.com

This is an on-line job center.

www.ajb.dni.us

This is a U.S. Department of Labor site that lists job vacancies from 1,800 state employment offices nationwide, most from the private sector covering every type of work.

www.doleta.gov

This U.S. Department of Labor site has sections on planning your future and starting a new career.

www.usajobs.opm.gov

This U.S. Office of Personnel Management site lists federal government vacancies worldwide.

Former AmeriCorps members interested in jobs with the Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service, the U.S. Department of Housing

and Urban Development, the U.S. Department of Education, and other federal employers can get very specific and helpful application and vacancy information there.

www.nationalservice.gov/resources

This site gives information about job searching on the Internet and provides links to AmeriCorps-related sites.

www.peacecorps.gov

The Peace Corps’ website for former volunteers is a wealth of career information. In particular, the section on federal employment provides links to other government agencies. Click on *RPCVs Only*, then this sequence of screens: *Career TRACK*, *Job Searches & Career Planning*, *Career Fields & Employers*, and *Federal Sector*. Another good site for information about federal agencies, but not necessarily employment information, is www.whitehouse.gov.

Finally, one of the best uses of the Internet is for career-related research about workplaces. Most large organizations have or will soon have web pages that contain valuable information about the organizations. Many annual reports are now available on the Internet, for example.

Search under the organizations’ names first. If you don’t get links that way, search next under the general headings. For example, search under “Kodak” for information about that company. If you don’t link with a web page for Kodak that way, search under “camera.” If you are not yet familiar with cyberspace, take a course or get tutored. Find a way to get familiar—fast.

On-Site Experience. Other ways to gather information directly are to intern, volunteer, and/or “shadow” people who work in the jobs/career fields/occupations in which you are interested.

INTERNING AND VOLUNTEERING

Few better ways exist to get a good feel for a particular work setting or career field than to intern or volunteer. These activities are excellent ways to discover whether the career field and type of organization that interest you are as you believe them to be and to get a good grasp of what the work entails. Sometimes people’s perceptions of certain occupations and organizations are at odds with the reality. By interning and volunteering, one can temper dreams with a dose of the real thing.

Consider using intern and volunteer opportunities to get hands-on experience in the career field or type of organization that interests you. For example, if you are interested in fundraising for a nonprofit organization, arrange to intern or volunteer with a fundraiser in a nonprofit organization, not with the human resource manager of that organization.

Getting realistic experience is just one of the many benefits of interning and volunteering. They are also excellent ways to make contacts for the future. You will, however, generally find that both paths offer few financial rewards for your time commitment. Internships, for example, usually require a specified level of effort while rarely providing much of a salary—if any. Most good volunteer programs require both training and a regular

time commitment.

One way to reap the benefits, yet keep the time commitment shorter, is to intern or volunteer for a specific, time-limited project. For example, you might serve as an adult leader (with others) of a field trip for third-graders, volunteer at a neighborhood immunization clinic one Saturday, research potential funding sources for a project at a community-based organization, or devise a marketing strategy for a new anti-litter campaign at an environmental organization.

SHADOWING

Shadowing is another way to get more information about possible career fields, jobs, or organizations. Ask someone who is doing work you are interested in if he would permit you to follow him around for a morning or day. You should stay in the background and observe him at work for a predetermined period. Afterward, the two of you can discuss any events you observed that interested or puzzled you. That way, you have a chance to ask the questions you couldn’t when you were shadowing. Again, the time invested in this activity is time well spent. Sometimes the appearance and reality of a particular type of work differ greatly. Better to discover this now rather than later, after you have already made a commitment.

Information Interviews. As soon as you can, locate and interview people who work in the ten occupations you’ve identified and researched. You may be able to find some of them by asking the people you know—parents, friends, community members, church members, co-workers, and supervisors—for suggestions and referrals. For example, if a preschool teacher or

police officer is on your list, ask everyone you can think of if they know someone who works as either of these. If you get a “yes,” ask for phone numbers or other specifics. (Be sure the people who give you this information agree before using their names to contact those you want to interview.) Repeat this process for the other occupations on your list.

Another good way to locate and interview people in your ten occupational areas is to connect with professionals in those fields through their affiliated groups—professional associations, informal groups, labor unions, and so on. For example, counselors may belong to the American Counseling Association, small business owners in a community might gather every few weeks through the local Chamber of Commerce, and telephone installers might belong to the Communications Workers of America.

When you’ve located some people in the fields you’re thinking of entering, try to schedule an information interview. This type of interview differs from a job interview in that you are seeking information only, and are not being considered for a job. Remember, at this step you’re not ready to apply for a specific job anyway. You’re still researching your options.

In an information interview, your objectives are to gather as much information and advice as possible and to make contacts in the occupational areas and/or organizations that interest you most. Information interviews can serve a variety of functions: they can be used for background research on a field of work; for researching a type of organization; for finding out where the jobs might be; or for exploring a particular organization and talking with decisionmakers.

Getting an information interview, particularly without an introduction from a mutual acquaintance, can be difficult. In your initial contact to request an interview, you need to cover several points:

- ☛ Your name, why you chose that person to interview, and who referred you (if applicable).
- ☛ An indication of what kind of information you are seeking. (Be sure to make clear that you are seeking information and advice, not a job.)
- ☛ Something flattering that you know about the person.
- ☛ A request for twenty to thirty minutes of time at the person’s convenience.

In making the four points above, your rehearsed request for an information interview might go something like this, without any pauses: “I’m Shantel Hernandez, and I’m calling because I am considering [name the career or job in the interviewee’s field or organization] following my AmeriCorps service. [Robert White] suggested that I call you. I’m looking for information about the [career, job, field, or organization], and I’ve heard you are a [knowledgeable, experienced, informed] person. May I have twenty to thirty minutes of your time, at your convenience, to ask some questions and get advice?”

Once you’ve secured an interview, prepare your questions ahead of time. Some of the following questions may be useful:

- ☛ What experience and education are required in your work?

- ☛ How did you get into this type of work?
- ☛ Why did you choose this type of work?
- ☛ What do you do in a typical day?
- ☛ What are most and least rewarding about this type of work?
- ☛ What types of employers hire people in this type of work?
- ☛ What is the future outlook for this type of work?
- ☛ If you could begin your work life again, is there anything you would do differently?
- ☛ What skills and abilities are most valued in this type of work?
- ☛ What other areas of work relate to this type of work?
- ☛ What is the range of entry-level salaries?
- ☛ What is the financial potential?
- ☛ How much variety is involved in the work?
- ☛ Are there peak hiring seasons?
- ☛ What is the best way to conduct a job search in this field?
- ☛ What other employers in the area hire persons in this line of work?
- ☛ Are there others in the area I should consult about this field? Will you refer me to them?
- ☛ May I use your name when I contact them?
- ☛ What advice would you give someone who is considering this type of work?

If you think this might be a field or place of work for you, ask for brochures, annual reports, or any other information that might be available. Remember, however, that the intent of information interviews is to get information and advice from seasoned professionals. Don’t use the information interview as a job interview. Be clear about your research intent. After the interview, say thank you in person and follow up with a thank-you note.

Reducing through Record Keeping

Try to stay on top of the information you gain from books, videos, and computerized career information systems and from talking with people. Look at the pros and cons of the career fields and jobs, occupations, or organizations you research. Then begin to reduce your list of ten career fields/ jobs/ organizations to about five. But don’t cut anything from your list until you are ready to do so.

Decisionmaking and Goal Setting

After completing your research, you are ready for some decisionmaking and goal-setting tasks. These will help you decide which career field(s) or type(s) of job(s)/occupation(s) you are going to seek—or which options you will choose for your next step. Then you can set some goals. If the option you are considering is something other than employment, apply the information and suggestions to your own pursuits.

QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS:

- What will be the focus of your job search?
- How will you describe your plans to prospective employers?
- What steps will you take to reach your goals?

- How long will you give yourself to achieve your goals?

TASKS TO COMPLETE:

- Narrow the focus by integrating the self-assessment and research information you have gathered.
- Understand your decisionmaking style.
- Set some specific and realistic goals for yourself. Write them out in such a way that you can measure your progress.
- Create a realistic timeline for your goals.
- Begin to “own” your focus/decision by talking about it.

Decisionmaking Strategies

When people make decisions, they are choosing between two or more alternatives. In your own case, any decision that you make in regard to your job search will depend upon what you believe you are able to do (your abil-

ity) and also upon what you are willing to do (your motivation). In the weeks ahead, you may find yourself using any or all of the decisionmaking styles described below.

Confused. This decisionmaking strategy is perhaps better described as a style. It is characterized by mental paralysis and confusion. If you are in this mode, you may be feeling powerless and unable to deal with the decision at hand, whether from lack of knowledge about your environment or about yourself. You find yourself in a state of anxiety—a state in which it is almost impossible to make a decision.

Dependent. People whose decisionmaking styles are dependent generally prefer to leave choices to others—often believing that while they may not know enough to make a decision themselves, others do. This strategy may be used out of fear of making a choice or to avoid the work of exploring options. Dependence is not necessarily negative. In some cultures, dependent decisionmaking is expected. For example, elders may make important decisions for young people.

Intuitive. Intuitive decisions are “gut-level” reactions with little supporting factual data. For intuitive people, data gathering is usually an internal process in which they decide whether the course of action “feels good.”

Planful. People using a planful decision-making strategy explore both their needs and their environments, and weigh possible alternatives. The planful strategy combines four approaches—gathering information, comparing alternatives, checking out personal feelings, and seeking the opinions of others.

(Styles are from Carney, cited in J. Hoppin and H. Spetle (Eds.), *Curriculum for Career Development Facilitators*, Oakland University, Rochester, Mich., 1996.) Think of your own decision to join AmeriCorps. Which strategy did you use for that decision—confused, dependent, intuitive, or planful? Then think of a day-to-day decision you made recently, such as where to have lunch, which work project to tackle next, or which movie to see. Which strategy did you use for that decision?

Most people use all four strategies over the course of a lifetime. If you use one strategy more than others, which one is it? That one is likely to be your consistent decisionmaking style.

List the five (or more) career fields/jobs/occupations you have selected, and summarize your job options on the worksheet on page 47. Decide what, if any, information you still need to know and note it on the worksheet. Then gather that final information and enter it either under “positive aspects” or under “negative aspects.” Now you are ready to enter the next step of your job search (or exploration of future options)—the decisionmaking phase.

▶ **How does your most consistent decisionmaking style affect your life? For example, a person who consistently uses dependent decisionmaking may feel that decisions are really not his, so he will not feel committed to them. Consider the ways your own style affects you in both positive and negative ways. Then write them in the spaces provided below.**

My most consistent decisionmaking style is: _____

This decisionmaking style affects my life positively in the following ways:

▶ **This decisionmaking style affects my life negatively in the following ways:**

Based on what you've written, would you like to change your most consistent decisionmaking style? Why or why not?

Parents, friends, spouses, children, other family members, co-workers, supervisors, and club members are some of the people who can affect an individual's decisions. Who are influential people in your life, and how do they affect your decisions?

**People influential
in my life:**

**How they affect
my decisions:**

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Please remember that the purpose of this workbook is to help you make a planful decision about your next step after AmeriCorps service.

► **Making Good Decisions: Three Steps**

Standard decisionmaking is composed of three basic steps. More discussion on the steps covered in the following sections appears in *Career and Life Skills Series, Making Decisions: Learning to Take Control of your Life* (Michael Farr and Susan Christophersen, Indiana, Ind.: JIST Works, 1991). If you have trouble making decisions or want to understand your decisionmaking process better, the exercises in that book may help you.

1. IDENTIFY THE CHOICE TO BE MADE

Initially, the decisionmaker identifies options and criteria. For example, an AmeriCorps member may have identified five jobs/occupations/career fields of interest. Thus, he has identified five potential job options. His clear goal is to decide which option among the five he will pursue in his job search.

What are your job options at this time?

For example, what criteria might a job-seeking AmeriCorps member use to choose among his five options? Perhaps he has six criteria for any job he seeks, in order of importance:

- ☛ he must be able to work with elementary school-age children;
- ☛ he wants to be able to create programs for elementary school-age children;
- ☛ he wants to attend school during the day;
- ☛ he must be able to enter his next job with no additional training or experience;
- ☛ he needs a salary of at least \$15,000 a year; and
- ☛ he doesn't want to work shifts or put in much overtime.

► **How will you choose among your own options? What are your criteria for your choice? List them below.**

2. PRIORITIZE AND COMPARE

During your search, you will need to prioritize your criteria—that is, rank them from most important to least important. Let's take the case of the AmeriCorps member just described. For him, working with elementary school-age children, having the opportunity to create programs for the children, and being able to attend school during the day while working were the three most important criteria for his decision.

Following is an example of a simple decision matrix. It lists options horizontally along the top and criteria vertically down the left.

SAMPLE DECISION MATRIX

Options	Social Work Assistant	Parent Educator	Pre-School Aide	Elem. During-School Aide	Elem. After-School Aide
Criteria					
Elementary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Programming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Day School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No More Training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Salary	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No Shifts	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

→ Create your own decision matrix below. Along the top, list the five career fields/jobs/occupations (or non-job options) that most interest you. In the left column, list your criteria (from most important to least important) as shown in the example.

YOUR DECISION MATRIX

Options	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Criteria					
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The next step is to complete the matrix by placing an X in the space where any option meets a criterion. Look at the sample matrix again. Notice that the most important criterion—working with elementary school-age children—is available to the AmeriCorps member in three of his five options. Now complete your own matrix. If you are unsure how to respond in one or more blocks, go back to your research notes or continue your research until you are clear on your options and criteria.

Now it's time to compare the options in your matrix. Look at each option separately. What does each offer? What does it not offer?

You have now prioritized and compared your options.

3. MAKE THE DECISION

In this final step, you choose the best option and state reasons for your choice. In the example, the AmeriCorps member might choose option five because it meets all of his criteria. Thus, his job search would focus on option five opportunities.

Now make a similar decision for yourself. Which of your options seems the best? When you decide, circle the option and write your reasons for choosing it. Be explicit. Take a look at the statement of the AmeriCorps member we've been following. He might say something like the following:

I will look for a job in an after-school program. Such a position will allow me to work with elementary school-age children, create programming for them, and attend school myself during the day (while the children are in school). Further, based on my research about this field, I will not need additional training or experience and will earn about \$15,000 per year.

Write your own statement, using the information from your decision matrix.

The above statement reflects your objective and why you chose it. Read the statement aloud. Is it accurate? Does it feel right? If not, go through the decisionmaking exercise again. If it does feel right, move on to the next section.

Becoming Confident About Your Decision and Goals

The next step is to become comfortable with and confident about the decision(s) you have made and the goals you have set. One way to practice talking about your decision and goals is to talk with important people in your life. They can help you "fine-tune" and articulate your future as you would like it to be.

Look back to the section where you listed the most influential people in your life. Choose five of them and make an appointment with each. If they do not live within local traveling distance, call them on the telephone, correspond by e-mail, or write them a letter. Tell each person about your goal and about how and when you plan to meet it. Seek feedback and encouragement. Ask for support as you begin your search.

In the space below, list the five people you identified and describe what happened during your meeting with each.

Name of Contact	Advice/Encouragement
1. _____	_____

2. _____	_____

3. _____	_____

4. _____	_____

5. _____	_____

Announcing Your Goal

Your final step is to announce your goal and the plans you have made to achieve it. Make copies of your revised goal and tape it above your desk, in your car, on the refrigerator, and anywhere else you can think of so you will be confronted with your goal every day. These will serve as a reminder to keep going.

Share your goal with the important people in your life, and describe the methods by which you will work toward it. When you talk about your decision, it will seem less frightening and more do-able in your own mind. At the same time, it lets others know of your commitment. Both will be helpful as you begin your job search or move along the path toward another option.

MORE HELP AVAILABLE

There are scores of resources available to help you with self-assessment and career planning. See Appendix D, page 96, for career planning resources. Some of the self-assessment process can be done through a computerized career planning program and follow-up with a career planning professional. DISCOVER from American College Testing and SIGI and SIGI+ from the Educational Testing Service are two such programs. They may be found at local community colleges, colleges and universities, government job services, and one-stop career centers. Those organizations may also sponsor career planning workshops or classes. Check out the career planning resources in your local libraries and career centers.

