



Choosing a College Major

(adapted from College Board)

Some students start college knowing exactly what they'd like to major in. Others don't know what to major in, or have a career goal but no knowledge of what majors will get them there. Many students find themselves switching majors during college. Here are some tips to deciding what major will suite you, no matter where you fall in this range.

What is a college major?

A major is one field of study. You're required to major in a specific academic subject to demonstrate sustained, high-level work in one field. Depending on the college, you might be able to major in two fields, or have a major and a minor. These options may take longer, however, if you do not decide early.

Example of College Majors: Architecture, Mechanical Engineering, Business Administration, Communications, English, Chemistry, or Computer Science.

When should I declare a major?

At most colleges, you aren't required to declare a major until the end of your sophomore year. If you're in a two-year degree program, you'll probably select a major at the start because your course of studies is much shorter.

The standard time it takes to graduate college is 4 years. If you wait too long to choose a major, or switch majors halfway through, it could take you 5-6 years to graduate.

How do I choose?

First- and second-year students usually take more general courses while they try and decide on a major. After this initial "shopping period," coursework becomes more focused and specific. Don't rush the decision. Take steps to make sure that you have genuine interest in the major you choose. You don't want to choose a major by process of elimination—that could take a while. Take courses in areas that appeal to you, then try and focus on a subject that will interest and motivate you. You'll do better, and your motivation will continue through college and into your career.

What if I want to go to grad school?

Before going to graduate school to earn a master's, doctorate, or other professional degree, you must complete your undergraduate degree. If you think law school, medical school, or graduate school is in your future, some schools offer pre-professional advising programs (such as premed or prelaw). These programs are not the same as majors—you'll still need to choose a major in another subject. As long as you fulfill a grad school's course requirements, it really doesn't matter what you major in.



Choosing a College Major

(adapted from College Board)

Does my major decide my profession?

Sometimes. If you specialize in something like nursing, accounting, or engineering, you're learning a specific trade and will likely continue with that. Other majors, however, prepare you for a range of careers that you can be trained to handle once you graduate. For most students, picking a college major is not the same as picking a career. It will be up to you to pursue what you like. For example, after college a business student can choose from a wide range of fields to specialize.

Remember, you're not alone. Choosing a major is usually done with the help of academic and peer advisors.

Take Your Time and Do the Research

Choosing a major is not a decision that should be made in two hours, two days, or even two weeks. Research all your options and keep an open mind. Once you've narrowed the list of majors and careers that seem interesting, it will be easier to choose!