

Graduate Career Services

The Graduate School and Division of Student Affairs

Self-Assessment: Identifying Your Interests

Identifying your interests often helps focus you on what ideas and pursuits keep you engaged, an important element in satisfying work.

PAST EXPERIENCES

One way to consider your interests is to think about past experiences that you found satisfying or intellectually stimulating.

- Create a list of previous experiences that you enjoyed, gave you a sense of accomplishment, or challenged you in an exciting way.
- Select five to seven of these and write a few sentences summarizing the experience.
- Focus on what you did and what you particularly enjoyed.
- Re-read these descriptions and identify any themes that emerge. What do you know about the topics or activities that interest you?

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Take time to consider your interests outside of scholarly life. Ask yourself the following additional questions:

- What are your hobbies or extracurricular activities?
- If you were browsing in a bookstore, where would you start?
- What are some topics that you feel very strongly about?
- What are your favorite entertainment options (books, movies, restaurants, travel destinations, conversation topics)?
- What was the most stimulating conversation you had recently?
- If you had no financial limitations and a week of vacation, where would you go?
- If you could be introduced to anyone, who would he or she be?
- What topics do you frequently read in print or online?

While it may seem odd to consider outside interests, they can help inform elements of your career. For example, an interest in photography does not mean you should become a professional photographer. However, you might enjoy career options that require creativity and an attention to detail.

