



Career Counseling

Updated \\ April 2026

Holland Code Activity

Interests

- Interests are the strongest predictor of job satisfaction.
- Connecting our interests to careers is key to finding satisfying work.
- This module will help you:
 - Identify your interest areas
 - Understand how interests relate to careers
 - Get you started exploring careers based on your interests

This module includes an activity to help you identify your interests, determine how your interests connect with careers, and provides tools to explore careers that match your interests. Throughout the module, watch for the **RED BOXES** to find instructions.



Identify your interest activity

The following pages each show a collection of images, and each has a letter representing the collection.

GET STARTED

On a piece of paper, draw 3 boxes and label them from one to three, then follow the instructions below to fill in the boxes:

- **Box 1:** Look through the next 6 pages and identify the collection of images you like best. Think about the activities in each image, not the image's quality. Then write down the letter of the grouping you like best.
- **Box 2:** Look through the pages a second time and identify the collection you like second best. Write down this letter.
- **Box 3:** Look through the pages a third time and identify the collection you like best of the three. Write down this letter.

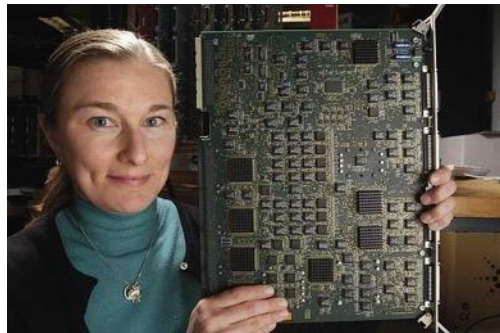
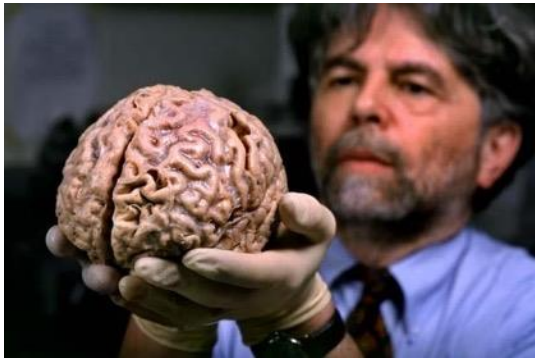
Having trouble deciding?

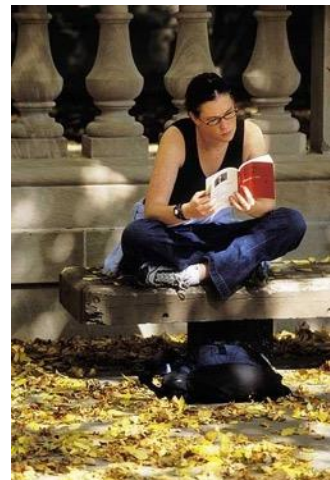
- If you like two collections equally, for purposes of this exercise, make note of that, but pick a priority order even if it is random.
- Find that you cannot narrow it down to three? For purposes of this exercise, pick three, but make note of the others that you also like.



Once you have completed this activity, move on to page 9.







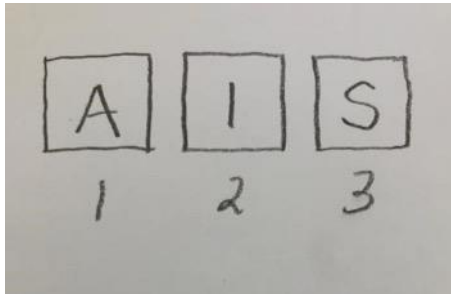






Verify your 3-letter code

After viewing the 6 image groupings, you should have your 3-letter code as in the example below:



The next 2 pages give an overview of Holland's Theory. The image exercise you completed is based on this theory.



Read over the next 2 pages to understand how interests connect with careers.



Holland's Theory

John L. Holland, pictured on right, developed a theory that is widely used in career development and planning.



The main points of his theory are:

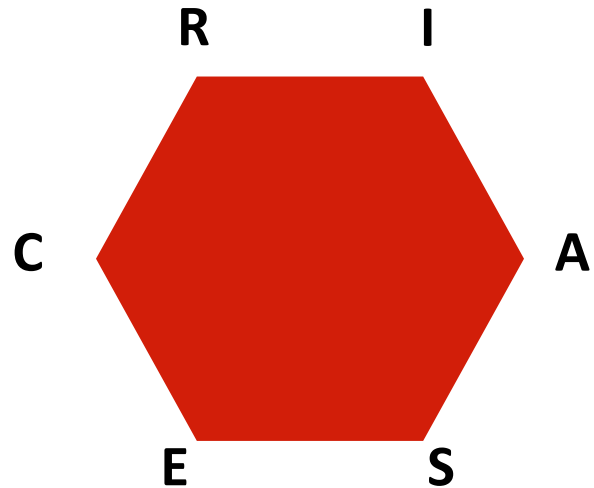
- Interests can be organized into six themes. The images you viewed are representative of these **six interests or occupational themes**.
- We learn to **prefer some activities** over others
- Our interests and competencies **create who we are**
- People with similar interests are **likely to be attracted to**:
 - the same type of work
 - others with the same interests
 - work environments that reflect those interests



Holland Occupational Themes

This hexagon shows how the themes are related to one another.

- Realistic
- Investigative
- Artistic
- Social
- Enterprising
- Conventional



Most jobs reflect 3 of these themes and most people have interests in more than one of the themes. Thus the 3-letter code you developed after reviewing the images.

The following 6 pages provide more detail about each theme.

Read through them and think about which themes sound most like you.

Realistic



DOERS

- **Enjoy:** Working with things more than people
- **Value:** tradition and practicality
- **Work Environments:** structured, stable, and product-driven
- **Key Motivator:** using hands-on skills to produce tangible results





Investigative



THINKERS

- **Enjoy:** Working with ideas, data, and things
- **Value:** new ideas and innovative thinking
- **Work Environments:** that are structured and task-oriented
- **Key Motivator:** analyzing information to probe questions of intellectual curiosity

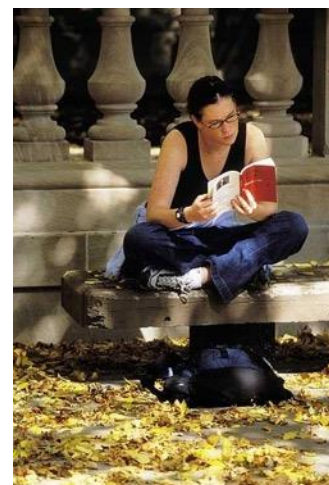


Artistic



CREATORS

- **Enjoy:** Working with things, people and data
- **Value:** artistic expression and intuition
- **Work Environments:** flexible, unstructured and artistic, independent
- **Key Motivator:** expressing oneself in the creation of art or appreciation of beauty



Social



HELPERS

- **Enjoy:** working with people more than data or things
- **Value:** communication and relationships
- **Work Environments:** supportive, cooperative, and changing
- **Key Motivator:** helping others to know, grow, change, and get along for the betterment of humanity



Enterprising



PERSUADERS

- **Enjoy:** working with people
- **Value:** influencing, status and risk-taking
- **Work Environments:** entrepreneurial, competitive, profit-making and fast-paced
- **Key Motivator:** persuading others of the merits of an idea or product; dedication to organizational goals



Conventional



ORGANIZERS

- **Enjoy:** working primarily with data
- **Value:** accuracy, stability and security
- **Work Environments:** structured, organized and predictable
- **Key Motivator:** organizing information and bringing order to data and things in order to make decisions





Your theme code

- After reading through the detailed pages for each theme, are those that resonate with you most the same themes as your code from the image activity?
- If not, jot down the themes, in order of how you would rank them, on the same sheet of paper as the original code. This will be your working code moving forward.
- If your code has not changed, then that will be the code you use moving forward with this exercise.

A note about your code, this is not engraved in stone by any means. At this point, it is helpful to have something to work with as you go through the next steps. And interests are not the only thing to consider as you think about careers. Visit our skills and values assessments to learn more about yourself.



Connecting your interests to careers

O*NET online is a tool for career exploration, and it has a feature which allows you to “plug in” your theme code to discover occupations related to your interests. Here how to do it:

- Go to: onetonline.org
- Locate the “O*Net Data” section and use the drop-down menu and select “interests”
- You will see the 6 occupational themes listed
- Click on your number one theme. This will open a page of occupations related to that theme.
- Fill in the rest of your code at the top of the page and then hit “go” to find a list of occupations that match your code.

Next

- Read through the list of occupations. Note that not all occupations on the list will have a code in the same order as yours. That is okay for now.
- To learn more about an occupation, click on it.
- Look for patterns in the occupations. When looking for patterns, consider the skills, tasks, values, etc. associated with each occupation.
- Look for related types of work, for instance multiple jobs in healthcare or in management.
- Write down occupations that interest you so you can research them further and think about how they match with your skills and values.

Code order

- It is okay change the order of your code. Think back to the image exercise. If you had trouble deciding on an order, change it to see how that affects your results. You can also drop the third letter to see what options come up.

Reverse look-up

- Do a reverse look-up using O*NET. Using the Occupation Quick Keyword Search (in the upper right-hand corner), enter an occupation of interest or even your current/past occupation. In the description under Interests, you can find the interest code associated with that occupation.

Tips on what to do with this information

- Identify jobs you want to research
- Look at our [Explore Options](#) page for tools on how to explore
- Remember that this is just one piece of the puzzle. Look at our [skills and values assessments](#) to get more information about yourself.
- [Meet with a counselor](#) to discuss your results and learn more about how to move forward with your career planning process.