

Finding and Growing into Your Ideal Career

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There are countless articles out there about finding your dream job, and there are many aspects to finding your dream job, just as there are many things to consider in making yourself the ideal candidate for that job. This article presents one idea that I think is valuable, and it is presented as a thread that you will need to flesh out by doing your own research. It will take a lot of work, but the payoff can be well worth it.

Part 1 —Finding Your Ideal Career

The good news is that there are so many kinds of careers out there (over 900 at this writing*) that it's almost certain that several are ideal for you.

The bad news is that there are so many kinds of careers out there that, unless you have an organized way of searching, you probably will never find those that are ideal for you.

John Holland proposed a solution for this problem in 1958 that now pervades career counseling research and practice: he found that personalities seek out and flourish in career environments they fit and that jobs and career environments are classifiable by the personalities that flourish in them (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holland_Codes)

Holland found that there are six basic personality types:

- **Realistic (Doers):** A realistic person prefers concrete tasks. They like working alone or with other realistic people. Some of the careers included in this category are engineer, plumber, audio and video equipment technician, chemist, dentist, furniture finisher, and rail car repairer.
- **Investigative (Thinkers):** Someone who is investigative likes to use their abstract or analytical skills to figure things out. They are a "thinker" who strives to complete tasks and often prefers to do so independently. These are a few investigative occupations: sociologist, scientist, psychologist, and economist.
- **Artistic (Creators):** Artistic people like to create things and are imaginative. Artistic occupations include creative writer, performing artist (including actor, singer, and dancer), photographer, and fashion designer.
- **Social (Helpers):** A social person prefers interacting with people. They tend to be concerned with social problems and want to help others. Social occupations include home health aide, certified nurse's aide, RN, licensed practical nurse, social worker, occupational therapist assistant or aide, teacher, and clergy member.
- **Enterprising (Persuaders):** Those who are enterprising lean toward leadership roles. They are willing to take on challenges and are extroverted, as well as aggressive. Enterprising occupations include restaurant host or hostess, retail salesperson, attorney, chief executive, chef, and wholesale or retail buyer.
- **Conventional (Organizers):** Someone who is conventional prefers structured tasks and tending to details and is often conservative. Conventional occupations include accountant, bookkeeper, actuary, cost estimator, human resources assistant, and loan officer.

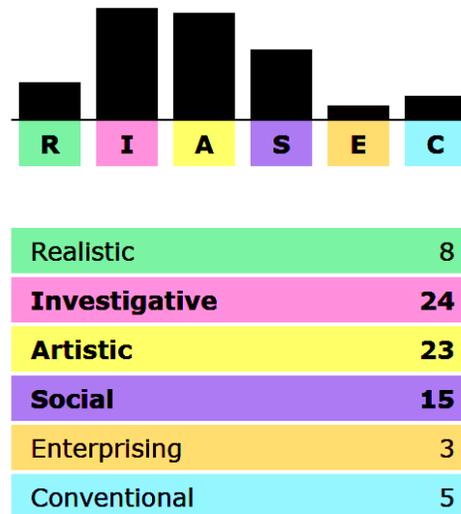
How do you find out what your personality type is?

The Department of Labor's **O*NET Interest Profiler** is a free online test that will show your dominant personality type, along with your secondary and tertiary types; an example of its output is shown to the right.

The example shows that the test-taker has the RIASEC codes **IAS** (Investigative, Artistic, and Social), and would be best suited to jobs that have those codes.

The test is available at

<https://www.mynextmove.org/explore/ip>



Once you've taken the test and know your RIASEC codes, go to the **O*NET Online Interest Search** at <https://www.onetonline.org/find/descriptor/browse/Interests/>, click on your primary RIASEC code, enter your secondary and tertiary codes, then click **GO**.

The careers that match your codes will be displayed, along with other information about the careers.

While these free tests should give you a fairly good idea of how to use RIASEC codes, you may want to use one or more of these professional tests in a serious career search:

- **Career Key Discovery for Individuals**
<https://www.careerkey.org/career-tests/take-career-test-career-assessment>
- **CareerHQ (Australasia)**
<https://careerhq.com.au/personal/>
- **Colby College Personality Lab** (in particular, the Big 5 Inventory by Dr. Soto)
<http://www.colby.edu/psych/personality-lab/>
- **Dependable Strengths**
<https://www.dependablestrengths.org/>
- **Explore My Purpose - Zoe** (3 valid assessments are offered in this one product: Career Key Discovery, Gallup StrengthsFinder, and Acclaro Values)
<https://www.exploremypurpose.com/>
- **Kuder**
<https://www.kuder.com/>
- **Motivated Skills Assessment**
<https://www.careerkey.org/fit/self-assessment/motivated-job-skills-assessment>
- **Self-Directed Search**
<https://self-directed-search.com/>

Part 2 —Growing into Your Ideal Career

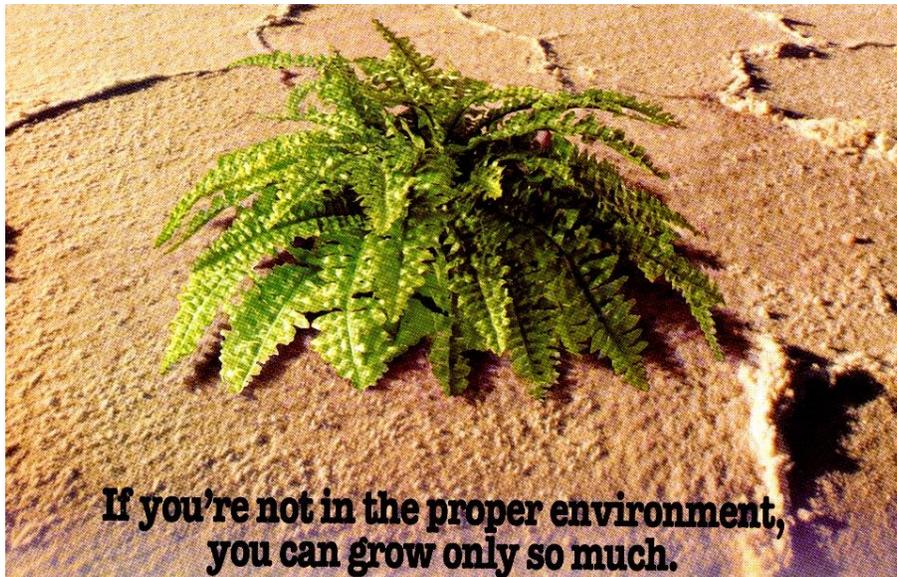
Let's say you've decided you want to be an Operations Research Analyst, Hydrologist, or Ergonomist; how should you proceed?

Based on your research you could arbitrarily pick one and acquire the necessary skills, but wouldn't it be nice if you could meet people who are already established in these fields and benefit from their experience? Maybe find out what path took them to this point in their career, or even visit them on the job? Most importantly, you may develop a relationship with people who are already working in the area that you are interested in and may someday be interested in hiring.

Such a scenario would be possible using a professional networking site such as LinkedIn. To use the site effectively, you would need to:

- Create a profile that focuses on your skills, the problems that you can (or would like to) solve
- Understand the overwhelming emotional impact of your profile photo, and learn to use Photofeeler (<https://www.photofeeler.com/>)
- Search the site for members who are already in the careers you are interested in
- Follow these people to have their posts sent to you; some people take notice of the people following them.
- Understand the value of connecting to other members and extending your network of connections
- Learn to send an invitation to connect in such a way that the person receiving the invitation is likely to accept it.

Once you are connected to people in the careers you are interested in you can continue to develop the relationship. This may be a lot of work initially, but it can be invaluable in giving you a real understanding of the careers you have chosen.



* <https://www.mynextmove.org/> <https://www.onetonline.org/>

Both sites are sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor

The O*NET Program is the primary source of occupational information in the U.S. Valid data are essential to understanding the rapidly changing nature of work and how it impacts the workforce and U.S. economy. Central to the project is the O*NET database, containing hundreds of standardized and occupation-specific descriptors on almost 1,000 occupations covering the entire U.S. economy. The database, which is available to the public at no cost, is continually updated from input by a broad range of workers in each occupation.