



Anca Simescu

College Majors

The Starter Kit

Get Into College with a BANG!, Instead of With a Whimper

Presă Universitară Clujeană

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*Get Into College with a BANG!,
Instead of with a Whimper*

Presa Universitară Clujeană

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Sweat more in training, bleed less in war

(Spartan proverb)

Foreword

With an increasingly attractive higher education system, but one that is too often lacking in internal benchmarks, the book **College Majors. The Starter Kit** rises as a calm and clear presence, awarding young people that essential something: the right and the ability to choose their own path that is aligned with themselves.

This is a book that does not offer recommendations like "which university is better," preferring instead to discuss how to make a decision that will stand the test of time, support competence, and fuel motivation. In other words, the reader is invited to make a choice that suits them. The author's starting point is a deeply human one: the major difficulties in higher education choices stem not so much from a lack of options as from the fragility of the initial decision-making process. Lack of self-knowledge, family and social pressures, and poor communication between students, parents, counselors, and institutions create a noise that distances young people from their own voice. The book proposes restoring this voice as the central axis of choice.

The "Comfort Zone" model—the zone of natural competence—structures the entire approach. It suggests that authentic learning and sustainable performance occur where our way of thinking, feeling, and acting meets the real demands of a field. Instead of looking for "recipes for success," the reader is invited

to discover their own way of becoming competent. The four-step method, "4 Steps to Your College Major," turns this idea into a guided experience. From the honest introspection in *Know Your Comfort Zone*, to refining one's identity through *The Shoe Has to Fit*, then engaging with academic reality in *Select The Common Denominator*, and finally making a educated decision in *Choose The Actual College*, the reader follows a coherent path that combines personal reflection with information about the world. The choice is no longer a leap into the void, but a gradual construction, supported by clarity.

An important strength of the book is the balance between tools and sensitivity. Personality tests, resources such as *VIA Character Strengths*, *Gallup*, or *16 Personalities* are used as mirrors, not labels. Cultural references, from Warren Buffett to Lewis Carroll, add a layer of inspiration that makes the reading lively and relatable. And the presentation of academic fields provides a realistic framework in which readers can project their discoveries about themselves. This is why this book reads more like a journey than a manual. It puts people before the system and reminds us that studies are not just an administrative stage, but the beginning of a professional identity.

The author manages to create a guide that speaks to the reader and respects their intelligence through a rigorous approach, clarity, and empathy. If you are facing one of the most important choices of your life—or if you want to support those who are—this book offers not only information, but also a way

of thinking about the decision. A way that starts with who you are, meets the world where it's at, and builds, step by step, a path that can truly belong to you.

Prof. PhD Mihaela Toader

When I Grow Up, I Want to Be...

Introduction

They say that there's no future in college education, and that you'll end up straight in the unemployment line, with a huge bag of student loans on your back.

They say that higher education is broken, and that you'd be better off skipping it altogether.

But actually, the problem lies elsewhere. It lies in the fact that the various stakeholders (you, the student-to-be, your parents, the university as an institution and its college professors and guidance counsellors) don't communicate properly and thus fail miserably in understanding the others' standpoint.

Which leads to you making poor decisions, choosing the wrong major for you or frequently switching majors – and last but not least to you not being EXCELLENT.

As a college professor, I know how to make all the stakeholders communicate and I will help you navigate easily through this next step in your life, so you come out on the other side kicking some serious *derrière*.

You are a winner.

You are excellent.

You are the linchpin.

I hope you know that you are not alone. There is courage in reaching out and taking action. Every single step you take helps build up your courage muscle.

The unemployment line? Noooo, no, no, no. Just no! Of course, you'll want to avoid that happening to you! But how can you, when everybody's headed that way, or so it seems? Actually, it's really simple: be Charles Steinmetz to the market's Henry Ford!

And who is this Charles Steinmetz, you ask? Well, he was a famous mathematician and genius electrical engineer (also called "the 4ft mathematician"). The story goes that he was called by Henry Ford to work with GE on some complicated repair on one of his generators. For two days, Steinmetz wandered around the generator with no tools, knocking here, knocking there and finally he took a piece of chalk, climbed on a ladder (remember, he was only 4ft tall) and marked an X on one side of the generator. He told GE employees to replace a certain part, and lo and behold, that fixed the generator.

Henry Ford was very happy with the result, but a lot less happy when Steinmetz' bill arrived: \$10,000! So, he demanded that the outrageous bill be itemized. Here's how Steinmetz itemized his bill: the chalk mark amounted to \$1, but *knowing where to put the chalk mark* was no less than \$9,999. Simple as that. You set the cost of your expertise.

Of course, assuming that you're (or will grow to be) excellent at what you do...,

Assuming you're starting in your comfort zone, that specialist field comes naturally to you...,

Assuming you are passionate about your specialist topic...,

Assuming you're having fun, playing with the various concepts, ideas, knowledge and know-how in your field...,

... and assuming you're willing to learn on. And on. And on. And then some more...

Then you can command – and get – the big bucks, hands down.

But if you dabble, if you're so-so, if “whatever” is your word and attitude of choice, then I'm afraid the unemployment line is where you're headed.

WAIT, WHAT? But, but, but.... This can't happen to me!

You won't want to hear this, but it's the godawful unpleasant truth: 99% of students today traipse in whatever college their parents or extended family, online metric test or guidance counsellor has told them to attend – the “tried and tested, safe, with good job opportunities” kind of college degree.

So, I suppose you're reading this book

... because you're not sure what you should do next in life and in college?

... because you've heard that a certain job pays well and you want that, too (well, duh!)?

... because your friends all seem to have a clear plan and you're sort of in limbo?

... because everyone and their dog has an opinion on what would be good for you, what you should do?

... because metric tests and IQ tests and EQ tests and the rest suggest you should go and do and be – and you kinda don't feel the same, but have no real counteroffer?

... because you no longer want to play your future life by the ear, but rather you'd shape your own path?

That's good, because I have just the thing for you. There is the gray area between high school and college that nobody tells you anything about – but I will.

You may not believe it right now, but *getting into* college is really the easy part. The hard part is *staying in* college and making the most of it! So, you have to make sure now, today, that you're not barking up the wrong tree later. As William Gibson puts it: "*The Future is here. It's just not evenly distributed*".

In this book, I'm going to make all stakeholders communicate: you, your parents, college professors and the higher education system itself. I'll equip you with all the gear that you need, so that you can zip the line and have fun doing so.

And while I bring the equipment, I'll also show you how to get in excellent shape for the adventure that is college. Because if you get in prepared, it's a wonderful time and you'll grow up in sooo many ways! But if you flit from major to major, undecided for years, that just sucks the life right out of you and you will be too exhausted to enjoy the ride. Plus, you run the very high risk

of ending up straight in the unemployment line. That's what I want you to avoid!

My colleagues, college professors across topics, universities and countries and I see especially freshmen who never so much as pondered *"what is it that I really like, what do I really, truly, honestly can do, naturally?"*. Instead, they just "go" to college in the hope that they might "find" a suitable major. A textbook case of *"I-don't-know"-itis*.

And guess what? If "I don't know" is what you want, then sure enough, "I don't know" is exactly what you'll get.

Every. Single. Time.

Don't get me wrong: I strongly believe that in your lifetime you will absolutely need at least some basic IT/ web design/ programming and sales and marketing skills, regardless what you'll study. But study those exact topics only if you are very good at them and so inclined! A college major is not a penny you find in the street by chance; it's a choice and a decision – ideally an educated choice, a well-pondered decision.

I'm here to help you with exactly that. It's really not that difficult, especially when you have a local guide (aka, me!) to show you the way. You may be going to "something SCHOOL" (Art School, Law School, Nurse School, Med School etc.) or "something INSTITUTE" (Polytechnics) or any other name, but it will not be some kind of "higher high school". No. It's university, it's college, it's a completely different approach

- to learning – there will be few things you’ll learn from scratch, but rather you’ll build on your preexisting level of knowledge and build steep and fast
- to growing up – as a person and a personality. You’ll be setting yourself up to succeed in life, and that’s no mean feat! And here I also include living the college life, because it’s not all work, no fun. You have to have fun!
- to expectations – the ones you set in yourself, and the expectations that others set in you, whether you like it or not.

But in a nutshell, it is kindergarten all over again, the scariest of all times.

Now, there are four steps to this madness: two intrinsic, two extrinsic. In the first two steps, the intrinsic ones, I’ll help you look inside yourself, deep down where all your secrets lie, and you’ll find out what is a must to you and what is a nice to have.

Imagine sorting through your wardrobe (I know, I know!): first we make a mess by dragging everything out. Then, we make organized piles, and only then do we decide what to keep and what to give away. Makes sense? After you’ve done that, the **College Majors Playbook** is a great time-saver built in just for you, to help you along with the decision process. You’ll see!

The last two steps, the extrinsic ones, are fun and really easy to do. Here’s where we take a close look at majors, minors, double majors and all that jazz, plus some pondering on where to study – as in, geographically.

And then you're done! You'll be set for college for the right reasons, not because "my friend goes there", or "my parents said", or "it sounds interesting".

Simple? Of course!

Easy? Maybe, maybe not, that's really on you.

With this simple prep work, you will easily

- ◆ be the expert in your field, the leader, the LINCHPIN
- ◆ get paid *beaucoup* money to do what you love, what you'd do anyway, with or without pay
- ◆ be happy, accomplished in your own right, a trailblazer living life to the max.

The quality of your advice/solutions/product(s) will bring in the money, the time, whatever it is you value. And that, my friend, is success. The fact that you can be yourself. Success is a byproduct of happiness, not the other way around. Be happy first and you'll be successful in your very own way!

When I Grow Up, I Want to Be...

I'm sure you have at least an idea about what you want to study, or what you want to become. You may really know yourself very well, know what you can and can't do, or maybe it's a family profession, or somebody has seen a certain trait in you that could translate into profession X. The reasons are endless. Mind you, there's profession and then there's job! I might be preaching to the choir here, but bear with me, please:

- ◆ the **profession** is your qualification, your training (e.g. my profession is teacher);
- ◆ the **job** is how and where you exercise your profession (e.g. my job right now is college coach and sparring partner, but it's also university professor, and it also used to be conference interpreter, advisor to the CEO and a few more);
- ◆ whereas the **position** defines the rungs on a career portfolio (e.g. dean, director, associate researcher, senior consultant, CEO etc.).

You can always be promoted to or be demoted from a position, or choose to step up or down or sideways; you can always be fired from, get or leave a job; but **you can never lose your profession.**

That's why it's so important that you do something you really, really like and don't get bored with in the long-term. Your profession will evolve with you, it will grow sometimes up, sometimes sideways, but it will be what you have built, the first solid brick that sustains the construction that is your life.

And think about this for a minute: even if, say, 500 people

- study the exact same thing
- in the exact same place,
- then go on to work in the exact same profession
- with the exact same employer,

there will be no two exact same experiences!

It's where your personality comes into play, your interests, hobbies and curiosity, your colleagues, your boss, your whole work environment and how you react to it, your family, your upbringing, your financial situation and sooo many more criteria.

It will be your personal stamp that decides whether you have a good job or a bad job, whether you have chosen a good career or a bad career, a good major or a bad major.

Professions, and even jobs are intrinsically neutral. It's **what you make of them** that tips the scales.

4 Steps to Your College Major

Step 1: Know Your Comfort Zone

Before we dive in, let's take a quick detour via memory lane. Remember the first few weeks in kindergarten? You would hold on to you mom's or dad's hand for dear life, begging and pleading with them not to leave you there, in that scary place? Don't tell me you didn't! But then what happened? You *adapted*, you made friends, you learned!

Next, how were your first few weeks in elementary school? Scary again, right? And then? Correct: you adapted. Same in middle school.

Fast forward to high school, junior or senior, it doesn't really matter: it was scary in the beginning, but you adapted more quickly and now you're seasoned, you know what it's all about and you're cool.

Only problem is: you seem to run out of time. In elementary school, four years seemed like eons away, you felt like you'd be really, really old in fourth grade, remember? Whereas now? Blink and you miss a whole year! Yeah, that feeling is not going to change anytime soon.

So, now to university: based on your previous experience, how do you think it will be? Scary? Or fun? It can be either or, or it can be both, depending on how you set yourself up, how you

prepare. Because, make no mistake: this is “school” no more. More importantly: Will you adapt? Obviously!

Ok, with that said, let’s get back to the fabled Comfort Zone.

Look at your room at home and imagine that everything is covered with a comfy, warm, cozy duvet comforter. It’s everywhere, you step on it the minute you enter your room. It covers your desk, your chair, your trainers, your books on the bookshelves, the instrument that you play, your make-up/ your sneakers/ your football, even your smartphone and your beloved headphones that you absolutely cannot do without. EVERYTHING!

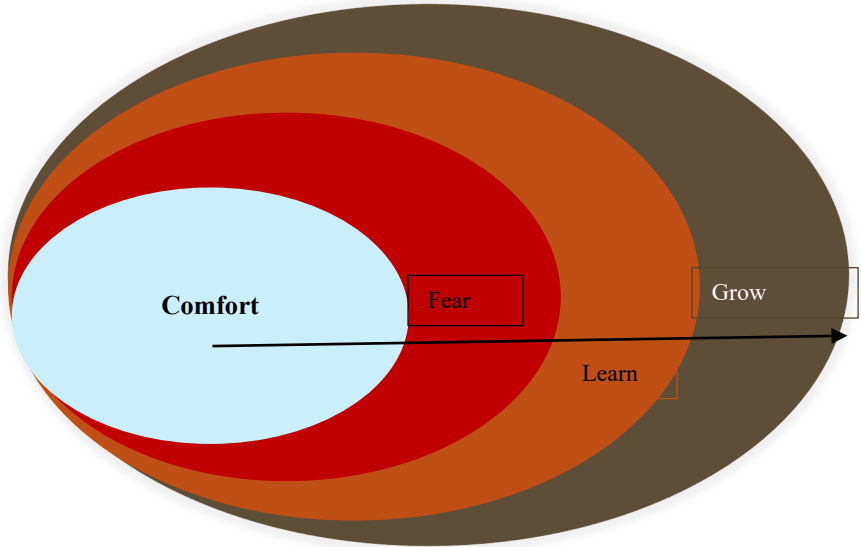
How safe and cared for and secure do you feel? Pretty much, right? You know all those things, you chose most of them, if not all. You had a say! Do you wish you could stay there forever and what the hell, take on the annoying task of looking for your stuff every single day? YES, right?

Now, think of this room of yours like this: all the stuff under this comforter is

- what you know
- what you’re good at
- what you like
- what you’re interested in
- what you talk to your friend(s) about

Why would you want to leave all that behind and start from scratch, from knowing absolutely nothing?! It’s what happens

when you let others choose for you. Here's how that looks like as a graph:



To go from the Comfort Zone straight to the Growth Zone, or even to the Learning Zone, you will have to swim with the sharks and crocodiles that lurk in the Fear Zone – and not get eaten alive, ideally! This is the most difficult part of learning. Here's where we all lack self-confidence, where we find excuses ("I'll start on Monday, sharp, that's a promise!"), where everyone else's opinions matter more than our own. Also, sadly, there's no way around it, it's our fight or flight instincts come out to play.

But here's the trick: while you cannot jump over the Fear Zone or walk around it, and also there's no bridge across it, **you can**

shrink the Fear Zone! When you know what you know, where your strengths lie, you can add on knowledge that doesn't feel so scary because you know the basics. And on you go, one step after the other, until whaddayaknow, you're in the Learning Zone, where you learn more easily, where your attitude is "bring it on!"

And then you grow.

But don't take my word for granted! Hear it from the master himself, Stan Lee:

*"I think whatever you do you should **do what you most want to do and what you're best at.** Too many people don't do what their heart's desire is. They try to do something else 'cause they think **it will be easy** to get a job or make money. And if that happens then when you're doing it **you feel like you're working.** But if you do what you really want to do you **feel like you're playing** and it's easier for you to **do.**"*

Now, how do you feel about enjoying yourself while studying and then while working? I don't mind if I do!

Or, here's what Warren Buffet has to say about what he calls The Circle of Competence:

"An excellent programmer (writer, architect, doctor etc....) is not twice as good as a good programmer (etc.), not even three, four or ten times as good.

No.

An excellent programmer (etc.) can solve the same problem in a fraction of the time it would take the good programmer to solve."

Read that again and let it sink in. Really sink in. The Circle of Competence is that area of things that you know, that you control, that are intrinsically you. It's about excellence, about being the best. Here, we are all about excellence, about being the best.

There will always be the mass of averages, of good-enoughs. And it's fine, it takes all kinds of people. But that will NOT be you! Because you will know what lights the fire in your belly and you'll go after that, so by default you can only be excellent. And excellent will always be in high demand, no matter what it is you do exactly.

Do you mind me telling you a short anecdote? About five years ago, in May or so, during the semester exams, a 3rd year student came to sit a first-year exam with me. And a second-year exam. She failed once, she failed twice, three times each, both first- and second-year topics. And not just a little bit; she crashed and burned!

So, because she was supposed to graduate within like a month, I just had to ask her what had prompted her to study Conference Interpreting in the first place. Her baffling answer was: *"I heard it was in demand and you can earn good money with it"*. I'm laughing now, but I can assure you, it wasn't funny at all back then. I believe my exact thought was: What in the world??!

So then I pulled myself together to stay calm and I explained this very simple math to her: yes, conference interpreting *is* in demand and yes, the interpreter *does* earn a pretty penny, but there will only be demand for the best-in-class interpreter, never for the taillights. And that applies to any study field, to any profession, to any job. Sure, there will be solutions for the good-enoughs as well, but for the taillights... I will gladly go on a limb here and predict that the pickings will always be rather slim.

Please, do not be that student! By the way, of course she didn't graduate and still has a loong, hard way ahead of her. That's why I insist on you knowing yourself. It's the least sexy topic, I know, but also the most important. Like I already said, we **choose** majors here, we don't find them.

Now, I'm sure this student I mentioned is good at something. But at something else, not conference interpreting, not even languages (certainly not German!). And I have another three or four this semester again, where I think "this student was supposed to graduate several years ago. What's s/he still doing here?" There's a long answer, but the short answer is: s/he's lost. Excellent? Nope.

Ergo, your "sweating in training" will be to dig deep into who you are and unearth ideas you had totally forgotten about, interests that have lost their luster and yes, also things you profoundly dislike.

To do this, firstly you will draw a list with 4 sections:

- ◆ I hate / I don't like (e.g. homework)
- ◆ I am (e.g. shy/outspoken, crafty)
- ◆ I enjoy / hobbies & interests (e.g. crafts, driving, fashion)
- ◆ I am naturally good at/with (e.g. numbers, people, languages)

Start with "I hate". Why? Because it's so much easier to know what we dislike, what we suck at, than what we like, what we're good at. That is too wide open. Plus, it can weigh big on your final decision (you'll see in Step 3, where we look at majors for you). I suggest you do each section separately and try not to jump from one to the other, if you can. But ultimately, it's your call and you must work as feels best for you. No judgment here!

Here's your To Do #1 for this exercise. Do it now, so you can have the first brick of your foundation set solidly. Oh, and don't worry about making a mess. It's supposed to be like that and we'll clean it up in Step 2.

To-Do #1 – Your List (mandatory)

Your list is mandatory. It's YOU. Without you, there's really no need to pursue this exercise any further. Also, nobody needs to see your list, so you might as well consider it journaling. Be as accurate as you can, go as deep within you as you can. It will come in handy later.

Remember: there's no right or wrong. There's simply you.

I hate / I don't like (e.g. doing homework, sports, reading, music, tidying up, driving etc.)

- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...

I am (e.g. outspoken, shy, funny, hard-working, lazy etc.)

- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...

I enjoy (e.g. sports, reading, driving, traveling, hanging out with friends, gaming, drawing, playing music etc.)

- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...

I am naturally good at/with (e.g. numbers, languages, people, children, animals etc.)

- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...

I inserted equal numbers of bullet points just for the sake of symmetry, but your numbers will naturally vary. Draft each list on a separate sheet of paper if you wish, the table above is just the framework for you to work with.

There's this *never-break, No# 1 rule* of Conference Interpreting:
Remember the first phrase/ idea your speaker has said!

Sounds obvious, but believe me when I say, the practice of it is darn difficult. As an interpreter, when you finally get your turn to speak, *you will naturally remember only the last sentence or the last idea* your speaker has said in 5 or more minutes.

But you *cannot* and you *should not* and you *must not* start with that. NEVER!! You start with the beginning, just as the speaker has started with the beginning.

The same rule applies when you draft your list. Your life and who you are didn't happen only this summer, in January or this year. No, it all began 14-16 years ago.

So, go back as far as you remember and be as accurate as you possibly can. It's your list after all, no one has to see it if you don't want to! Make a huge mess. You'll soon be happy to have it!

Then, if you wish – and I strongly encourage you to do it! –, ask your best friend/s how they would describe you and your strong and weak points. In their words!

Here's To Do #2 for this exercise. Do it now, so you can have the second brick of your foundation set solidly.

To-Do #2 – Your Best Friend's List (optional)

This list is optional, but I highly encourage you to ask. Your friend(s) might see something that is so second nature to you, that you might overlook it simply for it being literally in your face.

S/he is good at/with

- ...
- ...
- ...

We talk a lot about

- ...
- ...
- ...

Same with your family, if you wish. Ask them how they see you, what your strong and weak points are. Again, in their words, try not to infer what they might say.

Here's To Do #3 for this exercise. Do it now, so you can have the third brick of your foundation set solidly.

To-Do #3 – Your Parents' List (optional)

This list is also optional, but I highly encourage you to ask your parents about memories of you. You may not remember, and their recollections might contain a true gem.

Of course, you know best whether your particular family situation lends itself to driving down memory lane together or not, if you want to or not. This is just my advice, based on students like you whom I've coached over the years.

S/he is good at/with

- ...
- ...
- ...

As a kid, s/he would spend hours playing (with)

- ...
- ...
- ...

You could also take a strengths finder test, online or with a psychologist. Online, there are hundreds, but here's a sample of the ones I personally found to be OK – my filter. You can choose whichever resonates with you, however!

- VIA Survey at www.viacharacter.org (free)
- online Gallup/Clifton Strengths Finder test (paying)
- 16 Personalities at www.16personalities.com (free)

and many, many more you can find online, for free or paying. Just bear in mind: A test is good, but it cannot, nor is it supposed to do the work for you!

Any test, any list you make, will have to pass your filter, i.e. your gut feeling. Be honest with yourself, it's the only way to find your strengths and build on them, instead of on a lie.

Go deep, don't hold back and DON'T edit your thoughts. Otherwise it will be a complete waste of time, you won't be building the amount of muscle needed and, worst of all, college will feel like a drag. **This is your foundation**, the most solid brick you'll ever have.

I know it's the least sexy and least attractive step, but so is warming up before a workout. We'd all rather jump right in and push and pull and lift and roll and build that muscle, right? But who wants to tear a muscle? Not me! It hurts like a mother and you're out of commission for a considerable amount of time.

Here's a real-life example of one of my former coaching students. We'll call him Andrew (not his real name) for simplicity's sake. This is his exact draft. You may want to do it very differently, or maybe go with his structure. Any option is fine, just as long as you dive deep within you:

"I hate sitting still and being told what to do. I would say I'm inherently shy, but I don't find it terribly difficult to connect with people."

I need to be outdoors, I feel antsy if I have to be indoors for longer. I enjoy driving, eating and playing sports (basketball, tennis, skiing in winter). I read travel literature, history (ancient) and sci-fi.

I have a head for numbers and am really good with older people.

My friend says I'm great at sports and we talk about traveling the world, where would we go and so many other plans.

My parents say I was always on the move, like quicksilver. I played with cars, racing them through the sandbox and destroying everybody else's constructions. I was not what one would describe today as team player. But I think I am now."

We'll be working on his example in the next steps, so that you can see the continuity, how the four Steps build onto one another, and so that you can work on your own profile.

That's it! That was Step #1 of the College Major adventure.

You warmed your muscles, you sweated in training, so you've made sure you'll bleed less in war.

And the "war" begins in Step #2.

So, I'll see you bright-eyed and bushy-tailed for the second step, and this is where we curate the lists!

Step 2: The Shoe Has to Fit

Ready, Cinderella? Here, you start editing the pile of clothes we just pulled from your wardrobe and arranging them into neat stacks of like items. Or rather, a capsule collection of college major choices.

This Step is still about you, about who you are and which way you can look (and which other ways you can easily ignore). Because if the shoe doesn't fit, you won't be able to walk very far. So, you need to weed the lists out, slim them down to one, decide what's hot and what's not for you, not in general, your friends or the trends!

Remember that comfy duvet that covered your entire room? Well, now we need to trim it down, so that it covers only your bed and is nice to look at, not add to the mess. Ideally, you have three lists (yours, your friend's and your parents'), but if you only have yours, that's also OK.

General Dwight D. Eisenhower famously said:

"In preparing for battle, I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable."

Here, in Step #2, we plan ahead. Here's how we do it:

First, we **compare** the 3 lists (yours, your friend's and your parents'). What overlaps? What aptitudes are the odd ones, i.e. appear only on one list?

- the obvious, i.e. the overlapping items: Read them carefully, think about them, see if they sit well with you; *are you really that person?*
- the odd one(s): Why do people say you can do thing X or are good at Z? *What did they see, that you overlooked?* Did you overlook it because it's so second nature to you that you don't even notice anymore? (spoiler alert: that's the ticket to your future, really!)

Then, we **shortlist** both obvious and odd items (3-4 of each, max, if you have). What do I mean by that?

Obvious is a capability, interest, value you have on every list. This means that you know, and your friend and family know that this one thing is "so you".

The odd thing is that item that appears only on one list (usually not on yours, because that capability is in-your-face obvious to you and you may not have thought to write it down).

Think of each item on your list separately. How much do you care about each of them? And by this I mean that you get to rank them. I'll show you how.

Take into account as many pros and cons as you can find – remember, you're thinking about your interests, about you, NOT about college subjects. Not yet! That comes in Step #3.

We'll be doing this in 3 legs, but first, let me give you an example here, so you can get a better feel for this exercise and how to do it with your list:

I like fashion (especially shoes!) like the next girl, but not that much so as to want a career in fashion.

I am passionate about interior design, but I want it as my hobby, not my profession. For one, my drawing skills are crap, and yeah, I could learn it, but drawing is not one of my core skills, it's not my natural strength. I would have to work (really hard, I might say!) to acquire that skill and so I would be in the Fear Zone up to my ears. Plus, I would be competing with people who are naturals at this. Not a good feeling, and frankly, not a competition.

On the other hand, I love to read, I learn languages extremely easily (I speak 6, and not just at "hello, how are you" level), and I am also very good at explaining things to people and giving advice; in fact, they keep coming to me for coaching, for being their sounding board. At some point somebody said: "I like talking to you because I can clearly hear my thoughts, and with your questions I can arrange them in the right order". Cool, huh? I think so!

So yeah, teaching, being a coach and a consultant is my Comfort Zone and here is where I grow from every time, in every direction that takes my fancy.

(Ok, so I have the advantage of hindsight, but you get my drift, don't you?)

Be specific. Not for your parents, certainly not for me, but for you! This is the whole point of Step #2, to find your unique "You Factor". But we go deeper than this. We weed out your lists and structure what's left.

And thirdly, like I said, we **rank** the shortlist:

- ◆ On a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high), how good am I at item #1 on my shortlist? (be honest!) Repeat with every item, really annoy yourself. See my example above for inspiration.
- ◆ Are the highest-ranking items also the ones in which I can see myself long-term?
- ◆ What sits best with me, what idea am I most comfortable with? 1, max 2 items

So, basically, from the whole hodgepodge of items on your lists in Step #1, now we cherry-pick only what's important to you, who you are.

Here's Andrew's example again, as promised, with the student's very own ranking:

- *hate sitting still; quicksilver; sports: is sport something that I do naturally?* 5
- *hate being told what to do: authority in general, or somebody in particular? Why? Do I balk on principle, or do I see reason where there is reason?* 1
- *shy, but connect with people; really good with older people: how come? Am I interested in the people, or in their stories?* 3
- *need to be outdoors, antsy if I have to be indoors; enjoy driving; read travel literature, history (ancient) and sci-fi; talk about traveling: NEED, antsy! What do I do when I'm indoors (what activities)?* 5
- *head for numbers; read: basic computing, or do the numbers tell a story?* 3

So, basically a 9-to-5 job in an office would be the wrong thing for this guy, right?

Over to you now. 1 and 2 are rather props, but list them nonetheless:

My 5s

- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...

My 4s

- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...

My 3s

- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...

My 2s

- ...
- ...

My 1s

- ...
- ...

My oddball

- ...

Can you see it? Can you make out a pattern? Can you see the YOU Factor?

After you have shortlisted your capabilities, likes and dislikes, there are **3 aspects** we need to consider in this Step #2. I'll give you clear examples in a minute, but for now just bear with me.

A. Build on the shortlist of your strengths

Never try to boost your weaknesses in the hope that they will eventually turn to strengths. *If* you are extremely disciplined, you can try to play to your weaknesses and turn them into strengths. It *has* been known to happen!

I've had students do it (albeit only a very small handful), but only those with extreme willpower and discipline. If you cannot say that about yourself, play to your strengths and leverage those. Because you also want to live and enjoy life, right? And there are only so many hours in a day...

I, for one, couldn't do it! For me, it would be the ultimate ordeal to play Sisyphus with my weaknesses. I am more the kangaroo jumps type: I accumulate know-how (during which time I seem to be playing dead) and only then do I jump. Maybe you are like me, maybe you do things very differently. In this one instance, it is paramount that you be yourself, work *like you*, not like someone else.

- *Is a scholarship in the cards? What kind? How do I apply? By when?*

- *Am I willing/capable to work AND study AND have some fun in the process? What could I do? (list everything that comes to mind, you'll figure it out closer to the actual enrollment day or even after you start college. This is important but not urgent)*

About this last point: you may be tempted to think “*sure I can!*”. I’m not disagreeing, but please think of study + job like this: if you decide to study, your studies are job #1. Your job is job #2. Not the other way around.

Let me give you an example of how this pans out in real college life:

In May 2020 I had set the deadline for a study paper to be handed in. Sure enough, everybody handed it in... *except* for one student (who was already on prolonged studies), who emailed me later the evening of the deadline, saying that she

had no idea what I had taught, because of her job she couldn't contact her classmates, and could I please tell her what I'd taught throughout the semester and when was the exam scheduled.

She was nice and polite, that was not the problem. The problem was that her job #2 had been more important to her than job #1 and she didn't even acknowledge that she was about to be fired from job #1.

Yes, everybody understands that living in another city is costly and yes, college is quite lax with your job morale – up to a point. You may skip classes, but you need to keep up to date. That's the simple deal. The alternative is just like with any other job: being let go.

So that's why I suggest you evaluate your capabilities very thoroughly, especially the financial aspects.

Two down, one to go. Keep up the mojo!

C. Evaluate your capability & motivation (in all honesty)

Last but certainly not least, you and I need to talk about capability and motivation (yeah, I know!) This calls for 3 questions:

Question #1: What if I fail one or more exams? Do I have the resilience to pick myself up, study hard and pass them? Or do I throw in the towel?

(Circle the appropriate answer: **Study & pass / Nope**)

I see it every day (actually, every professor sees this every day, regardless whether in high school or in college): students, especially freshmen, are immediately demotivated and stop coming to class if they don't understand something.

They tend to skip and skip the class, until they have a really hard time following the course and then it's only by some miracle – or a knowledgeable neighbor at the actual exam – that they pass the exam. It's a vicious circle that only the student's motivation can break. That's why I have motivation as a separate item here.

Do you have it in you? Think about it.

How did/do you handle situations like these in high school? Think about it. Because you'll probably repeat performance in college! Most likely! So, take a good, hard look at yourself. Again, no one has to see but you!

Question # 2: What do I do in high school in those classes I don't like? Do I skip them or do I soldier through, ecstatic when they are finally over?

(Circle the appropriate answer: **Skip / Soldier on**)

Let's be clear about one thing here: **NOBODY likes all classes!** Either because of the topic (it's just not how your brain is wired) or because of the professor's teaching technique or because of both.

Even if you get good grades in everything, that doesn't mean you like everything (does it?). Good grades – and even bad

grades all over –, especially in senior years, are there to throw parents off the scent of who you have become and what you like. So, think about it and write down your answer, the raw material.

Question #3: Do I seriously have the capability to learn large amounts of information in a short time (e.g., all bones in the human body in one week, if you were to enroll in Med School)?

(Circle the appropriate answer: **Duh!** / **Weeeell...** / **Nope**)

This example is entirely accurate, by the way! There will be huge amounts of information to absorb in various fields, for various classes. At once. What do you do? Ask yourself this question seriously and, more importantly, try to answer it as accurate and truthfully as you can. It makes all the difference later!

Think about this for a moment (just last week I told my students this and their eyes grew big as saucers):

- ◆ College is 3-5 years, on average, a little longer in Med School. So, on average you'll be 22, maybe 25 when you graduate
- ◆ If things in the world don't go pear-shaped by then, going by today's rules you will retire from work at around 70. That's 45 years of working. 45! Whether you love your work or you hate it. Add student loans into the mix, and if you don't absolutely love what you do, you're screwed!

- ◆ Also, bear in mind that no matter how committed you are and how much you love your profession, there will be days, sometimes weeks and months, when you will hate your job (not your profession, but your job, the output). Because the boss, because the colleague, because Monday etc. There can be any number of reasons why. But if you hate your profession (the foundation), it's just not you, and you hate your job, what do you do then? Get depressed? That's one more problem, not a solution!
- ◆ Sure, you could always switch jobs and even change profession! But that's expensive, especially in terms of time. Not impossible, but time-consuming. And yes, you will have multiple professions during your lifetime, not to mention jobs! It's the simple geography of your life. That's why it's paramount that you get the foundation right.

Changing lanes in life is not as easy as on the road, so you'll need a safe haven to return to when life throws you a curveball. Remember this number: 45 years! On average. Could be more by the time you're done...

And that's why starting in your Comfort Zone is so important and you have to figure that one out first. I hope you understand now the thought process of weeding out your lists and why it's crucial before we can move on to Step 3 of your college adventure, where we're getting to the best part, the college major!

Now, contrary to popular belief, no school and no professor is out to trip you or to torture you with this large amount of information. It's just that, without it, you won't be capable to learn on and move on in the subject matter.

You won't know how to apply the fabled critical thinking.

You need the facts first.

Everything you are learning now was someone else's tripwire – which they documented; for you, so you don't trip like they did, but instead you now can sail smoothly (don't worry, there are still enough tripwires for you today).

You've come so very far in this journey, congratulations!

And because you did, I want you to do one last thing here, in this Step. In the next pages, I have inserted the **College Majors Playbook** for you. It's a priceless gift, you'll see, especially in terms of time saved.

With your weeded-out list, give it a good workout. Check out what those ideas and inclinations that you have could translate into. Just for fun now, no pressure. We'll get back to it and deep into the nitty-gritty during Step #3.

So, now that we've finished weeding out the lists, you can see that there's considerably less "crap" in there and that alone calls for a celebration! Do something that's fun and liberating, shake off the stress, you really deserve the break.

À propos break: do these exercises in your own rhythm, but don't doodle. The sooner you finish, the better! In my experience coaching students like you, they take about ½ day. And yes, I can almost guarantee that you will course-correct, but you need the first take-off to run smoothly, you need to be in control, so you can carry on with confidence.

But like I said, no pressure. This is all about you, no competition. Also, nothing is set in stone, immovable. This book, this exercise is the equivalent of training wheels on a bike – and you will know when it's time to get them off. Enjoy!

The College Majors Playbook

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4 Unpleasant – but Necessary – Truths

Fact is that getting admitted to college is the easy part. Staying put is the hard part, especially if you find out that you don't necessarily like your major. How do you change it? Can you even do that? When? And at what cost (money, time, energy)?

Fact is that admissions exams are the easiest exams you'll ever sit. They are rather general and test your ability to handle the specific topic, rather than grill you about details. That will come later on, when you're already in college.

Fact is that the first semester is the hardest:

- ◆ you get bombarded with classes and information you had no idea existed
- ◆ you're very new to this and you behave strangely
- ◆ classes are taught so very differently than what you had in high school
- ◆ those first exams WILL hit you hard
- ◆ you started out as a teen, at home, safeguarded, and then bam!, three months later, in college, everyone treats you like an adult, expecting you to make decisions on the fly. But you don't feel like an adult. Welcome to life!
- ◆ you have high expectations from college and most college life will disappoint you in the beginning – so you resort to skipping class, partying a tad too much, that sort of thing... Or despairing, wanting to quit.

Fact is also that you can come prepared, and not fly by the seat of your pants. Welcome to this Playbook!

How to Use This Playbook Effectively

With your shortlist of likes and dislikes, hobbies, interests, and most importantly, what you're naturally good at, check your #1 skill (aka the 5s and 4s in your ranking in Step #2) and look it up here. Then the next, and the next, until you have researched every item of interest on your weeded-out list. Research each one as if they were THE ONE.

Read the Description of the field and the Likely Courses you'll take.

Peruse through all the aptitudes/skills on your shortlist and *listen to your gut*: which one feels best? Why?

Go deeper! Check the websites of your university of choice (or community college, online course, online university, whatever floats your boat), check out their exact curriculum, schedule, plans etc. If you like **around 60%** of their offer description, you're in the perfect place. None will be 100% to your liking, that's a fact you'll need to accept!

Medicine

General (Human) Medicine

Brief description of the field

= the science and practice of the diagnosing, treating and preventing diseases

- includes health care practices that aim to maintain and restore health by preventing and treating illnesses. In modern clinical practice, physicians assess patients in order to diagnose, treat and prevent disease using clinical judgment, evidence-based medical practice and other
- doctor-patient relationship typically begins with an examination of the patient's medical history and medical record, followed by a medical interview and a physical examination
- the doctor may order medical tests (e.g. blood tests), take a biopsy or prescribe pharmaceutical drugs or other therapies. Differential diagnosis methods help to rule out conditions, based on the information provided
- Medicine is one of the longest study fields. Also, graduates need to pass a residency exam in order to choose and train in their field of expertise. Residency takes 3 to 7 years to complete, usually followed by a specialist exam. So, sum total that would be in average 10 years that you should firmly count on for grad studies alone

Likely courses

Macroscopic Anatomy

Chemistry

Physics

Cell Biology

Human Genetics

Microscopic Anatomy

Biochemistry

Molecular Biology

Physiology

Semiology

Pathology, Pharmacology, Toxicology

Internal Medicine, Surgery, Neurology, Psychiatry, Dermatology, Urology, Ophthalmology, Pediatrics etc. etc.

*I am not afraid of death,
I just don't want to be there when it happens*
(Woody Allen)

Dentistry

Brief description of the field

= the study, diagnosis, prevention and treatment of diseases, disorders and conditions of the oral cavity, in the dentition but also in the oral mucosa, and of related structures and tissues, particularly in the maxillofacial area (jaw and facial)

- primarily associated with teeth, but Dentistry or Dental Medicine is not limited to teeth – it includes other aspects of the cranio-facial complex (e.g. temporo-mandibular and other supporting structures)
- dentistry = stomatology, i.e. the study of the mouth and its disorders and diseases, for which reason the two terms are used interchangeably in certain regions
- dental treatments are carried out by the dental team, which often consists of a dentist and dental auxiliaries (dental assistants, dental hygienists, dental technicians, dental therapists)

Likely courses

Clinical Dentistry

Clinical Medicine (patient management, health promotion)

Biomedical Sciences (Anatomy, Physiology, Microbiology)

Operative Dentistry

Prosthodontics

Periodontics

Restorative Dentistry
Extractions
Pediatric Dentistry
Head and Neck Anatomy
Oral Medicine
Sedation
Orthodontics
Crown and Bridge
Maxillo-Facial Surgery etc. etc.

*Faced with the choice of enduring a bad toothache
or going to the dentist,
we generally tried to ride out the bad tooth
(Joseph Barbera)*

Pharmacy

Brief description of the field

= the science and technique of preparing and dispensing drugs. It is a health profession that links health sciences with chemistry and aims to ensure the safe and effective use of pharmaceutical drugs

- the scope of pharmacy practice includes more traditional roles such as compounding and dispensing medications, and it also includes more modern services related to health care, including clinical services, reviewing medications for safety and efficacy, and providing drug information. Pharmacists, therefore, are the experts on drug therapy and are the primary health professionals who optimize use of medication for the benefit of the patients
- Undergraduate studies: 4 to 5 years, graduate studies: ca. 4 years (M.Pharm, Ph.D). Graduates need to pass a **residency exam** in order to choose their field of expertise

Likely courses

Professional and Scientific Skills for Pharmacy

Biology

Chemistry

Mathematics for Pharmacy

The Human Body

The Role of the Pharmacist

Making Medicines

The Science of Drugs

Drug Design and Medicine Development

Pharmacy Law

Ethics and Practice

The Central Nervous System and Mental Health

The Cardio-Respiratory System

Infection, Immunology, and Cancer

Endocrine, Reproductive and Inflammation

The Cardio-Respiratory System

Gastrointestinal, Liver and Skin

Technology to Care

Effective Decision Making for Pharmacy Practice

Research Methods and Project

etc. etc.

*It is easy to get a thousand prescriptions,
but hard to get one single remedy*
(Chinese proverb)

Nurse Studies

Brief description of the field

(in certain countries: graduate studies only)

= aligns the prevention, remedy and management of illnesses with a profound understanding of the social factors which influence a patient's quality of life and the success of healthcare strategies

- Nursing, midwifery, paramedicine, physiotherapy, social work
- Graduate studies: ca. 3 years

Likely courses

Quality Health Systems

Health Across the Lifespan

Chronic Conditions etc. etc.

How can anybody hate nurses? Nobody hates nurses!

*The only time you hate a nurse
is when they're giving you an enema*

(Warren Beatty)

Veterinary Medicine

Brief description of the field

= the branch of medicine that deals with the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of disease, disorder and injury in animals. The scope of veterinary medicine is wide, covering all animal species, both domesticated and wild, with a wide range of conditions which can affect different species

- Veterinary medicine is widely practiced, both with and without professional supervision. Professional care is most often led by a veterinary physician (also known as a vet, veterinary surgeon or veterinarian), but also by paraveterinary workers such as veterinary nurses or technicians. This can be augmented by other paraprofessionals with specific specialisms such as animal physiotherapy or dentistry and species-relevant roles such as farriers
- Veterinary science helps human health through the monitoring and control of zoonotic disease (infectious disease transmitted from animals to humans), food safety and indirectly through human applications from basic medical research. They also help to maintain food supply through livestock health monitoring and treatment and mental health by keeping pets healthy and long living
- Graduate studies: 4 to 5 years (B.Sc)

Likely courses

The Animal Body

Animal Life & Food Safety

Professional and Clinical Skills

Veterinary Pathology

Integrated Clinical Course – Dog and Cat

Professional & Clinical Skills

Clinical Foundation Course

Integrated Clinical Course: Farm Animal

Integrated Clinical Course: Equine

Integrated Clinical Course: Exotics

Professional and Clinical Skills

Veterinary Public Health etc. etc.

*Good veterinarians talk to animals.
Great veterinarians hear them talk back
(unknown)*

Animal Husbandry

Brief description of the field

= the branch of agriculture concerned with animals that are raised for meat, fiber, eggs or other products. It includes day-to-day care, selective breeding and the raising of livestock

- animals, particularly farm animals, play a more important role in our daily lives than we may think. The production of healthy livestock is the driving force towards global food security. With an ever-growing population to feed, farmers need to increase production and optimize distribution on a national and international scale
- Animal Husbandry teaches the ins and outs of nutrition, immunology and diagnostics, disease control and animal welfare scientific knowledge of the main species within the husbandry system: cattle, horses, pigs and poultry
- Undergraduate studies: 4 years (B.Sc), graduate studies: 2 to 4 years (M.Sc, Ph.D.)

Likely courses

Animal and Achievement

Animal Farming

Animal and Health

Sustainable Chains

Agricultural Company

Soil and Crop

Animal Husbandry and Society

Dairy Farming

Applied Animal Sciences

Marketing

Animal Health

Land Use and Feed Production

Entrepreneurship

Animal in Society

Animal in Business

Research, Food and Breeding

Animal Health: horse-rider interaction

Food and Procreation

etc. etc.

You don't choose farming; farming chooses you
(adapted after Al Nobriga on music)

Humanities – General

Classics

Brief description of the field

= the earliest branch of the humanities

- covers the languages, literature, history, art and other cultural aspects of the ancient Mediterranean world
- focuses primarily on but is not limited to Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome during classical antiquity, the era spanning from the late Bronze Age of Ancient Greece during the Minoan and Mycenaean periods (c. 1600-1100 BCE), through the period known as Late Antiquity, to the fall of the Western Roman Empire, c. 500 CE
- the word “classics” is also used to refer to the literature, architecture, philosophy and science and technology of the period

Likely courses

Medieval Cultures

Principles of Archaeology

Classical Etymology

Ancient Myth

Liberty and Equality: Ancient and Modern Perspectives

Birth of the West: Thinking about the Greek

Origins of Western Civilization

Classics of Page and Screen: Exploring the Iconic in Literature and Film

The Art of Greece and Rome

Ancient Political History

Daily Life in Antiquity

Democracy: Ancient and Modern

etc. etc.

*The man who does not read has no advantage
over the man who cannot read*
(Mark Twain)

History

Brief description of the field

= the study of the past as it is described in written documents. Events occurring before written record are considered prehistory (an umbrella term that relates to past events as well as the memory, discovery, collection, organization, presentation and interpretation of information about these events)

- uses a narrative to examine and analyze a sequence of past events and objectively determine the patterns of cause and effect that define them. Historians sometimes debate the nature of history and its usefulness by discussing the study of the discipline as an end in itself and as a way of providing "perspective" on the problems of the present
- stories common to a particular culture, but not supported by external sources (such as the tales surrounding King Arthur), are usually classified as cultural heritage or legends, because they do not show the "disinterested investigation" required of the discipline of history
- the modern study of history is wide-ranging and includes the study of specific regions and the study of certain topical or thematic elements of historical investigation
- studying history involves analyzing the overall impact of historic occurrences, trends and artifacts on the world, e.g. how various revolutions and civil wars have shaped particular countries' governments into what they are now, or how a strain of belief has developed to influence contemporary thinking

Likely courses

Medicine in History

Intro to ANC Near East

Globalization and its Historical Significance

Ancient Greece

Inquisitors, Heretics and Witches

History and Human Nature

Europe from the French Revolution to WWII

Revolution and Empire

Free Speech and Censorship

Modern American Culture

European Studies etc. etc.

*Education is not the learning of facts,
but training the mind to think*

(Albert Einstein)

Linguistics, Languages, Literature

Brief description of the fields

Linguistics is the study of language in all its forms. It explores the many different facets of language (physical properties of the sound waves in speech, social context in which conversations are embedded etc.). The various sub-branches of linguistics are concerned with how languages are structured, what they have in common, the range and limits to the differences among them, how they are acquired and used, how they change and so on.

Linguistics is the scientific study of language and it involves an analysis of language form, language meaning, and language in context.

If you can't annoy somebody, there's little point in writing
(Kingsley Amis)

(Modern) Languages is the study of individual languages or groups of languages currently spoken around the world (as opposed to Latin and Ancient Greek, *aka* the Classics).

A modern language degree is not just about fine-tuning a language you already know well, though attaining a high level of fluency is one of the goals.

Many programs will require the study of courses which develop the understanding of past and present cultures relating to the country (or countries) in which the language of study is spoken. This learning often requires the study of literary texts,

film and media, as well as learning about the historical and political contexts of a certain region.

Professionally focused courses may also be available (e.g. translation, international relations, business processes in different regions, media and communication studies etc.).

A language-focused degree will train students to analyze the workings of the language/s of their choice outside of literature, including language-based communication in all kinds of forms and contexts. This includes e.g. analysis of casual spoken conversation, text speak, advertising methods or the uses of language in specialized legal and medical discourse.

Man invented language to satisfy his deep need to complain
(Lily Tomlin)

Literature is the study of written works, essentially fiction. It is designed to get students to reading books, analyzing theories, critiquing prose and verse and taking a more critical look at the signs and words surrounding us every day.

The aim is to get students thinking creatively and analytically about the language/ s of their choice. A course with a focus on literature typically allows students to study literary texts from different periods. Your reading will require you to study and analyze passages and relating texts to their cultural, social, historical and political contexts

He knew everything about literature, except how to enjoy it
(Joseph Heller)

These 3 disciplines usually combine, but you can focus on one as your major.

Likely courses

Grammar (of your language/s of choice)

Phonetics

Language Learning (your choice of language/s)

Terminology

26Literature (of your language/s of choice)

Culture and Civilization

Comparative Literature

Literature Theory

Language Exercises

Translation Techniques

Note-Taking Techniques (if you study Conference Interpreting)

Conference Interpreting Techniques (same)

etc. etc.

In America, only the successful writer is important; in France, all writers are important; in England, no writer is important and in Australia you have to explain what a writer is
(Geoffrey Cottrell)

Law

Brief description of the field

= the study of the set of rules and principles by which a society is governed

- a law degree is an academic degree conferred for studies in law. Such degrees are generally preparation for legal careers; but while their curricula may be reviewed by legal authority, they do not themselves confer a license. A legal license is granted (typically by examination) and exercised locally
- Specialist fields include e.g. Business Law, International and Comparative Law, Media, Entertainment and Technology Law and Policy Specialization, or Public Interest Law

Likely courses

Areas of Focus, e.g.:

Business Law

Consumer Law

Criminal Justice

Employment & Labor Law

Entertainment Law

Environmental Law

International Law

International Human Rights

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Intellectual Property

Public Law

Immigration Studies

Gender Studies

Critical Race Studies

Interdisciplinary Studies etc. etc.

Laws are like sausages: it is better not to see them being made

(Otto von Bismarck)

Philosophy

Brief description of the field

= the study of general and fundamental problems, such as those connected with existence, knowledge, values, reason, mind and language. Philosophy is distinguished from other ways of addressing such problems by its critical, generally systematic approach and its reliance on rational argument

- “Philosophy is not just a subject, it’s a way of thinking. Philosophy helps develop a skill set of critical thinking and analysis that can be applied to most aspects of life. You learn to think about things and look at things in a different way.” (Maggie Clark, <http://unc-admissions.blogspot.ro/2012/06/to-be-or-not-to-bea-philosophy-major.html>)
- Undergraduate studies: 4 years, BA in Philosophy or BAH in Philosophy, graduate studies: 2 years (MA) or 5 years (PhD)

Likely courses

History of Ancient Philosophy

History of Modern Philosophy

Logic

Symbolic Logic

Logic and its Applications

Introduction to Philosophy: Main Problems

Introduction to Philosophy: Great Works

Critical Thinking

Language and Communication

Philosophy of Western Religion

Philosophy of Science

Introduction to Mathematical Logic

Introduction to Ethics

Practical Ethics

Morality and Business

The Ethics of Peace, War and Defense etc. etc.

You have to run as fast as you can just to stay where you are.

If you want to get anywhere you'll have to run much faster.

(from "Alice in Wonderland", Lewis Carroll)

Religion

Brief description of the field

= the study of the collection of cultural beliefs, belief systems and world views that establishes symbols that relate humanity to spirituality and sometimes to moral values

- Many religions have narratives, symbols, traditions and sacred histories that are intended to give meaning to life or to explain the origin of life or the Universe. They tend to derive morality, ethics, religious laws or a preferred lifestyle from their ideas about the Cosmos and human nature
- The study of religion pursues critical thought in the context of social and intellectual formations that have consisted of revolutionary engagement, sectarian creativity and significant acts of violence
- It is impossible to study religion without a consciousness of history: the history of dissent, rebellion, radicalism and imperialism that inquiry into religion
- Undergraduate studies: 4 years (BA or BS), graduate studies: 3 years (Ph.D.)

Likely courses

General, Comparative and Thematic Courses (traditions, concepts, texts)

Surveys of Religious Traditions (survey courses that provide a broad introduction to a particular religious tradition or scripture in historical context)

Topics in Religious Studies (specialized topics in religious studies, both introductory and intermediate)

Advanced Topics in Religious Studies (advanced courses on specialized topics), e.g.

- American Religious History
- Ancient Christianity
- Asian Religions
- Islamic Studies
- Judaic Studies
- New Testament
- Old Testament / Hebrew Bible

Philosophy of Religion

Religion and Modernity

Religious Ethics

Theology

etc. etc.

*To achieve great things, two things are needed:
a plan and not quite enough time*
(Leonard Bernstein)

Humanities – Social Sciences

Anthropology

Brief description of the field

= comparative discipline concerned with human cultural, social and biological diversity

- studies societies of the entire world, from the remotest past to the present day, helping us to see our world from a perspective that challenges ethnocentric assumptions
- the major in Anthropology covers the evolution of human and nonhuman primates and the evolutionary biology of living people, world prehistory and the emergence of civilization, diversity and commonality in social organization and culture, the importance of culture for understanding such topics as sickness and health, gender and sexuality, environment and development, media and visual culture, urban life and sport, economic organization and politics, law and society, migration and religion, and language use as cultural behavior
- the subfields of anthropological inquiry (archaeology, biological anthropology, sociocultural anthropology and linguistic anthropology) offer a holistic perspective on humankind and its development
- Undergraduate studies: 4 years (BA), graduate studies: 3 years (PhD)

Likely courses

Introduction to Cultural Anthropology

Human Evolution

Inca Culture and Society

Aztec Archaeology and Ethnohistory

The Corporation

Hormones and Behavior

Sexual Orientation

Gender Identity and Human Rights

Mammalogy, Primate Diversity and Evolution

Great Hoaxes and Fantasies in Archaeology

The Sustainable Preservation of Cultural Heritage

Anthropology of the Former Soviet Union and Eurasia

The Anthropology of War

Modern Southeast Asia

Urban Ethnography of Asia

Field Methods in Cultural Anthropology

Anthropological Theory and the Post-Colonial Encounter

Endangered Languages in Social Context

Ancient Civilizations of the Eurasian Steppes

Bilingualism in Social Context etc. etc.

*Ultimately, life isn't about finding yourself,
it's about creating yourself*

(Steven Gripp)

Archaeology

Brief description of the field

= the research into human history by locating and studying artifacts, structural remains and other surviving evidence

- the study covers prehistoric, early historic, medieval and other cultures and cultural developments in the Old and New Worlds and introduces students to the analytic tools that facilitate archaeological studies. The major is designed to expose students to a variety of archaeological research perspectives: anthropological, art historical, historical and scientific
- studies can include: origins of agriculture, cities and states, and early empires, study of the material culture, art, and architecture of prehistoric, early historic and medieval cultures, including the iconography of ancient cultures, the relationship between art and society, ancient writing systems
- Undergraduate studies: 4 years (BA), graduate studies: 3 years (PhD)

Likely courses

Great Hoaxes and Fantasies in Archaeology

Aztec Archaeology and Ethnohistory

Introduction to Archaeological Laboratory Sciences

Archaeological Ceramics

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Analysis of Lithic Technology

Human Osteology

Roman Art: Empire, Identity, and Society

Greek Art and Architecture

Roman Architecture

Introduction to the History of Art: Global Decorative Arts

Art and Architecture of Mesoamerica

Art of the Ancient Near East and Aegean

Egypt and Northeast Africa: A Multidisciplinary Approach

Directed Reading and Research in Archaeology

Senior Research Project in Archaeology

etc. etc.

*Open different doors; you may find a you there
that you never knew was yours. Anything can happen*
(from: Mary Poppins)

Communication Studies

Brief description of the field

= deals with processes of human communication, commonly defined as the sharing of symbols to create meaning. The discipline encompasses a range of topics, from face-to-face conversation to mass media outlets such as television broadcasting and the Internet

- Communication studies examine how messages are interpreted through the political, cultural, economic and social dimensions of their contexts
- Communication Studies is the perfect major for students with multiple interests and diverse talents, because the discipline provides theory, tools and techniques for analyzing, managing and improving communication in every arena of professional and personal interaction
- Undergraduate studies: 3-4 years (BA), graduate studies: 1-4 years (MA, MFA, MS or PhD)

Likely courses

Interpersonal Communication

Public Speaking

Speech Writing

Argumentation and Debate

Research Methods in Communication

Theories of Persuasion

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Persuasive Images: Rhetoric of Popular Culture

Principles of Rhetorical Criticism

Theories of Argumentation

Communication and Culture

Communication Technology

Community and Personal Identity

Collaborative Leadership and Decision Making

Understanding Media Markets: Users, Makers and Metrics

Power in Entertainment

etc. etc.

*It usually takes more than three weeks
to prepare an impromptu speech*
(Mark Twain)

Cultural Studies

Brief description of the field

= a field of theoretically, politically and empirically engaged cultural analysis that concentrates upon the political dynamics of contemporary culture, its historical foundations, defining traits and conflicts

- Cultural studies researchers generally investigate how cultural practices relate to wider systems of power associated with or operating through social phenomena such as ideology, class structures, national formations, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender and generation
- Cultural studies views cultures not as fixed, bounded, stable and discrete entities, but rather as constantly interacting and changing sets of practices and processes.
- The field of cultural studies encompasses a range of theoretical and methodological perspectives and practices. Although distinct from the disciplines of cultural anthropology and ethnic studies, cultural studies draw upon and has contributed to each of these disciplines
- Undergraduate studies: 3-4 years (BA or BS), graduate studies: 1 to 4 years (MA, MS or PhD)

Likely courses

Anthropology and Citizenship

Contesting Culture as Property

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World Fiction and Cultural Anthropology

Images and Critique in Public Culture

Variations in Blackness

Gender, Race, and the Social Construction of Identity

The 'Other' in Modern Japanese Literature and Film

Food and Culture

Water and Society

Capitalism and Nature

Methods of Media Research

Communications and Mass Culture

Rhetorical Theories of Cultural Production

Space, Place and Media

Historiographic and Ethnographic Approaches to Modern

Cultures and Societies

Philosophical Discourse of Modernity

Introduction to Post-Colonial Studies

Mobilities

Cultural Studies

Approaches to Pedagogy

etc. etc.

*The trouble with our times is that the future
is not what it used to be*
(Paul Valéry)

Economics

Brief description of the field

= much broader than the study of recessions and inflation, or stocks and bonds

- Economists study decision-making and incentives and how taxes create incentives for labor market and savings behavior
- Many current public policy debates concern questions of economics, including causes and consequences of inequality and gender and racial wage gaps; how to address poverty; the impact of immigration and trade on the well-being of a country's citizens; the cause of the Great Recession and how to predict future downturns
- Undergraduate studies: 4 years (BA), graduate studies: 2 years (MBA), 2 years (PhD)

Likely courses

Introductory Microeconomics

Introductory Macroeconomics

Quantitative Foundations of Microeconomics

Econometrics and Data Analysis

Introduction to Probability and Statistics

Game Theory

Financial Theory

Financial Markets

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Health Economics and Public Policy
Urban Inequalities and Educational Inequality
International Economics
Capital Markets
Introduction to Corporate Finance
Advanced Development Economics
Advanced Competition
Economics and Policy
Mathematical Economics: General Equilibrium Theory
Global Financial Crisis
International Trade Policy
Firms, Markets, and Competition
Central Banking
Economics of Uncertainty and Information
Designing the Digital Economy
etc. etc.

*I'm not worried about the deficit.
It is big enough to take care of itself*
(Ronald Reagan)

Education (Pedagogy)

Brief description of the field

= the discipline that deals with the theory and practice of teaching

- Pedagogy informs teaching strategies, teacher actions, and teacher judgments and decisions by taking into consideration theories of learning, understandings of students and their needs, and the backgrounds and interests of individual students
- Pedagogy includes how the teacher interacts with students and the social and intellectual environment the teacher seeks to establish. Spanning a broad range of practice, its aims range from furthering liberal education (the general development of human potential) to the narrower specifics of vocational education (the imparting and acquisition of specific skills)
- instructive strategies are governed by the pupil's background knowledge, experience, situation and environment, as well as learning goals set by the student and teacher
- Undergraduate studies: 3-4 years (BA), graduate studies: 1 to 4 years (MA or PhD)

Likely courses

Foundations in Education Studies

Public Schools and Politics

Theory and Practice of Emotional Intelligence

Child Development

Current Work in Child Development and Social Policy

Theory and Practice of Early Childhood Education:

Implications of Curriculum and Policy

Language, Literacy and Play

The Growing Child in Global Context

Child Care, Society and Public Policy

Cities, Suburbs, and School Choice

Contemporary Challenges to Liberal Education

Urban Inequalities and Educational Inequality

Developmental Psychology

Social Psychology

Cause and Effect: Research Methods

Clinical Psychology in the Community

etc. etc.

I never let schooling interfere with my education

(Mark Twain)

Geography

Brief description of the field

= a science which attempts to explain the world around us and the impact of both natural and man-made factors and events. Those who choose to study geography will typically opt to focus either on physical geography or human geography

- Physical Geography (= the study of physical processes and natural environments) is closely related to Earth sciences. It is about understanding the Earth's physical processes – from climates and weather systems to earthquakes and rock formations, right down to what's happening on the ocean floor.
- Human Geography (= concerned with human societies and the relations between people and planet) studies social sciences such as sociology, anthropology and politics (how they operate, develop and the challenges they face), population change, cultural and religious practices, or various aspects of globalization
- Undergraduate studies: 3 to 4 years (BA or B.Sc.), graduate studies: 1-2 years (MA or M.Sc.) and 2-4 years (PhD)

Likely courses

Biophysical and Social Transformations in Northern Regions

Korean Urban Experience

South and Southeast Asia

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Contemporary China

Middle East; North America; Spanish South America; Brazil;

Europe; Mexico;

Central America; Caribbean

Applied Climatology: Principles of Climate Impact on Natural Environment

Soil and Water Conservation

Natural Resources

Humid Tropics

Human Impact on Biophysical Environment: What Science Has Learned

Population and Biogeography of Plant and Animal Invasions

Ecosystem Ecology

Bioresource Management

Environmental Impact Analysis

Conservation of Resources: North America

Conservation of Resources: Underdeveloped World

Wildlife Conservation in Eastern and Southern Africa

Health and the Global Environment

Geography of Extinction etc. etc.

I haven't been everywhere, but it's on my list

(Susan Sontag)

Global Affairs

Brief description of the field

= understanding complex issues such as terrorism, refugee crises, global inequality and health and environmental challenges, gain a deep understanding of political, social, economic and cultural globalization, understand the use of different kinds of data and theories to analyze current global issues, be trained in writing effectively for policy and other audiences, be prepared to work in cross-cultural environments, have expertise in your field, be it a world region or issues such as global governance, the global economy, international development, or environment

- International development focuses on economic development and poverty, including global public health, in all but the world's wealthiest countries
- International security focuses on international relations, foreign policy, and diplomacy and includes topics relevant to national and human security
- Undergraduate studies: 3-4 years (BA), graduate studies: 1-2 years (MA, MAS) or 2-3 years (PhD)

Likely courses

Introduction to Global Affairs

Globalization and Society

Introduction to Microeconomics

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Introduction to Macroeconomics
Approaches to International Development
Approaches to International Security
International Politics
Comparative Politics
Quantitative Analysis
Qualitative Analysis
Cultural Anthropology
The Art of Biography
Game Theory
Strategic Models of Politics
Civil Conflict
Causes of War
International Relations
Studies in Grand Strategies
Media and Conflict
Human Rights Theory and Politics
Global Conflict
Analysis and Resolution etc. etc.

Those who stand for nothing will fall for anything
(Alexander Hamilton, US Founding Father)

Political Science

Brief description of the field

= a social science which deals with systems of governance and the analysis of political activities, political thoughts and political behavior

- it deals extensively with the theory and practice of politics which is commonly thought of as determining of the distribution of power and resources (why do countries go to war? how can we explain problems such as poverty, inequality and pollution? what can be done to improve political representation in the countries around the world?)
- Political science comprises numerous subfields, including comparative politics, political economy, international relations, political theory, public administration, public policy and political methodology. Furthermore, political science is related to and draws upon the fields of economics, sociology, history, philosophy, geography, law, psychology and anthropology
- Undergraduate studies: 3-4 years (BA or BS), graduate studies: 1 year (MA) and 2 years (PhD)

Likely courses

The Science of Politics

Religion, Democracy and Human Rights

Introduction to International Relations

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Ethics and Politics in Public Service

Comparative Corruption

Thinking Strategically

Presidential Politics

Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law

Campaigns, Voting, Media and Elections

Justice

Political Culture

The Dynamics of Change in Africa etc. etc.

*Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it,
diagnosing it incorrectly and applying the wrong remedies*

(Groucho Marx)

Psychology

Brief description of the field

= the scientific study of the mind, the brain and human behavior

- offers course work and research opportunities in the fields of clinical, cognitive, developmental, neuroscientific and social psychology. By studying psychology, students better understand human behavior, including who we are, how we do the things we do and how we enhance our lives and society
- Undergraduate studies: 3-4 years (BA or BS), graduate studies: 1 year (MA) and 2 years (PhD)

Likely courses

Introduction to Psychology

Child Development

Autism and Related Disorders

Attraction and Relationships

Theory and Practice of Early Childhood Education

Language, Literacy and Play

Language and Mind

Introduction to Cognitive Science

Developmental Psychology

Social Psychology

Theory and Practice of Emotional Intelligence

The Human Brain

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Learning and Memory

Thinking

Statistics

Philosophy for Psychologists

General Phonetics

Psychopharmacology

Psychology and the Law

Science of Free Will

Neuroscience of Decision Making etc. etc.

It is never too late to be what you might have been

(George Eliot)

Sociology

Brief description of the field

= provides the theoretical and empirical foundation for understanding how societies function and how they change over time

- Sociologists are interested in the causes and consequences of processes such as the social construction of groups and identity, the evolution of culture, intersubjective meanings, intergroup relations and hierarchies and social norms.
- They conduct research on individual behavior and outcomes such as educational attainment, jobs and careers, religious commitment and political involvement; interpersonal processes such as intimate relationships, sexuality, social interaction in groups, and social networks, the behaviors of organizations and institutions, the causes and consequences of group differences and social inequality and social change at the societal and global level
- Undergraduate studies: 3-4 years (BA), graduate studies: 1 year (MA) and 2 years (PhD)

Likely courses

The Sociological Imagination

Computers, Networks, and Society

Foundations of Modern Social Theory

Topics in Contemporary Social Theory

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Methods of Inquiry

Methods in Quantitative Sociology

Social Networks and Society

Visual Sociology

Contesting Injustice

Religion and Politics

Extreme and Radical Right Movements

Sociology of the Arts and Popular Culture

Civil Sphere and Democracy

The Making of Political News

Welfare States across Nations etc. etc.

*It is not enough to speak on point,
you have to speak to the people*

(Stanislaw Lec)

Humanities – The Arts

Performing Arts

Brief description of the field

= a form of creative activity that is performed in front of an audience, which includes **drama, music and dance**

- Degrees that focus on performing arts are practical and actively immerse you in cutting-edge, interdisciplinary practice which prepare you to enter the industry
- Performing arts include a wide range of specialisms, including acting, dance, voice, physical theatre, music theatre, sound design and digital video. Courses offer an array of possibilities within live and digital arts in a range of contexts
- Undergraduate studies: 3-4 years (BA in Performing Arts), graduate studies: 2-4 years (MA and PhD)

Likely courses (depending on your area of focus)

Acting

Conducting

Dance – general

Jazz/ Jazz Studies

Keyboard Instruments

Music Performance – general

Music Theory and Composition

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Music – other

Playwriting and Screenwriting

Stringed Instruments

Voice and Opera etc. etc.

If you want to make God laugh, tell him about your plans

(Woody Allen)

Visual Arts

Brief description of the field

= are art forms that create works which are primarily visual in nature, e.g. **architecture, drawing, painting, photography, sculpture**

- Visual arts courses provide you with practical experience in painting, photography, drawing, digital imaging, interface design, book art, figure drawing, modeling and simulation, sculpture and more
- Undergraduate studies: 3-6 years, depending on the major (BA in Visual Arts), graduate studies: 1 year, MA or 2-4 years (PhD in chosen field of study)

Likely courses (depending on your area of focus)

Art

Archaeology

Ancient Athens

Animation, Comics and Theater

History & Theory of Curatorial Practices

History of Arts Markets

Art in Renaissance Italy

Sculpture

Painting

Drawing

Cinematography

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Photography in Context

Digital Photography

Digital Imaging

Graphic Design in Multimedia

Architectural Design

3D Modeling & Animation

Site, Situation and Object: Sculpture and Architecture

Costume Design

Experimental Interface Design etc. etc.

An original idea. That can't be too hard.

The library must be full of them

(Stephen Fry)

Applied Arts

Brief description of the field

= the application of design and decoration to everyday objects to make them aesthetically pleasing. The term "applied arts" has been used since the late 19th century to differentiate it from the pure arts, fine arts or a regular humanities subjects, since it consisted of technical applications or a physical product or outcome

- Applied Arts include fields such as **fashion design, graphic design, industrial design, interior design.**
- A degree in Applied Arts helps you build upon your capacity for problem solving, leadership and management. Learn to better promote and communicate your artistic vision, leveraging unique business perspectives to make more meaningful career decisions and excel professionally the degree is especially for people with technical skills in art, design and media-focused fields such as makeup design, film editing, or set design, who want to more fully understand the context and business side of their industry
- Undergraduate studies: 3 to 4 years (BAA), graduate studies: 1 to 3 years (MAA and PhD)

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Likely courses (depending on your area of focus)

Performance Art

Art, Recycling and Consumption

Portfolio Development I

Portfolio Development II

Principles of Marketing

Interpersonal Communications

Social Media Marketing

Participatory Media etc. etc.

I don't do fashion, I am fashion

(Coco Chanel)

Agricultural Science

Agriculture and Agronomy

Brief description of the field

= a broad multidisciplinary field of biology that encompasses the parts of exact, natural, economic and social sciences that are used in the practice and understanding of agriculture

- Agriculture is the set of activities that transform the environment for the production of animals and plants for human use
- **Agriculture** concerns techniques, including the application of agronomic research.
- **Agronomy** is the research and development related to studying and improving plant-based crops
- Undergraduate studies: 4 years, graduate studies: 3 to 4 years (M.Sc., Ph.D.)

Likely courses

Mathematics – Statistics

Botany

Soil Biology

Biochemistry

Microbiology

Agricultural Machines

Law and Legislation

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Agroecology

Pedology

Fito-pedology

Conservation of Biodiversity

Environment Studies

Entomology

Genetics

Plant Physiology

Orchards

Vegetable Raising

Vineyards

Irrigation

Mountain Studies

Sustainable Agriculture: Food, Farming and the Future

Farm Business Management

Integrated Pest Management etc. etc.

Agriculture is civilization

(E. Emmons)

Horticulture

Brief description of the field

= addresses the growing and breeding of plants and maintaining productive soils

- offers concentrations in landscape design, floral design, nursery management or greenhouse management
- Associate's degree programs are often industry-oriented, preparing you for entry-level work in technical jobs within the horticulture industry. A bachelor's degree program in horticulture often allows you to focus on areas such as research, sustainability, communication, landscapes, turf management or horticultural therapy.
- Graduate degree programs usually concentrate on a particular specialty, such as biotechnology, ornamental horticulture or urban horticulture
- Undergraduate studies: 4 years, graduate studies: 3 to 4 years (M.Sc, Ph.D)

Likely courses

Landscape

Plant Materials

Plant Propagation

Plant Evolution and Systematics

Nursery Management

Interior Plantscaping

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Viticulture

Pomology

Olericulture

Greenhouse Management

Post-Harvest Physiology

Sustainable Plant Production etc. etc.

Personality is to a man what perfume is to a flower

(Charles M. Schwab)

Food Science

Brief description of the field

= designed to expand understanding of the biological/microbiological, chemical, physical, sensory, nutritional and engineering properties of foods and beverages

- identify and prevent outbreaks of food-borne illnesses
- develop improved preservation methods to expand the available food supply
- evaluate the role of fruit and vegetables in preventing cancer
- reduce nutrient losses during processing, storage, and transport of foods
- improve the effectiveness of food fortification
- develop foods that may someday travel to other planets with astronauts
- Undergraduate studies: 4 years, graduate studies: 3 to 4 years (M.Sc., Ph.D.)

Likely courses

Introduction to Physiochemical and Biological Aspects of Food

Food Microbiology Laboratory

Food Chemistry

General Food Science

Food Microbiology

Food Engineering

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Dairy Science

Food Processing

Waste Technology

International Food Science

Sensory Evaluation

Enology etc. etc.

*The only time to eat diet food
is while you're waiting for the steak to cook*
(Julia Child)

Forestry

Brief description of the field

= the science and craft of creating, managing, using, conserving and repairing forests and associated resources to meet desired goals, needs and values for human and environment benefits

- Forestry is practiced in plantations and natural stands. The science of forestry has elements that belong to the biological, physical, social, political and managerial sciences
- Modern forestry generally embraces a broad range of concerns, in what is known as multiple-use management, including the provision of timber, fuel wood, wildlife habitat, natural water quality management, recreation, landscape and community protection, employment, aesthetically appealing landscapes, biodiversity management, watershed management, erosion control and preserving forests as 'sinks' for atmospheric carbon dioxide
- A practitioner of forestry is known as a forester. Other common terms used are verderer and silviculturalist. Silviculture is narrower than forestry, being concerned only with forest plants, but is often used synonymously with forestry
- Undergraduate studies: 4 years (B.Sc.), graduate studies: 2 to 4 years (M.Sc, Ph.D)

Likely courses

Forest Measurements

Forest Engineering

Forest Ecology

International Forestry

Advanced Fire Ecology

Problems in Silviculture

Problems in Forest Hydrology

Tree Improvement

Problems in Forest Fire

Problems in Forest Resources Management etc. etc.

Not all those that wander are lost

(J.R.R. Tolkien)

STEM – Sciences, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics

Sciences – Biology

Brief description of the field

= the natural science that involves the study of life and living organisms, including their physical and chemical structure, function, development and evolution

- Modern biology is a vast field, composed of many branches (e.g. cell biology, anatomy, bioengineering, biochemistry, etc.).
- Biology recognizes the cell as the basic unit of life, genes as the basic unit of heredity, and evolution as the engine that propels the creation of new species.
- It is also understood that all organisms survive by consuming and transforming energy and by regulating their internal environment
- Sub-disciplines of biology are defined by the scale at which life is studied, the kinds of organisms studied, and the methods used to study them: e.g. biochemistry examines the rudimentary chemistry of life; molecular biology studies the complex interactions among biological molecules; cell biology examines the basic building-block of all life, the cell; physiology examines the physical and chemical functions of tissues, organs, and organ systems; ecology examines how organisms interact in their

environment; and evolutionary biology examines the processes that produced the diversity of life

- Undergraduate studies: 4 years, graduate studies: 3 to 4 years (M.Sc., Ph.D.)

Likely courses

Biology Fundamentals
Mathematics
Physics
Genetics
Chemistry (organic, inorganic)
Vegetal Biology
Animal Development
Vegetal Development
Animal Physiology
Biodiversity
Bioethics
Biostatistics
Biogeography
Alpine botany
Molecular biology etc. etc.

*It is even harder for the average ape to believe
that he was descended from man*
(HL Mencken)

Sciences – Chemistry

Brief description of the field

= a branch of physical science that studies the composition, structure, properties and change of matter, its properties and reactions. As a practice, it dates back thousands of years and was used to produce everything from perfume and cheese to glass and bronze

- Chemistry includes topics such as the properties of individual atoms, how atoms form chemical bonds to create chemical compounds, the interactions of substances through intermolecular forces that give matter its general properties, and the interactions between substances through chemical reactions to form different substances
- Chemistry is sometimes called the central science because it bridges other natural sciences, including physics, geology and biology. The history of chemistry can be traced to alchemy, which had been practiced for several millennia in various parts of the world
- Undergraduate studies: 4 years, graduate studies: 3 to 4 years (M.Sc., Ph.D.)

Likely courses

General Chemistry

Organic Chemistry

Physical Chemistry

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Inorganic Chemistry

Spectroscopic Methods and Chromatography

Mathematics

Statistics

Physics

Applied Theoretical Chemistry

Environmental and Analytical Chemistry

Structural Chemistry etc. etc.

*People who think they know everything
are a great annoyance to those of us who do*
(Isaac Asimov)

Sciences – Earth Sciences / Geoscience

Brief description of the field

= a widely-embraced term for the fields of science related to the planet Earth. It is the branch of science dealing with the physical constitution of the Earth and its atmosphere

- Earth science is the study of our planet’s physical characteristics, from earthquakes to raindrops, and floods to fossils. Earth science can be considered to be a branch of planetary science, but with a much older history
- “Earth science” is a broad term that encompasses four main branches of study, each of which is further broken down into more specialized fields: Earth sciences can include the study of geology, the lithosphere and the large-scale structure of the Earth's interior, as well as the atmosphere, hydrosphere and biosphere
- Typically, Earth scientists use tools from geography, chronology, mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology to build a quantitative understanding of how the Earth works and evolves
- Earth science affects our everyday lives: meteorologists study the weather and watch for dangerous storms, hydrologists study water and warn of floods, seismologists study earthquakes and try to predict where they will strike, geologists study rocks and help to locate useful minerals
- Earth scientists mainly work “in the field” – climbing mountains, exploring the seabed, crawling through caves, or wading in swamps. They measure and collect samples

(such as rocks or river water), then they record their findings on charts and maps

- Undergraduate studies: 4 years, graduate studies: 3 to 4 years (M.Sc., Ph.D.)

Likely courses

Origins of the Earth

Mineralogy and Crystallography

Metamorphic Processes and Mountain-Building

Animal Biology

Materials Science

Chemistry

Mathematics

History and Philosophy of Science

Experimental Psychology

Evolution of The Hydrosphere

Maps and Structures

Tectonics and Seismology

Sedimentary Basins

Evolutionary Paleobiology

Micropaleontology etc. etc.

*The Stone Age did not end because we ran out of stones;
we transitioned to better solutions*
(Bjorn Lomborg)

Technology

Brief description of the field

= ("science of craft") is the collection of techniques, skills, methods and processes used in the production of goods or services or in the accomplishment of objectives, such as scientific investigation.

- Technology can be the knowledge of techniques, processes and the like, or it can be embedded in machines to allow for operation without detailed knowledge of their workings. The simplest form of technology is the development and use of basic tools
- The prehistoric discovery of how to control fire and the later Neolithic Revolution increased the available sources of food, and the invention of the wheel helped humans to travel in and control their environment. Developments in historic times, including the printing press, the telephone and the Internet have lessened physical barriers to communication and allowed humans to interact freely on a global scale. The steady progress of military technology has brought weapons of ever-increasing destructive power, from clubs to nuclear weapons
- Technology has many effects. It has helped develop more advanced economies (including today's global economy) and has allowed the rise of a leisure class. Many technological processes produce unwanted by-products, known as pollution, and deplete natural resources to the

detriment of Earth's environment. Innovations have always influenced the values of a society and raised new questions of the ethics of technology (the rise of the notion of efficiency in terms of human productivity, the challenges of bioethics etc.)

- Undergraduate studies: 4 years, graduate studies: 3 to 4 years (M.Sc., Ph.D.)

Likely courses (depending on your area of focus)

Finance and Society

Toward the Scientific Revolution

The Rise of Modern Science

Bioethics

Science, Technology and the World

Technology in History

Technology and Culture

Cross-Cultural Investigations: Technology and Development

Cultures of Computing

Art, Craft, Science

Social and Political Implications of Technology etc. etc.

*Tonight, we'll be talking to a car designer who's crossed
Toyota with Quasimodo
and come up with the Hatchback of Notre Dame
(Ronnie Corbett)*

Engineering

Brief description of the field

= the application of mathematics, as well as scientific, economic, social, and practical knowledge, to invent, innovate, design, build, maintain, research, and improve structures, machines, tools, materials, systems, components, processes, solutions and organizations

- The discipline of engineering is extremely broad and encompasses a range of more specialized fields of engineering (chemical, civil, electrical, mechanical, software, systems, economic, naval, mining, aerospace, textile, industrial, nuclear etc.), each with a more specific emphasis on particular areas of applied science, technology and types of application
- Undergraduate studies: 4 years, graduate studies: 3 to 4 years (M.Sc., Ph.D.)

Likely courses (depending on your area of focus)

Fluid Mechanics

Introduction to Hydrology and Water Resources

Environmental Chemistry

Transport Processes in the Environment

Solid Mechanics

Physics

Anca Simescu

Calculus

Multi-scale Characterization of Materials

Structural Mechanics and Design etc. etc.

Predicting rain doesn't count. Building arks does
(Warren Buffett)

Mathematics

Brief description of the field

= the study of topics such as quantity (numbers), structure, space and change. There is a range of views among mathematicians and philosophers as to the exact scope and definition of mathematics

- Mathematicians seek out patterns and use them to formulate new conjectures. Mathematicians resolve the truth or falsity of conjectures by mathematical proof. When mathematical structures are good models of real phenomena, then mathematical reasoning can provide insight or predictions about nature
- Through the use of abstraction and logic, mathematics developed from counting, calculation, measurement and the systematic study of the shapes and motions of physical objects. Practical mathematics has been a human activity from as far back as written records exist. The research required to solve mathematical problems can take years or even centuries of sustained inquiry
- Mathematics is essential in many fields, including natural science, engineering, medicine, finance and the social sciences. Applied mathematics has led to entirely new mathematical disciplines, such as statistics and game theory.
- Mathematicians also engage in pure mathematics, or mathematics for its own sake, without having any

application in mind. There is no clear line separating pure and applied mathematics

- Undergraduate studies: 4 years, graduate studies: 3 to 4 years (M.Sc., Ph.D.)

Likely courses

Linear Algebra

Differential Equations

Complex Variables with Applications

Functions of a Complex Variable

Principles of Continuum Applied Mathematics

Discrete Mathematics

Introduction to Numerical Analysis

Algebraic Combinatorics

Statistics for Applications

Probability and Random Variables

Information Theory

Linear Partial Differential Equations

Nonlinear Dynamics: The Natural Environment

Nonlinear Dynamics: Chaos etc. etc.

If the facts don't fit the theory, change the facts
(Albert Einstein)

Sport

Brief description of the field

= sports science (also sports and exercise science, sports medicine or exercise physiology) is a discipline that studies how the healthy human body works during exercise, and how sport and physical activity promote health and performance from cellular to whole body perspectives

- The study of sports science traditionally incorporates areas of physiology (exercise physiology), psychology (sport psychology), anatomy, biomechanics, biochemistry and biokinetics
- Sports scientists and performance consultants are growing in demand and employment numbers, with the ever-increasing focus within the sporting world on achieving the best results possible. Through the study of science and sport, researchers have developed a greater understanding on how the human body reacts to exercise, training, different environments and many other stimuli
- Undergraduate studies: 4 years, graduate studies: 3 to 4 years (M.Sc., Ph.D.)

Likely courses

Games and Sports

Skill Acquisition

Motor Development

Inclusive Physical Activity

Anatomy

Kinesiology

Health

Exercise Physiology

Biomechanics

Individual Fitness Activities

Aquatics and Athletics

Nutrition

etc. etc.

The first time I see a jogger smiling, I'll consider it

(Joan Rivers)

MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses)

In November 2017, quartz.com published a blog article on 200 universities that had just launched 600 free online courses AND provided the full list super orderly and easy to browse.

Below is the link to that article that I think could help you make an informed decision even more to the point, especially if you are considering not actually going to college, but letting college come to you. Enjoy!

<https://qz.com/1120344/200-universities-just-launched-600-free-online-courses-heres-the-full-list/>

Update post-pandemic:

Increasingly, almost all universities and higher education institutions have added an online component to their offer. Especially during the lockdown incurred by the Covid-19 pandemic, they have gone fully online and discovered the beauty of it.

However, in-person attendance not only increases your chances for a wonderful future that you shape for yourself, it also helps to forge true friendships and shape you as a complex human being that has so much to contribute to society. No amount of online courses (academic or informational) will be able to give you that.

Finissage

I'm sure you are familiar with the term "*vernissage*". It's the opening exhibition of some form of art. It comes from the French noun "*vernis*", which means 'paint', so technically, "*vernissage*" means applying the first coat of paint.

Conversely, "*finissage*", also a French term meaning 'to refine', hints at the finishing touches an artist applies to his/ her artwork.

Here's mine:

The information in this Playbook serves for orientation purposes only.

For exact and up to date information regarding the specific major and minor you wish to pursue and the mandatory and elective courses you will likely have, as well as the exact duration of the study, please consult the webpage of the university, college or school you wish to enroll in. Or call and schedule a site visit, if you can.

All information in this Playbook was compiled from public internet sources. The information is meant to help you make a decision in good standing; it is not meant to replicate Wikipedia or other sources.

If you are interested in additional information about a certain field of study, you can do two things:

- go to Wikipedia or other sources that you like and research all there is about that field; or
- check the website of your university of choice and read how they address the subject of your interest.
- Or, maybe the wisest choice: combine the two!

This Playbook is intended for you only, for the gem that only you are, to help you make a decision in good standing and for you to do so all the while enjoying the process. It is not called Playbook for nothing – play with this book, rearrange it, make it yours!

Go deeper into the fields that are potentially of interest to you and simply skip the ones you know you'll never pursue.

And now that you've perused the information, let's do Step #3 of your College Major adventure and learn how to make the most of the Playbook.

Step #3 Select the Common Denominator

So, here we are in Step #3 of the College Major selection. Finally, oh finally we talk about majors and how to choose them!

Are you ready?

Do you have your shortlist?

Did you build on your strengths, drafted a financial plan and evaluated your capability and motivation, like we agreed?

Then let's do this next.

There is just one thing to do in this Step and again, it all starts with THE LIST, the one we just weeded out. The one where you ranked your interests and capabilities. The one where you decided *this is me, I can do it, I love doing this, I have the skills, the capabilities and the motivation.*

I'm sure you have more than one item on that list, but if you don't, no problem.

Also, have the **Playbook** handy, we're going to give it a thorough workout in this leg of our journey. Start with the Playbook and then work the internet to find more about your preferred options. The Playbook tells you how.

To-Do

To find the Common Denominator of your skills, aptitudes, abilities, likes and dislikes, check your shortlist like this:

- Which are your 2-3 main aptitudes/ skills? Handle each one separately. (YOU qualify them as first, second, third, depending on how well they sit with you)
- Remember the 1-5 scale? Look at 5, then 4 then 3. You can set aside 1 and 2, they're props.
- Also, check your odd one(s) – It's usually just one, but you may have more – or none. Do you really do that, are you really good in that special thing? Why didn't you pick it yourself?

Always be looking at the one you kind of feel like “yeah, I probably am/do that”, or “doesn't everybody?!” Discard the ones that feel wrong.

Let's have an example here:

- ◆ Say, your first strength – so, a definite 5 – is reading (mythology, history)
 - check out History
 - or Philosophy
 - or Greek Culture & Civilization
 - etc.

What else could you do with this strength? Go as far and as deep as you can. You don't have to make any decisions right now, just play! It's safe, I promise you.

For now, nothing is too far-fetched, too out there, no-way etc. They are all equal possibilities. We'll trim them down in a moment!

- ◆ Say, your second strength – another 5 or a solid 4 – is being outdoorsy, sporty and outspoken
 - Sport (define)?
 - or Archeology?
 - Engineering, maybe?
 - what else? Be creative, don't play it safe! Use the Playbook and go deeper from there

- ◆ And say, your third strength is Math, exact sciences
 - Architecture?
 - Mathematics?
 - Engineering (Civil Constructions)?
 - what else? Use the “*yes, and*” technique of theater improv

Now, let's find the **Common Denominator**:

You recognized Andrew, from the previous examples, didn't you? He had these exact strengths figured out and they interlinked like this:

Because of everything he did and how his interests and strengths interweaved, he found **history** to be his common denominator.

He chose ARCHITECTURE as his major.

But when it came to looking into a minor, there were History and Archeology equally enticing. He went with History, and here's why:

Both Architecture and Archeology are long and demanding fields, that would be very difficult to marry. On paper, the match is obvious, but in practice the workload and study load would break him.

That's why you need to research thoroughly. And also, use your brain and your gut feeling when you make these decisions, not just the hard facts you researched. They are your finest antennae; they will unerringly tell you where to look closer.

Quick side note:

*What's a **minor** or a **double major**? And why would you take one, need one?*

A **minor** is a major with less classes and less credit points to it. A **double major** is exactly what it sounds like: another major; same number of classes and credit points you'll need in order to pass.

Schools tend to give you "packages" of majors and minors, because history has shown that some subjects go better with one another than with others, or are easier to digest in the allotted time. But you can totally skip their package deals and make your own, there's nothing to stop you! You can go either by complementary subjects, like in Andrew's example here, or you can go with your next best interest, regardless how and if it fits with the major.

Both options have pros and cons, but I really wouldn't lose sleep over them; either way, they will come in handy later in life when you'll need them and you'll know then that it was a winning combination. I'm sure!

How are your strengths related?

You've researched each and every one of your strengths and what major they could translate into.

You've seen which is longer or more difficult, but you also know now what sits best with you. What does your gut tell you? Trust it! Feel free to mix and match until all sits well with you.

You may have more options, in which case just add on. But word to the wise: don't overdo it, or you'll end up more confused than when you first started reading this Starter Kit! Also, you may not want to have a minor or a double major. That's absolutely fine!

My major (option 1)

→

My minor / double major (option 1)

→

My major (option 2)

→

My minor / double major (option 2)

→

My major (option 3)

→

My minor / double major (option 3)

→

There's just one more little thing I want you to take into account, namely: use your common sense and your gut feeling.

I know, I know, you're thinking "*is that supposed to be professional advice?*" Trust me when I say this! Your gut is your best antenna in an age where the Internet is overflowing with posts trying to sell you doomsday news or steer you towards a certain direction:

- ◆ "*The worst/best majors you could have*"
- ◆ "*What can you do with a major in Philosophy in the era of AI?*"
- ◆ "*Top 10 skills you'll need to have in order to thrive in 2026*" etc.

But *they are wrong and misleading!* These so-called "statistics" are there to

- A. test the market (what do people do), and also to
- B. influence the market (do this, not that).

It all depends on who pays for these statistics. Don't fall for them, do your own thing! These statistics are made taking into account today's jobs, job market and economy.

But you will be graduating in 3-5 years earliest, maybe even later if you're in junior high right now; by then, the landscape may have shifted dramatically and you'll be left out to dry if you followed their advice.

Decide for yourself and make your future, don't be just another sheep in the herd! If you just go along because "this is how it's done", or because "the Jones' son studied X and he is veeery

successful” you will be unhappy. Guaranteed! The Jones’ son is another person, with other strengths and interests than you. Be yourself! Stand for your uniqueness. Be happy.

You want to be happy, right? Doing what you love, what you can do best, either being employed or working for yourself – or both for sure, during your career!

Here’s a nugget o’ wisdom, from me to you:

When you study the right thing for you, the effort needed will not feel like effort at all, so you will study right. You will be good. Actually, you will be excellent. You will be an authority in your field (aka a linchpin). Other people will come to you looking for advice or solutions. Ergo: success, comfortable financial means, the world is your oyster.

Here is also where you give your copy of the **Playbook** a thorough workout. Also, the Internet! Don’t be shy – or lazy!

Now, I know for a fact that finding your very own Common Denominator is very hard work, so brownie points to you that you did it! Have a steaming cup of hot chocolate (or whatever you fancy). It’s on me! And don’t forget to celebrate in style. We’re one step away from Mission Accomplished!

Step #4 Choose the Actual College

Here it is, the final nail in the coffin of “*I don’t know*”! Step 4 tackles the geography of the whole major problem, namely the small matter of where to study?

Know one thing: your choice of higher education system has to suit you *and you suit them* in turn. *You and college are (or will be) a partnership of equals. If you’re in the right place, the right place will skyrocket your further career.*

It is less and less important what name is on your college diploma, and more and more important what you **actually know** and **how open** your mind and heart are to learn on. Mainly because you may want to start your own business right out of the gate, so there will be absolutely no one to admire your fancy graduation diploma, but conversely you will have to depend on your know-how.

Will your choice be

- ◆ college or community college,
- ◆ school or vocational school or institute,
- ◆ or academy and whatnot?

Will it be

- ◆ close to home,
- ◆ or in your home town,
- ◆ or rather farther away,
- ◆ or even abroad? 🙄

Which one exactly is it and how do you choose?

Consider that getting into a famous university usually comes with a bunch of strings attached, with a heavy workload and with little time to catch your breath if your major does not align with who and how you are.

Conversely, choosing a community college just because it's close to home (and no other reason, financial or otherwise) is just plain lazy.

So, do the work! Choose the best option for you. And also: whether you want to study close to home or in your home town, or rather farther away, or even abroad. There are pros and cons to each option, you just need to know how to weigh them against each other.

Let's break them down into chewable bits. Have your shortlist and your **Playbook** handy, work the internet to the bone and below is your To-Do.

If you are a college freshman or have been admitted to your college of choice, then congratulations! You made it and you may skip this step altogether (although, please stick around, you might want to confirm –or rethink- your choice).

Types of institutions

This is the first choice you need to make. What kind of school do you want to enroll into? Read the following descriptions carefully through, do your research and make an informed decision.

I strongly advise you to think about *all* options. This is really not the time to go for fancy or in-right-now. This is the time to choose *what will serve you*, what will propel you towards excellence. And frankly, any one of these can. It's up to you to rise to your own expectations!

Colleges

College – its primary focus is on undergraduate education in a 4-year B.A. or B.Sc. degree. The term College applies primarily to the Anglo-Saxon school system.

Its (continental) European counterpart would be a Faculty. Europe (again, continental) follows the *Bologna Education System* of 3-2-3, which means that undergrad studies should not exceed 3 years, grad studies must take 2 years to complete and postgrad is 3 years.

Except for Medicine; their studies take 4 to 6 years as undergrad studies. So basically, almost everywhere in Europe you can graduate high school and directly enroll in Med School. Then there's the residency program, which, depending on specialty and country, takes 3 to 7 years to complete. And more to come, but that's another story.

Community College/Junior College typically offers courses parallel to the freshmen and sophomore offerings at 4-year colleges and universities, with the opportunity to transfer to a 4-year school. Many offer career-oriented certificate programs or associate degrees (with immediate employment opportunities).

In Europe, some countries have the exact equivalent (e.g. in Germany there's the "Fachhochschule"), others don't have them at all or they are embedded into college.

Engineering or Technical Colleges are independent professional institutions for training programs in the fields of engineering, technology and physical sciences. They are often known as Institutes of Technology or Polytechnic Institutes. They have 4- to 5-years degree programs.

In Europe, most technical or engineering colleges are actually universities and very few, if any, are independent or private.

Schools

Art Schools (or Institutes) study the visual, performing, and/or creative arts. If accredited as a college, they offer a B. FA or M. FA degree. Many colleges and universities also have art schools as part of their program offerings.

In Europe, these are separate universities.

Vocational or Technical Schools are similar to a community college in that they offer specific career- oriented programs.

Study here takes a few months to a couple of years and most are specialized (intense training in one specific skill area).

Nursing Schools – some are affiliated with hospitals and students receive R.N. (Registered Nurse) degrees, others are affiliated with colleges/universities, where they get the R.N. degree and the bachelor's degree, plus preparation for careers in nursing administration.

In Europe, in some countries these schools are indeed affiliated with hospitals, but most are affiliated or even integral part of Universities of Medicine.

Universities

In the Anglo-Saxon world, a typical university has a liberal arts college, as well as several specialized colleges and graduate programs (e.g. business, engineering, medicine, law, agriculture, nursing, arts etc. etc.). Their undergrad degrees take 4 to 6 years to complete.

Liberal Arts offer broad undergraduate education: sciences, history, philosophy, music, art. Pre-professional and professional training may be offered, but not stressed. Most liberal arts institutions are private and their degrees take 4 years to complete.

In Europe, Liberal Arts are faculties/ colleges within universities and they are seldom, if at all, private. Their curriculum follows the Bologna system 3-2-3.

Online Universities/ Distance Learning – e.g. <http://www.openuniversity.edu>

Their studies take place online, enabling you to study whenever and wherever you wish. They have a very broad range of degrees.

Ever since the Covid pandemic, more and more universities and colleges offer online studies that are equivalent to the in-person studies.

Check out the university or college of your choice to see if they offer this as well, if you are considering this option.

Military Institutions*

* Every country in the world has their own rules of access to military schools, so check out the requirements in your country of choice.

Military School and the Police Academy

Military academies prepare officers for the armed forces — Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines. In the US, they require recommendations/appointments (or endorsements) by members of Congress.

US Private and State-supported military schools and the Coast Guard Academy operate on a college application basis. Their degree programs are usually in the areas of business, engineering, technology and military science.

Should I stay or should I go?

A. Close to home/home town

Pros

Cons

B. (Far) Away from home

Pros

Cons

C. Abroad / Out of State

Pros

Cons

This warrants some clear examples and discussion. For instance, in the **Pros** section, you might have, e.g.:

- ◆ *I know the town like the back of my hand*
- ◆ *I can (maybe) live at home, so there will be no/ minimal living expenses*
- ◆ *I know the University/college*
- ◆ *It's a good university/college/community college*
- ◆ *Some of my fellow classmates go there, I'll have an in-built circle of friends*
- ◆ *I can explore the new town*
- ◆ *I can live in a dorm, on campus, make new friends*
- ◆ *I'll get to know a different country*
- ◆ *Living expenses are lower than in my country*
- ◆ *Tuition fee is low/college is free of charge*
- ◆ *Maybe I'll learn a new language, make interesting friends*

Whereas in the **Cons** section you might go, e.g.:

- ◆ *I know I want to explore new territory.*
- ◆ *I can (maybe) live at home. More home??*
- ◆ *It's a bad university/college/community college*
- ◆ *Living expenses ...*
- ◆ *I won't know a soul, what if I don't make any friends?*

(Know yourself and your personal comfort zone. It's no use to write in your list that you're oh so outgoing and a people person, when here you fret about how you're going to make new friends. Again: know yourself and don't lie to yourself!)

- ◆ *I don't speak the language; I won't know a soul!*
- ◆ *Home travel is more expensive (always a fact)*

Me, I'm a huge fan of studying abroad. When I was in your shoes and had to choose where to study, I had a huge row with my mother: I wanted to study in another town (far, far away), my mother argued in favor of my home town. She won the round, but actually it wasn't as bad as I had expected; besides living at home with no living expenses, I was constantly abroad somewhere, on scholarships.

You cannot begin to fathom how many institutions are happy to pay for your tuition and stay somewhere else! I say: take advantage! Also, it will be beneficial for whatever you choose to do afterwards, because international experience is and will continue to be highly sought after.

It also changes you for the better, it educates you to look beyond the media and the stereotypes, and you grow up in sooo many ways. Always! Well, unless you're a hermit or completely opaque to different cultural experiences. But that won't be you, of course not! You're one of us, a true linchpin.

Choose what you feel is accurate to your particular situation in the moment. You can always change when situations change. You are THE LINCHPIN, remember? And people like us do things like this:

→ we research, we don't sit on the fence indefinitely and then hand over our life decisions to whomever happens to be there. Sitting on the fence is extremely uncomfortable, so we either jump the fence or we accept the fence for what it stands

- we are open to new horizons, we make decisions and we sail the high seas of life
- we are excellent and we keep on learning, our whole life
- we know that higher education is a fundamental building block of our life, but just one of many, nonetheless. Life is what we make of every step, not the step itself. We can always change track if the one we're on becomes too narrow or just uncomfortable, we know how-to and where to look for options tailor-made for us
- we acknowledge that in the beginning of our career, *we get paid to learn, not to earn* (Robert Kiyosaki). And learn we do!

Aaaaand (drumroll, please!) ... YOU HAVE ARRIVED!

Mission accomplished, yay! Congratulations are definitely in order!

Do you see now how the 4 Legs and each of their actions weave into one another, build onto one another to create

🏆 *your* very own pattern?

🏆 *your* career?

🏆 *your* life?

Now you'll be good to go to university for all the right reasons and are confidently on your way to excellence. And enjoy it! That's very important. I can't wait to see how you'll shape the world in the coming years!

Misconceptions About College

I want you to go into college with a *bang*, instead of with a whimper, as do too many students to count. As I'm writing this, it's beginning of October again and I'm so not looking forward to a new cohort of students who have come into Conference Interpreting because "*it sounds interesting*", "*my parents said*", "*my friend chose that*" or similar explanations!

You're different though. You chose to make an informed decision, you painstakingly went through the 4 Steps, done the work and therefore you deserve some insider information that you cannot get elsewhere.

For some reason, college seems to be shrouded in an aura of mystery, an impenetrable cloak of "what might be on the other side?". Well, there's no mystery, no cloak and most certainly no doomed "other side". But there *is* a difference to what came before it.

Remember, in Step 1 we walked down memory lane and we reminisced how nobody prepared us for kindergarten, for 1st grade in elementary school, or later for 5th grade and high school? All that still holds true, but we also agreed what? That we adapted, that's right! So yes, there is a learning curve to college life as well, one that is better learned fast, so that you can then enjoy all that college and higher education as a whole has to offer.

Here's a sample of the most frequent misconceptions about college. There are many more, but I'll address those on the One In Demand YouTube channel. Consider subscribing, seeing as you are serious about choosing your major on the right foundation.

Misconception #1: "I'll Study This to Become That"

Just this September I was talking to a 13-year-old girl and she was adamant that she wanted to become a notary public, because she wanted to make lots of money and live lavishly. That was her reason.

So then I asked her if she liked to read, if she found debate and reading interesting. Immediately she went "Noooo, I don't read! I can't concentrate and my mind wanders even when I watch something I really want to watch". What she saw in a highly demanding profession was a fraction of the output OF LINCHPINS. The hard work and dedication and interest she did not see.

Of course, she's a little too young to be thinking seriously about professions and she'll probably reconsider, or at least look behind the curtains for a reason that's true for her, but this "tit for tat" principle applied in the 20th century. Not anymore.

You see, until about 15-20 years ago, we studied this to get that job in that same profession. Much like climbing stairs. It was all

about the job, the next rung on the career ladder. This would be the generation over 40, so it's only natural that your parents want you to "get a job". The only thing is, a career is not a ladder. Not anymore.

Ever since, things have shifted dramatically (who'd have thought that blogger would be a profession?) To-date, in some circles "job" is almost a swear word. I don't agree, but indeed, today, when you consider college studies, you should think in terms of *"I'll study this to know about this field, which will enable me to twist and turn and pivot easily into a job that I like doing. I can even create my own job"*. It's a transformation journey. All. Your. Life. This was not a given before, whereas now it's the norm. This is just what I meant when I said before that a career cannot be a ladder!

To recap: today it's all about the knowledge that you can and want to assimilate. That will create the difference. **Knowledge is that thing that nobody can take away from you**, whereas a job, however coveted, however well paid and however many perks it has attached, is that thing that anybody can take away from you.

And just to put things into perspective again: going by today's data, you will have to work for roughly 45 years before you retire. Love it or hate it! Think about it...

When I work with my coaching students, this is the first thing we discuss and shift into the correct order for them. Because everyone is unique. We talk about why it's ok to forget half of

what they learned, and what they can do with the knowledge that sticks. We talk about how they happily marry their passions, their interests, their vocation and their mission into a host of professions where they can be the linchpins, not the minions. But that's another story, an insider story.

Misconception #2: "I've Got Time, I Don't Have to Decide Right Now!"

No, you don't have time and yeah, you do have to decide right now. Or rather, the sooner, the better.

Most of my coaching students come to me with this idea. Also, many of my students at university enroll with this idea of infinite time front and center in their mind. Can I tell you two anecdotes to illustrate why I say no?

A coaching student of mine, we'll call her Emmeline, was in senior year in high school, all set to study Economics. Her reasons were rather unclear, but okay, Economics it is. Then, three months before graduation, came the about-face: she wanted to enroll in Med School. Just like that. Because her best friend wanted that, too.

Her parents were against it, so she became adamant about Med School, but with so little time, she figured she'd give herself one year off to actually study for the admissions exam (because here we have admissions exams). At home, on her own. What's a year, right?

Well, the year came and went – and she didn't make the cut into Med School. Bummer! So, she thought, ok, no problem, I'll try again next year. What's a year, right? A second year! She'd be 20, that's nothing. You're right, it is nothing on this end, but at the other end, at graduation, that actually counts in terms of employment opportunities, for example.

So, when I sat down with her last summer, I asked her what she was most passionate about, what she did when nobody was looking. Her prompt answer was: baking. She even dreamed of opening a bakery one day (and I have sampled her baking and can vouch for her fantastic skill!). So, obviously, I had to ask: where does Med School fit into her dream? You can guess her answer: *"I don't know..."*

Fast forward to this June, after we've fine-tuned her passion and how to enhance it through study, she's all set for Nutrition and Diabetes. She will rock this one, because she was admitted to Med School! Yay!

And take Michael, let's call him that, the son of friends of mine: in senior high, he explicitly told his parents that he had no idea what he wanted to study, so they should choose for him. Which they did. Gladly!

In high school, he was rather the taillight, but there he was in October, all set to study Economic Engineering.

And it hit him really hard: Math on Monday, Math on Tuesday, Math every day. Oh, I forgot to mention he was a graduate of a

Humanities high school, so hardly any Math to be found in that curriculum. Obviously, he failed all of his mid-term exams. And his final freshman year exams. Crashed and burned hard.

Which woke up the parents somewhat, and they enrolled him (again without any input from him) in Communications studies. That was marginally better.

But he'd already acquired this perception of himself as a failure, which didn't help matters at all, because his negative thoughts triggered negative actions, meaning he again failed all of his exams. Which sent him on a tailspin, of being convinced he's a failure, of refusing to cooperate and to pursue his studies ... and he is now trying to cope with depression. Yes, the disease.

His mother had mentioned his situation on occasion, but only this June did she come to me in tears: "Anca, I don't know what to do, I've tried everything and nothing works. Michael point blank refuses to do anything, he's holed up in his room day in and day out, playing video games. He won't talk to the psychologist, he won't talk to the psychiatrist, maybe he'll talk to you?"

He did, eventually, but it was a hard, uphill battle for me to try and gain his trust. And I've known Michael since he was a funny, mischievous 3-year old and we used to play race on the ski slopes! We're still at Step 1 of the 4 you just went through yourself...

So this will be the third year that Michael has lost. Destination unknown. Will he make it? I hope so. I'll do my best, but ultimately it's his investment – of time, of energy, of input, of desire, of commitment.

Look, I know this is an extreme example, but I just wanted to put the thought into perspective for you. It's not about the time you have now, in the beginning of your journey, it's about the time you'll have wasted when you reach the other end of the funnel.

There will always be those students who know why they are here, what they're good at and how to stay on the speed lane all the way through college. And leave you in the dust, scrambling for morsels of low-paying jobs or unemployment after graduation.

Do you really want to be the minion, of which there are millions, interchangeable? So, no, you haven't got time; the sooner you decide, the better!

My point is, do not rely on "later". "Later" may change on a dime, as we've just witnessed with the Coronavirus and the ensuing pandemic. And all of the more recent stuff.

Misconception #3: “I Want the Perfect Job, So I’ll Have to Get Into the Perfect College, With the Perfect Major”

You know, there’s perfect, and then there’s perfect for you. I’ve said this before, but I’ll say it again as often as you need to hear it. Remember our exercise: even if, say, 500 people

- study the exact same thing
- in the exact same place
- then go on to work in the exact same profession
- with the exact same employer,

there will be no two exact same experiences!

It’s where your personality comes into play, your interests, hobbies and curiosity, your colleagues, your boss, your whole work environment and how you react to it, your family, your life experience so far, your financial situation and sooo many more criteria. It’s everyone’s different “Kopfkino”, as it is called in German – meaning “the movie that plays in your head, on a loop”.

It will be **your personal stamp** that decides whether you have a good job or a bad job, whether you have chosen a good career or a bad career, a good major or a bad major.

I have this coaching student who's in senior high right now. She'll be graduating next summer, so she and her family started looking for "the perfect major". Of course, what else?

Her mother, who runs a consulting company specializing in hiring and corporate trainings, had her tested for skills and aptitudes. They came up with a string of aptitudes, of course, all valid, but she was still unconvinced that this was the exact right thing. She wanted to "get it right" from the very beginning, even though she had no idea what the "exact right thing" meant for her, and the general approach was classic: study this to get that job.

You see, professions, and even jobs are intrinsically neutral. It's what YOU make of them that tips the scales.

For starters and to test her, I gave her the College Majors Playbook that you just went through in Step 2. Needless to say, she was like a kid in a candy store. She said: "I had no idea there were so many fields out there, so many options!"

Yes, there are, many more than any Playbook can possibly hold, but not all are a good fit for everybody, even when their title or their description "sounds interesting". We'll talk about this trap next.

Misconception #4: “It Sounds Interesting...”

This one’s my favorite – not! College professors hear this particular one a lot, sadly. Yeah, it does sound interesting, but what exactly sounds so interesting *to you*?

Imagine this scenario: you are the teacher (of a subject called something really cool, your pick) and every day you are faced with some 50 students who have enrolled in your class because “it sounds interesting”. What do you do?

At first, of course, you try to convince them that indeed, it’s interesting, right? Entice them, bewitch them with your knowledge, with facts & figures & anecdotes. You give it your all, yet two months into the semester your audience is still as neutral as in the beginning, if not downright unengaged. Maybe there’s a handful who light up, who actually come for what you have to offer, not just to warm a seat and to hope they’ll eventually get a diploma. *How do you feel, how motivated are you to still keep up the oomph? Whom do you address in your audience?*

See what I mean? A reason like that is demotivating not just for the student, it is demotivating by proxy also for the teacher and for the group, and it triggers a downward spiral in which you, who came for a sample, will be on the losing end. Every time.

Really **know what you’re getting yourself into**. The flitting from major to major, or picking one because “it sounds interesting” is plain absurd and will do you no good.

Let me top that: if “*I don’t know*” is what you want, then guess what? “*I don’t know*” is exactly what you’ll get. Without fail! So, methinks it pays to come prepared.

Remember that student who came to sit a 1st year exam with me, and a 2nd year exam? The one who failed each subject three times, abysmally? That’s exactly why I insist you know yourself deeply. It’s the least sexy topic, I know, but also the most important. Like I said before, we linchpins **choose** our majors, we don’t *find* them, they’re not a penny you find in the street.

Misconception #5: “Grades Don’t Reflect Anything About My Capabilities”

Actually, they do, but probably not like you think.

You see, grades are not born equal. There is no equal distance between them, as is the case mathematically. Regardless of the system, whether A to F, 10 to 1, 20 to 1, 1 to 6 etc., there’s always a **conditional sequencing**.

I’ll illustrate it with the 10-to-1 system we use, but throw in some equivalences from the A-to-F system. Though no grading system is identical to the other, the spirit is. Here’s what I mean:

A 1 means you know nothing; at 2, you still know nothing, but you were lucky to get a couple of correct answers in, probably by accident or sheer luck. Those would be similar to an F.

3 and 4 (the Ds of this world) are mainly lazy grades, you did not put in the effort. The distance is fairly small between them and if you apply yourself, you can get from 1 to 4 relatively easily. And you can actually see the learning curve.

From 4 to 5 there's a bigger distance (because with 5 you pass in this specific system), so for a 4 you really need to know quite a lot.

5 to 6 and 6 to 7 (so C- to C+, approximately) **are the most difficult distances**. It's super hard work to get from a 5 to a 6 (or from a C- to a C), and maybe even more so to get from 6 to 7 (C to B-). More often than not it takes years of sustained study. This is where you actually learn, where you accumulate knowledge, of the useful kind.

But once you make it to a 7, you are golden! From 7 to 8 (B to B+) it's easier, because you have laid some solid foundations, you have a sturdy, weatherproof backpack on. From 8 (B) on you're in the fine-tuning phase, you're good, you're an expert student. This is where you are clear(er) about your way, about possibilities that you may embrace.

The same thinking applies to any grading system, so yes, grades do reflect your capabilities. With one caveat: they reflect your capabilities *in that moment*.

Like with any graph, the closer you look, the better you see the deviations, the ups and downs, the granularity. But when you look at this long-term, you see the learning curve. So, as a

professor, I'd say: don't sweat the small stuff, strive to get better, but also don't dismiss grades as "*what do they know?!*" They know. But it gets trickier, because there's THE GAP.

Misconception #6: "I'll Figure It Out!"

You probably will, but what if you don't (in time for the rest of your life to pan out smoothly)? In high school, you learn the basics about everything, from Math to Biology to languages to History to Chemistry etc.

Remember, I said **the basics!** The bite-sized chunks, easy to swallow, to digest and to absorb the nutrients. It's there for you to find out what you're most inclined towards. It's also what you'll need in everyday life, even if you never go to college, even if you never study anything and just doze on your couch all your life. It's so you can at least understand what the world around you is doing and why.

Next: college teaches you to think and to learn. That's its first and foremost mission. And *then* it teaches you everything about a selected area of interest, a subject. Well, "everything" in relative terms, because in today's day and age nobody can know everything. But the latest research, the latest findings etc. and it's your job to grow from here on.

Now, about this gap: you come out of high school with a certain toolkit of knowledge in different areas. Different degrees of

knowledge: more in one area, less in another. University (I'm using this term as a substitute for any and all forms of higher education) takes you from higher up, never from where you stopped when you graduated high school, so **there will always be a gap in your knowledge**. The question is: how big? It's not called the Fear Zone for nothing...

You wouldn't presume to enroll in Mathematics at university because you want to learn calculus, would you?! Or enroll in Geography because you want to know where you could go on vacation? Or in Literature because you want to "read more"? No, of course not.

You already must come with a solid bag of know-how, bring it with you to college! Then the gap is smaller and you don't feel overwhelmed once you're in college. Because trust me: that first semester will be one of the hardest things you'll live through. So this is you, your input, your added value, what you can influence 100%.

Once you make it to the other side, in the outside world after graduation, your influence is slim. You can try, you can do your best, but the outside forces (economy, politics, social, medical etc.) will always be stronger than you, as an individual. Here, most of the time everybody is swimming countercurrent. And it's hard work, that.

Imagine yourself competing in a countercurrent swimming contest with a Navy SEAL, or a Marine, or Ryan Lochte or

David Popovici. Who do you think will win? Obviously, the better trained one, the one who has put in the work beforehand, aka in high school and in college, in your case.

Last semester I was surprised to see this student again sitting in my class, because I was sure she had graduated at least the year before. But nope, there she was, still trying to pass exams. So, I made it a point to talk to her a bit longer, to ask about her motivation, her dreams, her expectations then and now. Her defeated answer was *“I hope I’ll get a job, any job”*. It broke my heart, because she, too, had come in with big dreams, only to see them crumble to dust because she hadn’t put in the work beforehand.

Five years lost, to be exact. Five years of college tuition, of living expenses – gone, with very little to show for it. She’s clearly of the *“I don’t know”* variety, sadly.

Now, another student of mine, actually a fellow student of the one I just mentioned, she was not only very good, but also highly motivated. It was a pleasure working with her, so easy to fine-tune her existing knowledge and push it further, push her forward, so that her *“good job”* was within reach. Do you see my point?

If I may be so blunt: garbage in, garbage out; gold in, platinum out. There’s a difference. I hope I haven’t spooked you! That was never my intention, I just wanted you to know what’s at stake and how to prepare best for the adventure.

And here's a **Bonus Tip**, straight from the horse's mouth:

Have you ever witnessed or watched documentaries on TV of a cargo ship' docking process? Well, imagine that this cargo ship is the university. It is huge and when it comes in to dock, it can't move too quickly, lest it floods the entire city in a matter of minutes. And nobody wants that!

In this docking process, you'll have seen some tiny (by comparison!) ships that pull and push the cargo ship from every angle. To dock safely, the behemoth needs the help of these boats, called piloting boats. They are agile, they are nimble, they know the waters around the harbor like the back of their hand and it is precisely their job to push and pull such behemoths so that they align perfectly to the assigned dock. Not too fast, not too slow.

Now, the university is the cargo ship. Heavy, bulky, moving slowly and carefully, because the system requires it. But the piloting boats? That's you, the students. It is you who can and should help the university dock safely in new harbors, piloting it through tricky new harbor waters.

Your choice of higher education system must suit you and you suit them in turn! Remember what I told you before? **You and college are (or will be) a partnership of equals.** If you're in the right place, the right place will skyrocket your further career. It's less and less important what name is on your college

diploma, and more and more important what you actually know and how open your mind and heart are to learn on.

A piloting boat all alone would be lost on the high seas, so that's where being on a big sturdy ship comes in handy, to literally weather the storms that inevitably come our way. But in the shallow waters of the harbor it's the piloting boats that save the day.

Come prepared to help your university of choice dock safely in the new age of learning, and be ready to jump aboard for the adventure of the high seas, of deep learning. Of the linchpin kind!

ONLINE COURSES VS HIGER ED

Oh, this is maybe my favorite topic. I could talk the air blue, but for you I'll stick to the main milestones and help you see the woods for all the trees. Online you can find a plethora of questions and answers that relate to this question, including the very blunt but honest "*is college education worth it? why?*". We should probably start by addressing the difference between **learning** and **education**.

Very superficially put, there's a learning point in every education, but there's not necessarily education involved in all your learnings. Still superficially, it might look like learning is the winner here, but beware of snap judgments!

In 2019, Harvard Business Review published an article titled "*Does Higher Education Still Prepare People for Jobs?*" (you can read the full article here, if you're interested: <https://hbr.org/2019/01/does-higher-education-still-prepare-people-for-jobs>). It goes on and on that the higher ed system is warped and outdated and must change. I agree, up to a point. But my main counterargument to this article and how it leads your opinion on is that *higher education has never prepared people for jobs* – **it has always prepared people for life**. The job bit was and is an add-on; necessary, of course, but it is life we prepare for.

Robert Kiyosaki, the author of "Rich Dad, Poor Dad" (a must-read, by the way!) quotes his rich dad teaching him a wise

lesson: *“when you are young, you need to work to learn, not to earn!”*. Read this quote again two more times, let it really sink in.

That said, learning is more a matter of information that is conveyed to us and we may choose to leave it on the table, or take it and use it to trigger a transformation within us or in our lives. That transformation that we undergo educates us, we become a higher self, a better person, a better professional. It all depends on what we want and where and how we see ourselves.

For instance, the K12 years offer us a general education, as well as information about everything, so that we get to be acquainted with every subject. It is very broad, but not extremely deep information; it's just there to maybe pique our interest, and of course to teach us how to avoid dangers of everyday life (e.g. don't eat rat poison, it'll kill you!; chocolate is not a protein, but meat is; gas that accumulates in a closed-up space will explode eventually, which is why they put in the odor, so we can smell it and take action etc. etc.) and generally how to handle life on an everyday basis.

Even if we choose to do nothing at all in life, this information will come in handy every single day. Generations upon generations of high school students have complained about the curriculum (*“why do I have to study X, I'll never need it!”*). I'm sure I did, too, back in the day. But nobody tells us these things at the right time, so I made it my mission to clear this fog once and for all.

So, we've gathered information about every possible subject, but gradually, as we come into the senior high school years, we start to focus more, to go deeper into certain subjects and leave others to the wayside. That's good! That's how it should be. Straight As are helping no-one, least of all our parents.

Upon graduation from high school, we are effectively flushed out and into a wide stream of choices (aka possible college majors). College (and higher education in general) is all about going deep into your narrower field of choice. It is specific and in-depth and it teaches you how to think, where and how to source information and how to apply it so it transforms your life or you transform the life of others. This is an opportunity to choose wisely, so don't squander it by playing raffle.

The higher the education (meaning going into postgrad studies), or the more advanced, the more specific and in-depth the learning becomes. So, when people say that you can do anything you want, don't believe them. You cannot! You can do what you prepared for, what interests you, what you have put effort into. Not everything, no. Also, certain jobs require a higher education degree, while in others in the same field learning on the job is the key to success.

Take fashion design, for example: that requires a degree, because it teaches you the history of art, of fashion, how to read future trends, how to create trends and so much more. All the while, sewing is a learn-on-the-job capability. Yes, a very valuable skill, but you don't need to know all the ins and outs of fashion to do a great job sewing.

Or, let's look at the architect versus a constructor, a carpenter, a plumber or what have you. While each and every one of the professions are extremely valuable, and finding a good plumber is sometimes akin to striking gold, the architect did not go to school for 6 years for nothing. When designing a building, they must employ higher mathematics, physics, chemistry, art and many more information in order to transform the idea into a wonderful and useful building.

And let's have another example, one that I see every day, because it's my husband's profession. This is the last one, I promise: a surgeon must know not just how to perform surgery on the patient, but also what tests to indicate, how to interpret them medically (meaning s/he must possess knowledge of internal medicine, of anatomy or several specialisms besides their own), and last but not least, whether an operation is indeed the best solution for the patient, or whether there's another option – and which one would that be?

Now, online courses are **trainings** about a specific thing. They are what is called continuous education, because in the words of Isaac Asimov, "*education isn't something you can finish*". With an online course, you have to know what you don't know and also, what and how to go about filling that gap in your education.

Let me paint a picture for you here, so you can see the difference between online courses and higher education more clearly:

In Formula One, the race cars drive on a loop. Yes, they do test runs and they practice. A lot! But the track is tailor-made for F1, it is pristine, it is extremely well taken care of, nobody uses it for anything else. Hockenheim, Nürburgring, Hungaroring, Malaysia and the rest are just that, F1 race tracks. The only exceptions – that I'm aware of – are Monaco, where they race on the streets of Monaco City and San Marino (do they still compete there?). In F1, speed accounts for 90% of the success, whereas technique gets the other 10%. A Formula One driver must master the track.

In our analogy, Formula One would be the online courses.

Then there are rallye races. Rallye drivers practice a lot as well, they also do test runs and recon drives, just like F1 drivers. In rallye, the loop is larger and there is no dedicated track.

A rallye race is driven on common streets, where leaves fall from the trees and trees cast different shadows and light from one hour to the next, let alone from one day to the next. There may be cow dung on the tarmac, rain, people and many more impediments that change randomly.

This means that a rallye driver focuses on speed about 30% of his/her energy, whereas technique accounts for a whopping 70%. A rallye driver must master the car to the best of his/her abilities, or else s/he's out in the landscape, picking daffodils. Or worse.

In our analogy, the rallye race would be higher education.

It all depends where your focus lies: do you want to further your broader studies, or do you want to learn one specific thing and be done with it pronto? There's really no right or wrong in choosing one over the other, but you have to know WHY.

The Roman philosopher Atticus said it beautifully: "*She wasn't looking for a knight; she was looking for a sword*". What are you looking for?

Will This Work for Me?

Will This Work for Me?

Well, I don't know. But you do! In your gut, you know exactly whether this (college, a certain major) will work for you. They, along with your parents and family, are all external factors, doing their damndest to support you, but ultimately it all comes down to you. As will everything in your life from now on, so you might as well do a trial run while you have a safety net to fall back onto.

So, let's recap where we stand and you can make a decision in good faith. There's the fabled "*you can do anything you want*" mantra, extolled with the best of intentions, but the reality is: no, you cannot do anything you want. You wouldn't know where to begin, where your interests lie, and if you have no interest whatsoever in something, then you cannot do it properly. That is the ugly truth of it, sorry.

What you can do is: be invested in one area, grow abilities, aptitudes, interest and know-how and then you'll be able to do many things in that area. But *anything*? No. Don't kid yourself. You will be sorely disappointed.

Let's walk together through some myths about college and you can decide whether this is for you, whether it'll work for you.

Myth #1 – College Education Is Dead

Nope. Not even close! Yes, it used to be highly self-centered, yes, it is late to the AI party, but it is also a behemoth that simply cannot move very fast.

We easily accept that corporations need considerable time to adjust their strategy and be more in tune with their times and with what their employees and customers need, yet we are first to throw the stone at an even more complex institution, deeper rooted in history and in traditions than any corporation that has ever lived.

Why is that? Because it's a sitting duck (literally)? Let me recount the story of the cargo ship, so you can better understand why I argue in favor of college education being very much alive, thank you.

Recently I was watching this documentary on the docking process of transatlantic cargo ships at Hamburg harbor. It takes hours to position that huge thing perfectly, and it also requires an exact choreography from the piloting boats (yes, plural) to help do the job properly.

Now, why would the ship not dock itself, without the help of piloting boats? Is the captain suddenly inept? Has the crew ceased to understand and obey orders? Have they not been in a harbor before? No, of course not. It's the sheer size of the ship, that, moved too fast, floods half the city in a matter of minutes; it's the water and the wind and the other harbor activity that

requires minute attention to every detail – and those details are known by the piloting boats, not the ships. Only if they work in perfect sync can the ship be anchored safely and can be un/loaded just as safely.

Are you with me, can you see this image? Good. Because the same applies to universities. They are the cargo ships, the presidents and deans and rectors are the captains, the faculties are the crew – but guess who are the piloting boats? Yes, the students! (Good, so you *were* paying attention).

Let me explain: the better prepared and the more in-the-know the students, the more agile and up-to-date the university.

And don't make the mistake of thinking in stereotypes like "stuffy professors" (just recently I heard some really big-name gurus refer to this and instantly my adrenalin shot up)! Granted, some may be somewhat stuffy, but I would go out on a limb and argue that the percentage of them is under 1%. The rest are people like you and me, they are active on social media, they read and get involved, they have opinions of today's comings and goings, they are involved in their respective community, they give their absolute best – as do you in everything you do.

They know that education must change and they work on that from the inside. Could it move a little faster? Maybe, but then there's the whole flooding-the-city problem. And here's where

the students, aka you, and we, as parents and primary educators, come into play.

When a student's main motivation for choosing a college and a major is "*I don't know*", then you bet that's exactly what he or she will get: a fat load of "*I don't know*". Every. Single. Time.

And how could they possibly get anything else?! It's not like they're invested, or interested, or even know what their abilities and natural aptitudes are. Very few do, and they will always be the best piloting boats. But the rest will push and pull every which way, making the all-important choreography of docking the ship (aka university) that much more difficult and a screeching cacophony.

Something being in demand does not mean that we can do it, that we have the capability to learn it well enough fast enough to compete with the best of the best, with those who do this naturally – and therefore earn the fabled good money! The same learning curve that's a Mount Everest climb in shorts and sandals to you is a walk in the park to somebody else, who is mentally and physically well-equipped for the hike (and vice versa, of course).

Seth Godin accurately remarked that "*learning is taken as much as it is given*". To change, to grow up, to be adaptable and curious (as is required, right?), students must be teachable. And they can be teachable and curious only when they know why they are there, what has prompted them to choose this over that,

where their comfort zone lies and how big it is and what they expect from themselves first.

These will be the students who ask the right questions often enough to drive universities to change, who push universities to think out of the box, who infuse their enthusiasm for the matter in every nook and cranny of the university; who align the ship perfectly to the dock.

Disengaged students, “*I don't know*”-students, “*my parents said*”-students? For them, college education will continue to play dead and they won't even be wise to the game.

Myth #2 – College Degrees Are Worthless

Indeed, they're absolutely worthless if the student doesn't have any known ability toward that field, if they're like my student who failed all her exams.

Indeed, they're absolutely worthless if the student was pushed there or because “*it sounds interesting*” (don't laugh, it's an actual answer I and many professors hear way too often!). Because, hello, what of it can sound interesting to him/her, a student who's not interested? S/he'll be just another body in class, warming that seat and dropping the engagement level.

Indeed, they're absolutely worthless if the student assumes that that particular degree will get him/her a good job, or even a stable job. It may, but they shouldn't hold their breath. By the

time they graduate, that job might be gone or have transitioned into something else, and if they have no interest whatsoever in the topic, they'll never know how to adapt to get that new shape of the job they coveted for the perceived perks only.

Indeed, they're absolutely worthless if the student is not willing to put in the work, even when they do know why they're there. The comfort zone will shrink incrementally with every year that passes and they haven't caught up. Especially in this day and age!

And indeed, they're absolutely worthless when the students are in it for the title, for the name tag, for the potential perks, instead of for the lifelong learning. I know that some people stop learning the minute they're out of school (any kind of school, not necessarily college). I even know people who have done the bare minimum to get through school and never touched any information on their specialist field since, not to mention a book! I feel sorry for them, and as an avid learner myself, I don't really understand how this can be.

But

- ◆ when you know your why;
- ◆ when you get in prepared to be all in;
- ◆ when you want to learn;
- ◆ when you know that college is the foundation, the beginning of the rest of your life and it's up to you to make it count;
- ◆ when your eyes are open;

- ◆ when you are willing to learn how to learn, and to learn how to think with your own brain, so that you won't be easily corralled and manipulated;
- ◆ when you've been educated to be curious and empathetic and adaptable and have people skills;
- ◆ when you're invested?

Priceless!

Every. Single. Time.

Of course, that applies to any kind of education, not just college.

Myth #3 – College Degrees Don't Prepare Students for "Real Life"

Well, I should hope to shout not! Real life prepares students for real life! College teaches you how to select various types of information, transformation and education. As former German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt wisely put it: *"The biggest room in the world is the room for improvement"*.

College is the broad base, the maze garden which shows you what is possible. It's there for us so we learn how not to repeat history. That does not mean that you have to do everything, that you have to know everything, that you have to be everything laid out there. God, no! In fact, if you like, say, 60% of everything you are taught in your selected field, you're golden.

Nobody likes everything, even if they are good at everything. They just put in more effort and willingness.

College topics are not meant to be tailor-made, because this stage in a young person's life and evolution is a quest unfolding under their very eyes. You have to get more information than you can handle precisely so that you can sift through it and shape your path yourself. What one student finds super interesting could be boring another student to tears. An idea that has barely touched your consciousness while in college may be the winning ticket for the next stage in your career at some point.

But we don't know that while we're in college, there is no map laid out in front of each of us, indicating where we must dig for the treasure. There is no one foolproof, standardized treasure map that all must follow and subsequently find the same treasure. We each **draw our own map**, and we especially **define our own treasure**, with partly information gathered or left over from college, partly from our interests and hobbies and acquired tastes, and partly with what we absolutely want to avoid – voilà, the fabled real life. How can college then teach you the real life, when you're not there yet? Or rather, you are there: in the real college life.

Let's recap, shall we? College provides the broad base, equal for all students, while "real life" is what each of them makes with selected information from that broad base. Do you agree?

If you are a parent reading this book, may I ask you this: how much of what you learned in college or any kind of school you attended have you forgotten?

Me, I'm sure I haven't used or ever needed maybe half of what I learned back then. I used the other half quite successfully though and gone from there to learn on. But the half I found useless and promptly forgot is most certainly someone else's livelihood, or passion, or skill. Yes, we need the broad base (much as we hate the exams) so that we can cherry-pick the right things later and run with them successfully.

Remember, Isaac Asimov said it best: *"Education isn't something you can finish"*. If I'm not too presumptuous, I would prequel that education starts at home, by example of resilience, empathy and most especially integrity, and is the most important building block anyone can give their child (and perhaps future student).

So, tell me, will it work for you?

The Famous Last Words (of Wisdom)

“People Are More than Just What Happened to Them. It’s What They Do About It” (Amanda Nguyen, Founder of Rise)

If you never remember anything else from this book, please make an effort to remember these 3 key takeaways:

#1 There are no “best college degrees”, “best jobs”, “only jobs in the future”* and other such BS, ... but there is such a thing as **the best you**

#2 This best you will

- ◆ get the best college degree *for you*
- ◆ have the best job(s) *for you* and
- ◆ shape the most perfect future *for you*

#3 Only you can shape that, *if you come prepared*: if you know exactly how long and wide your Comfort Zone is, what’s in it and what’s not.

*Online, you will find an abundance of so-called “studies” unveiling in-demand professions and qualifications. And while what they say might all be true (although, take them with a good pinch of salt, please!), it sure does not mean that everything else is false. Those fields may be more in demand considering the economic evolution (which, by the way, you should be aware of!), but it certainly is not a “do this or bust!” law.

Think of a carpenter's profession: it's 90% manual, almost 0 automation, AI or digital, yet people still need them and want them to build their houses.

Or, take architects (I know! I'm fascinated by this profession and what an excellent architect can create). A while ago I read that this was a no-go study field because it takes a long time to complete, is very difficult and then you have no job. That's what the study professed.

Well, I beg to differ! People all over the world will continue to build. And while the design process itself benefits from computer science and automation, the idea, the spark, the genius will still be the architect, the person (if this is what they're meant to be doing, their skill and strength and passion, all combined, that is...).

That's just to give you the counter-example and to urge you to follow your dream and not take much notice of studies. Somebody paid for them to be written exactly like this, to plant an idea into your head.

When it's your passion and you want to learn on, no one has to prompt you or drag you; you adapt, and most importantly, you adapt your environment to your skills, you shape your environment. It will be your signature dish, if you will. And that's priceless! So, use all there is and all there will be in terms of tools, but above all use your brain and your heart!

Remember Charles Steinmetz and his \$9,999 X-mark on Henry Ford's broken generator? Let's mark our own here:

- X A college major, a university, a place to study is **something you choose**, not something you find. It's not a penny that you find in the street, not a lottery or raffle ticket, but an informed decision that you have made for yourself;
- X A well-defined Comfort Zone is your most prized possession. It will evolve with you. Take good care of it and expand it into the Learning Zone;
- X The better you know your Comfort Zone, the smaller the Fear Zone;
- X Decide on your major, sample electives and minors – not the other way around!
- X Decide already! Solve this major problem and move on. Life is about so much more than this! Also, have fun in college!

With my coaching students, we embark on an adventure during the One In Demand 2-days Intensive: we go hiking and we have fun. Virtually, of course.

First though, we warm up, we sweat in training, like the Spartan warriors taught us to. Then, we pack the right gear: some of us are going to the mountains and some are going to the sea; some of us are going abroad and some are visiting their grandparents. It's an individual trip, as unique as each one of my students. Actually, I consider it a privilege that I may be their local guide for a while and I appreciate it immensely!

Then we start the hike and it's the most exhilarating experience. For my students, because it's the first time they do this exercise from start to finish and they can actually see the way – not to mention the tangible results. And for me, because I get to accompany so many fantastic future linchpins.

And just before we reach the top, where each and every one of my coaching students can confidently say *“this is it, this is my mountain top, I claim it”*, we have a nice, warm, rich cup of hot chocolate to replenish the energy we consumed so far.

Every single time a coaching student tells me *“I'm good now, I can take it from here”* it feels like I've grown springs under my feet, I don't touch the ground for several days. This is what I vowed to do, this is my mission accomplished: your mission accomplished.

Can you relate? Can I help you? I would love to be there when you spread your wings wide and take off into your very own, clear future. Go on, hire a local guide!

I hope this book has helped you find your unique strengths – and thus the college major that's finely attuned to you – and that you can now bank on them. I was as detailed and specific as I could here, hopefully without running the risk of boring you to tears ...

But if, after you've read it and completed all the steps by yourself, you think *“hmm, I still need help. Will you help me?”*, the answer is yes, of course!

Who Am I And Who Made Me Queen of College Education?

Me? I help high school students and college freshmen become the linchpin, the maverick, the expert others cannot do without, instead of them being the interchangeable, replaceable minions, of which there are millions.

And nobody made me Queen of anything, of course, but being a college professor (of Conference Interpreting) sure does come with valuable insights in what concerns students' attitudes, thinking patterns and roadblocks, how college professors think and act, and what the higher education system is made of.

Eleven years into my tenure I got extremely frustrated that I couldn't help my students properly, that I was too deep inside the frame and I couldn't see the picture, so I quit mid-year. Cold turkey.

As luck would have it (and I admit, the beginning was a fluke, as are many things in life the moment you step off the beaten track), I went on to work as executive advisor to CEOs and CHROs, and I learned things I never knew I didn't know – or needed. Big leap forward!

Fifteen years later I got antsy again and decided to go solo. And while I continue to advise the C-suite of companies (but I get to pick and choose my clients, based on my very own, fine-tuned Comfort Zone, that evolved with me), as now a visiting

professor at my *alma mater* I have made it my mission to help students make the choice that's best for them. And in doing that, I also help my fellow college professors re-engage with their profession and with their students.

But my ultimate mission is to change, to modernize the higher education system. One student at a time. They are the piloting boats of this massive endeavor and we cannot do without them, without you. Funny how, once you step out of the frame, the picture becomes crystal clear... Will you help me?



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