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A Guide to Choosing Tests That Are Right for You

By Margaret Riley Dikel

You can find self-assessment resources that promise to measure just about every imaginable personal dimension, so you should narrow the selection and determine which will be most useful. Review the following list of categories of assessment tools and examples of each type, then see where the tests are located online:

Personality tests

These include temperament or type indicators, such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI) and the Keirsey Temperament Sorter. Such tools seem to help everyone struggling with career issues, says Annette Richmond, principal of the Richmond Consulting Group, a career-management consulting firm based in Rowayton, Conn., and founder of career-intelligence.com.

“These help you to better understand who you are and where your strengths are,” says Ms. Richmond. “They provide information on how you prefer to communicate, gather data, and make decisions, and how your style compares with others. This can help you determine if your personality really meshes well with the job you’re doing or are considering, making them useful for career changes as well as personal career management.”

Interest inventories

These offer suggestions for careers based on your personal interests. They include the Strong Interest Inventory, The Self-Directed Search, the Campbell Interest and Skill Survey (CISS), and the CareerKey, among many others.

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Skills inventories

These help you define your skills and abilities and make it easy for you to then find out which are transferable to new career fields. You'll often find them bundled with interest inventories. Others exist as stand-alone tests for specific job areas (for instance, benefits manager or nurse).

This isn't a formal test that has been validated by research, but taking a formal quiz isn't necessary to get the information you need. You can make a list of your own skills using tips and checklists from free articles available on sites such as career-intelligence.com and lifeworktransitions.com. Once you have a list showing your abilities, you can visit other career exploration sites, such as America's Career InfoNet, O*Net and the Occupational Outlook Handbook, to research career areas where your skills could be useful.

Values inventory

Like a skills inventory, this isn't a formal tool that has been validated by extensive research and analysis. But it does allow you to examine what motivates and is important to you (a job with an employer who is "family friendly," environmentally conscious, or who values employees highly), Ms. Richmond says.

Since it's hard for many people to say what they want, she suggests making a list of what you didn't like in the past when doing this exercise. Free articles at career-intelligence.com and the University of Minnesota at Morris Career Center's [Web site](#) outline ways to help with this process.

As you start looking for career and other assessments online, you'll see that many offer to measure everything imaginable about yourself. To determine which could be most useful, start by learning who developed the tool and his or her qualifications, the National Career Development Association (NCDA) suggests. After this, check the research behind the tool and make sure it has been tested on a diverse group of people. Reliable developers who have validated their tools through proper research offer this information on their sites or make it easy for you to contact them and request it. You can review NCDA's career software-review guidelines at www.ncda.org and looking under "[About NCDA/ NCDA Policy and Professional Statements.](#)"

Where to Find Assessment Instruments on the Web

Personality/type indicators:

- Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI): available for a fee through www.career-intelligence.com and www.discoveryourpersonality.com. A full list of MBTI licensed providers is available at www.aptcentral.org. Costs range from \$34 to \$100, depending on the version of the test you select, the type and amount of counseling involved and whether the test is offered with another instrument.
- Keirsey Temperament Sorter — www.keirsey.com: short initial report is free (registration required). A 10-page personal analysis is \$14.95. Available in several languages.

Interest inventories:

- Strong Interest Inventory: available for a fee through www.career-intelligence.com and www.discoveryourpersonality.com. Costs range from \$34 to \$80, depending on the version of the test you select, the type and amount of counseling involved and whether the test is offered with another instrument.

- Campbell Interest and Skill Survey (CISS): available for a fee through <http://assessments.ncspearson.com/assessments/tests/ciss.htm> and www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/careers/cciss.htm.
- Self-Directed Search: available for a fee from www.self-directed-search.com.
- CareerKey: free and in English or Chinese from www.careerkey.org.

Skills-inventory guides:

- www.career-intelligence.com (free guidance offered)
- www.lifeworktransitions.com (free guidance offered)

Values inventory guides:

- career-intelligence.com (free guidance offered)
- University of Minnesota at Morris Career Center — www.mrs.umn.edu/services/career/career_planning/ (free guidance offered)

— Ms. Dikel is the author of the “*The Guide to Internet Job Searching*” (VGM Career Books, 2002). Her Web site is www.rileyguide.com.