



Reading and writing can lead you to a career.

There are many interests. What's yours?



A scientist using a microscope

## It's Not Easy—Take Your Time

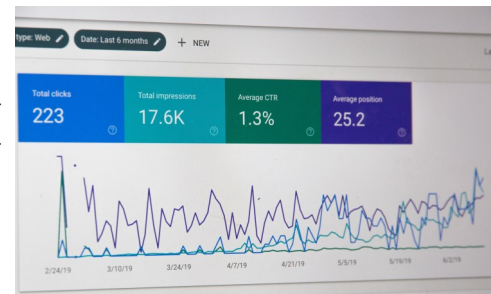
### By Jack Glanz

"Select a Major." I was prepared, but not everyone is. Picking a major is intimidating but finding what your interests are, knowing what subjects are your favorite, and exploring new things will help you pick a major and will make the choice a lot less intimidating. My calling was easy to ascertain. My dad, an engineer, has always worked on things around the house that pertained to building or fixing something. Changing a tire on the car, renovating our bathrooms, roofing our shed, and replacing the window motor for our car are just some examples of the many projects that I helped him with. I loved helping him with these projects; I got to spend time with him, and I also had fun learning how to do these tasks and figuring out ways to do them more efficiently. My dad always talks about what he's currently working on at work as well; whether it's something for a plane or boat, it always fascinates me.



A crane used by an engineer

Knowing what your interests are will help the decision-making process in picking a major. But knowing your interests is difficult; I still question whether the interests I have are my real interests, or just interests that have been heavily influenced by my dad. Chris Leitch, an editor and resume expert, didn't think about his interests for the first 10 years of his career. Working jobs that he "loathed," Leitch had "zero interest" in the jobs he was working which ultimately ended in burnout, anxiety, and depression (Leitch 1). After remembering that as a kid he loved to write poetry, Leitch found a job that matched his interests in writing and editing, conveying, "I was finally doing something that I enjoyed, that I loved and, most importantly, that made me happy" (Leitch 1). In high school, I took an engineering class for three years; I worked on projects like building a catapult and learning how to navigate CAD engineering programs which gained my interest. Whether you find your interests through activities you enjoyed as a kid or from things you enjoy doing now, you should keep in mind that your interests may not come to you instantly. For some, like Leitch, it may take you 10 years of working jobs you hate to realize what your interests are. And for others, like me, your interests may come easily whether it be from childhood activities or role models like my dad.



A graph used in business

## Subjects in School

The subjects you enjoy in school can also influence your decision in picking a major. I've always enjoyed math and the sciences more than any other class. A

Your favorite courses aren't a definite calling for your major but they are another thing that you can use to help you pick between majors if you are on the fence. Having a problem in your life or a problem you've seen that you feel strongly about can help you pick the major that fits best for your views.

## Following a Professional

Following a professional in your intended field is also very helpful to gain an insight into how the work environment is after college. Last summer, my dad was able to find me a job at his workplace—Lockheed Martin. Doing manual labor, I was able to experience what it was like working in the warehouse building cool things. Helping build projects that my dad designed was a fascinating experience that not many people get to have. I was able to get a sense of the work week as well; I worked four ten-hour days and worked overtime every week as well. I got to have both a desk and manual labor job experience when working at Lockheed Martin. I was able to see where my dad worked and met all of the other mechanical engineers, but I also worked with the structural engineers. Seeing both sides, I was able to get a sense of what I liked most: a mix of each. Having an opportunity like this was very lucky, and not many kids get to experience their field of interest so early. If your parents have connections, use them. If not, check out the [Career Center](#) to get some great leads on internships. You won't only gain the experience, but you will meet more people who can help you with getting a job after college.



A young woman follows a civil engineer while he explains what he does in his profession.

## Post College

You should also think about the number of jobs for people in your major and how easy or hard those jobs are to get. Mechanical engineering is such a broad major, so I'll be able to pick and choose the type of job I want out of college. With other majors, that's not always the case. For some majors, there will be limited jobs out of college since there are so many people majoring in that subject. Loyola helpfully hosts alumni guest speakers to career development workshops, networking events, and information sessions with employers for students who may not be sure about what they want to major in.

Although some say not to look at the earnings in the field, you should. Having your dream job is the first priority, but making money that will get you out of debt and keep you happy is just as important. Having a low paying job after finishing a 4-year degree, especially if you have student debt, is not ideal. Starting salaries for STEM fields tend to be the highest, while liberal arts fields like anthropology, interior design and graphic design, as well as public health and animal science rank the lowest at around \$40,000 (Claybourn 1). Starting salaries shouldn't be the first thing you look at, but it's another thing to consider when picking your major.

## What Do Your Parents Do?

Your career is ultimately influenced the most by your parents. Day, a fellow freshman at Loyola says he picked mechanical engineering because his "father and brother took similar career paths." I remember when I was younger, my dad and I worked on a pro-



A mom works while holding her kid.

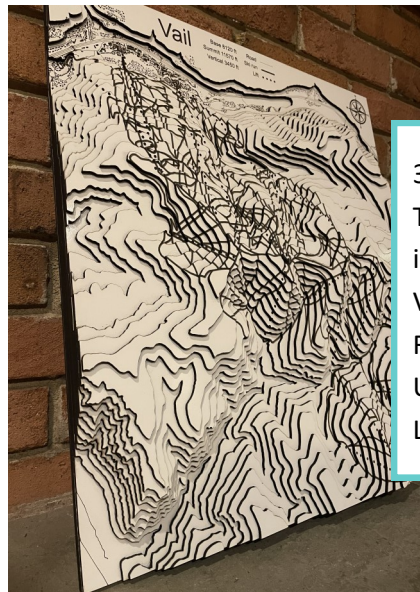
ject together. Since we had experience using the machine from when we joined a makerspace while living in California, my dad decided to buy a laser cutter a few years ago because he had a few things in mind that he wanted to build. At first, we were building small objects like a candle holder or a 3D structure of a dinosaur. Then, my dad thought of making 3D topographical maps for ski resorts; not finding any that were being sold online, he thought it would be a fun project that we could both work on. It took us months to get the maps right, but I finally decided to make an Etsy page and was able to sell a few. Like I said earlier, my dad influenced me in becoming an engineer as well; growing up while surrounded by his profession influenced me tremendously.

## Trust Yourself

Picking a major can be hard and can feel daunting, and your first choice doesn't have to be your last. Some pick a major and switch later on, including my cousin who switched her major three times. By finding out what your interests are and what your favorite subjects in school are, you can narrow down your options for majors. After narrowing down your options, you can follow a professional for a day, look at the earnings in each field, reflect on what your parents do, and go to the Career Center. You don't have to declare a major until the middle of sophomore year either, so don't feel rushed. Picking a major can be a hard mental battle to overcome: try out new things, don't listen to what others think you'll be satisfied with, and most importantly—trust yourself.



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