



LSA

WEINBERG INSTITUTE
FOR COGNITIVE SCIENCE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

BRAINSTORMING YOUR FUTURE

Planning for your post-graduate future can be both exciting and overwhelming! Students are often interested in exploring many options, but it can feel frustrating trying to narrow down your interests and options. The Weinberg Institute wants to help you begin this process by helping you brainstorm how your interests match up with potential career paths.

This workbook isn't intended to be a definitive map, rather a jumping off point for you to help identify your areas of interests, and make an action plan. We encourage you to do this worksheet with a peer facilitator and/or a CogSci advisor, who can act as sounding boards or refer you to campus resources you might not have explored!

EXERCISE 1: BIG PICTURE

If you're early in your undergraduate degree, you may not have a clear idea of what you want to do after you graduate. That's perfectly normal! Let's start with some big picture questions that might help you sort your priorities. Use the back of this page to jot down some notes and thoughts as you reflect on these prompts:

How do I want my work to reflect my core values?

Do I want a high salary or livable salary?

Do I have a specific location or specific company in mind?

How important is proximity to family?

Do I prefer city life or access to nature?

Do I want to specialize quickly, or do I want to try out many new things? Am I aiming for academia or the private sector?

Do I want to work for an employer or be self employed?

Do I want a full-time or part-time job?

Do I want to work domestically or internationally?

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EXERCISE 1: BIG PICTURE



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EXERCISE 2: NARROWING DOWN QUIZ

This next exercise is a quiz to see how your interests fit in with the major. This quiz has 8 multiple choice questions with options A, B, C, D, E, F, and G. Be sure to keep track of how many times you select each letter!

1. I enjoy classes that
 - a. Focus on larger questions that need answering or more exploration
 - b. Focus on problem solving or improving upon an existing process
 - c. Focus on examining issues in society
 - d. Focus on the wellbeing of the body and mind
 - e. Focus on writing and group projects
 - f. Focus on modeling and predicting outcomes
 - g. Other: _____
2. In my free time or for professional development, I like to
 - a. Join special interest groups that focus on different academic fields
 - b. Practice technical skills such as coding or programming
 - c. Volunteer at social services entities, such as community gardens, homeless shelters, or afterschool tutoring programs
 - d. Learn about the human body, practice sports medicine, learn about issues in public health
 - e. Post on social media, write think pieces, practice graphic design on sites like Canva
 - f. Engage in entrepreneurship/run my own business
 - g. Other: _____

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EXERCISE 2: NARROWING DOWN

3. In high school, some of my extracurricular activities were
 - a. Academic clubs, such as academic decathlon
 - b. STEM clubs and activities, such as science olympiad
 - c. Model UN or student government, National Honors Society, Identity-based groups, such as Black Student Union or GLAAD or Rainbow Alliance
 - d. Health oriented student orgs, such as working as athletic trainers for student athletes or health sciences clubs
 - e. Poetry clubs or student newspapers, drama/theater
 - f. Business Professionals of American or similar club
 - g. Other: _____
4. Since coming to UM, some of my extracurricular activities are
 - a. Working in a lab, or with programs such as UROP
 - b. Tech groups, such as Michigan Hackers
 - c. Student government, volunteering through the Ginsberg Center, working with identity-based organizations or with the Trotter Multicultural Center
 - d. Pre-med or health sciences student organizations
 - e. Performance groups such as MUSKET, or the Michigan Daily
 - f. Ross Business clubs, business fraternity/sorority, entrepreneurship activities
 - g. Other: _____

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EXERCISE 2: NARROWING DOWN

5. I prefer to work with
 - a. A team in a research setting
 - b. A mix of individual work and teamwork, focusing on projects or technology
 - c. In a group setting, focusing on group dynamics and social issues
 - d. In a group setting, focusing on health and well-being
 - e. A mix of individual work and teamwork, focusing on communication
 - f. A team that is marketing or selling a product
 - g. Other: _____
6. Some skills I already have are:
 - a. Statistical analysis, designing experiments, conducting in-depth interviews
 - b. Coding/Programming (Java, Python, C++)
 - c. Leadership and organizational skills, delegating tasks and working towards collective goals
 - d. Knowledge of anatomy and physiology, biology
 - e. Creative writing, blogging, social media, graphic design
 - f. Budgeting, advertising, customer relations, strategic planning
 - g. Other: _____

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EXERCISE 2: NARROWING DOWN

7. Some skills I'd like to acquire/improve are:
 - a. Statistical analysis, designing experiments, conducting in-depth interviews
 - b. Coding/Programming (Java, Python, C++)
 - c. Leadership and organizational skills, delegating tasks and working towards collective goals
 - d. Knowledge of anatomy and physiology, biology
 - e. Creative writing, blogging, social media, graphic design
 - f. Budgeting, advertising, customer relations, strategic planning
 - g. Other: _____
8. Some of my favorite topics in CogSci are:
 - a. Areas of CogSci that are growing/still being explored
 - b. Artificial intelligence, natural language processing,
 - c. Sociolinguistics, psychology, understanding macro-level decision making processes
 - d. Neurolinguistics, neuropsychology
 - e. Philosophical arguments, logic trees, semantics
 - f. Game theory, understanding interpersonal/micro-level decision making processes
 - g. Other: _____

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EXERCISE 2: NARROWING DOWN

ANSWER KEY

Mostly A's--High interested in research

- On-campus opportunities to get more experience in this field: UROP, Independent Study, Honors, working in a laboratory, working as a research assistant for a professor or graduate student
- Potential career pathways: research assistant/fellowships, lab manager, data analyst,

Mostly B's--High interest in technology

- On-campus opportunities to grow a interest in technology: Student organizations, targeted coursework, internships
- Potential career pathways: software engineering, AI programmer, content writing (no coding experience necessary), user experience/interface design (UX/UI), IT specialist, video game design

Mostly C's--High interest in public service

- On-campus opportunities this grow a interest in this area: targeted minors, student organizations, student government
- Potential career pathways: public policy, social work, law

Mostly D's--High interest in healthcare

- On-campus opportunities to grow interest in this field--targeted course work, target minors, student orgs
- Potential career pathways: clinical medicine, clinical psychiatry, counselling/therapy, public health

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EXERCISE 2: NARROWING DOWN

ANSWER KEY

Mostly E's--High interest in communication

- On-campus opportunities to grow interest in this field: mentorship programs, school newspapers, targeted coursework, student organizations, volunteer opportunities
- Potential career pathways: journalism, communications specialist, social media/content development, user experience/interface (UX/UI)

Mostly F's--High interest in business

- On-campus opportunities to grow interest in this field: Ross minors, Ross student organizations
- Potential career pathways: marketing, business consulting, project management

Mostly G's--High interest in another field

- Maybe your interests fall outside of the typical paths many of our CogSci students take, and that's ok! You're not limited to the aforementioned fields. Now might be a good time to chat with a peer facilitator or academic advisor about your interests, and what fields they map onto!

***PLEASE NOTE* These career paths are not all mutually exclusive! There are many ways to combine these interests, and you're certainly not limited to these pathways either!**

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EXERCISE 3: SKILL ACQUISITION

Now that you've assessed some of your priorities and areas of interests, take some time to reflect on some key skills you already have, and some key skills you'd like to acquire and/or improve! Use the lines below to list out some of these skills (you can also refer to the "What Can I Do With My CogSci Degree/Marketable Skills Guide" to help you make this list.

KEY SKILLS I ALREADY HAVE:

Example: Analytical Writing

KEY SKILLS I'D LIKE TO ACQUIRE/IMPROVE:

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EXERCISE 4: NEXT STEPS

For this final exercise, take all the information from the previous exercises and come up with some concrete steps you'd like to take to start exploring your areas of interests. Try thinking of both on-campus resources (ex, meeting with an Opportunity Hub advisor to discuss industry trends) and off-campus opportunities (ex, looking into internships through a company that you like).

U-M CAMPUS RESOURCES

OFF-CAMPUS OPPORTUNITIES
