

Question 4: How Do I Choose A Major?

Selecting a major area of study or concentration in college is a multi-step process. When you are applying to college, it is more important to begin by choosing the Area of Study, then choose your Major. Area of Study is also called *school, area of concentration, college, department, area* and *program*, depending on the individual college.

This is good news because choosing an Area of Study or Concentration is much easier to do. An Area of Study refers to a large, broad category such as:

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Arts and Humanities | <input type="checkbox"/> Communications |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social Sciences | <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life Sciences | <input type="checkbox"/> Music |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Physical Sciences | <input type="checkbox"/> Nursing and Health Studies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce/Business | <input type="checkbox"/> Arts and Science |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fine and Performing Arts | <input type="checkbox"/> Education |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering. |

A Major is a subject area within an Area of Study. Not all colleges organize Areas of Study and Majors in the same way but here are ten typical Areas of Study and some of the Majors within them.

1.	Engineering is Applied Science. It subdivides into Majors, including Civil, Architectural, Chemical, Computer, Electrical, Environmental, Geological, Mechanical, Mechatronics, Nanotechnology, Nuclear, Systems Design and Software...
2.	Science and Mathematics is broken into Majors such as Agricultural, Computer, Forensic, Health, Environmental, Physical, Life, Psychology, Statistics and then subdivides again within those categories.
3.	Health Sciences has Majors such as Biomedical, Midwifery, Nursing, Nutrition, Radiation and then subdivides again within those categories.
4.	Business breaks into Majors such as Accounting, Administration, Computers, Economics, Human Resources, International, Management and Organization, Marketing and then subdivides again within those categories.
5.	Communications Technology has Majors such as Advertising, Design, Digital Culture, Game Development, Graphic Design and Communications, Information Management, Interactive Multimedia, Media Information Technoculture, Radio and Television, Theatre Technical Production and then subdivides again within those categories.

Question #1:
What Is College?

Question #2:
How Does The College Catalog Work?

Question #3:
Is College Right For Me?

Question #4: How Do I Choose A Major?

Question #5:
What Do I Need To Go To College?

Question #6:
How Do I Choose The Right College?

Question #7:
What Are My Housing Options?

Question #8:
How Will I Pay For College?

Question #9:
How And When Do I Apply?

Question #10:
What Else Do I Need To Know And Do?

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6.	Performing Arts has Majors such as Acting, Dance, Design, Music-Vocal Performance, Instrumental, Film and Video Directing, Studio Arts-Visual, Film Production and Screenwriting, Theatre and then subdivides again within those categories.
7.	Social Work can include Majors such as Social Development Studies, Child and Youth Care, Family and Community, Addictions, Adult Development and Well Being. Social Work, unlike Social Sciences, is an education and training program for students who intend to do hands-on work with people and social issues in the community. It usually requires at least five years of post-secondary education to receive accreditation (Bachelor or Master of Social Work degrees) to lead and manage social agencies in the community.
8.	Education includes teaching at elementary or secondary schools. It includes Primary, Junior, Intermediate and Senior divisions. It includes Majors, Minors and specialist designations. This Area of Study can also include qualifications for Library Sciences, Guidance Counseling, Special Education, Co-operative Education, English as a Second Language, Outdoor Education and others.
9.	Social Sciences includes Majors such as Anthropology, Criminology, Geography, History, Labor Studies, Political Science, Psychology, Public Affairs, Religious Studies, Sociology and Urban Studies, among others.
10.	Arts and Humanities includes Art History, English, Classical Studies, Cultural Studies, Film, History, Languages, Linguistics, Medieval Studies, Philosophy, Peace Studies, among others.

After you choose an Area of Study or Concentration, then you choose a Major within that Area of Study. When you choose a Major (such as English) you are committing to take about half of your courses, over the four year degree period, from within this subject area.

The rest of your courses are general education courses and other electives. Some students may choose a Major and a Minor. A Minor requires fewer courses than a Major. Other students may choose a double Major. A Double Major requires completing the full requirements for two Majors.

When students choose a Double Majors they may be combining two areas which complement each other. For example, a Double Major in Peace Studies and Communications combines academic expertise with a viable skill for presenting that expertise.

Usually you do not have to decide on a Major within an Area of Study in your first year. When you do choose a Major in the first year you can almost always change it in the second year as long as you stay within the same Area of Study. Most colleges expect you to choose a Major at the end of your sophomore year or at the beginning of your junior year.

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Rakeem says: *I'm going to choose Science as my Area of Study and I expect to choose Biology as my Major Area of Study within Science. I like too that within the Area of Study of Science I am able to shift my Major from Biology to Chemistry, if I change my mind.*



Within the Area of Social Sciences you might change your Major from Psychology to Sociology. Within the Area of Commerce (Business) you might change your Major from Marketing to Human Resources Management.

In the Area of Engineering, however, it is often impossible to change your Major without a time penalty. If you start with Computer Engineering, it will be difficult to move to Mechanical Engineering without the penalty of redoing part or all of your first year.

Be aware, though, that not all colleges house all Areas of Study and not all Areas of Study offer the same Majors within an Area of Study. You need to check the college catalog to find out exactly what Areas of Study and Majors a college offers. Also, depending on the organization of a college you may find subjects interchanged in the categories of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities or Arts and Science.

Deciding On An Area Of Study, Program Or School Within The College

Why do colleges ask you to choose a Major for your first year if you are allowed to change your mind? The answer is simple. This information helps the college administration project their student numbers in different areas of study. It allows them to hire the right number of staff and to decide how many different courses they might offer within a certain subject area. It also prepares you to begin thinking about your interests, for future decision making.

When you were asked earlier what your strong interest was, you were not really expected to connect your interest to a subject or even a Major. You are expected, however, to connect it to choosing an Area of Study or umbrella program under which related Majors are found.

Let's return for a moment to the *Self-Directed Search* that you completed earlier in this handbook (pages 2-4,17). If you know a lot about yourself it will be easier to answer all the important questions, not just about whether or not college is for you, or if you are going for the right reasons, but also which Area of Study and eventually which Major is best for you.

Students working through this process as you are have some of the following ideas.

Kevin thinks: *I did not like doing Arts and Crafts at the playground or summer camp, and did not enjoy them in elementary school and did not pursue these interests in high school either. I'm not going to think about an Applied Degree in Jewellery-Making, Drama Set Design or Wardrobe and Textiles. Also, I always chose to play board games, such as Scrabble or to read a book rather than go out for a game of road hockey, or play basketball. I never liked trying out for the teams in high school either. I like some sports but I think that I'll avoid a Major in kinesiology, physiology or sports medicine.*



Every year when I was young I grew tired of the new Lego my family gave me for Christmas and I still don't like taking things apart and putting them back together. I'll avoid Engineering and at least some of the Technology programs.

Anisa says: *It was a huge effort to record a few hours of community service. I'm still scrambling to complete the required hours. I found this requirement at my school a huge strain. I'm a bit embarrassed but I've got to admit that I'm more*