

Discover paths to
**MAKE YOUR
MISSOURI
STATEMENT™**

**Exploratory
Student
Handbook**

Created by the
**Academic Advisement Center
and Career Center**



HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook is intended to assist you in choosing the best path for *you*. No major is a “one-size-fits-all.” You can complete all parts of the handbook, or only sections that will be the most beneficial for you. There is also no time limit on when you should complete these exercises. This is something you will discuss with your advisor. Pages 5-6 will have a timeline of when certain career exploration tasks should be completed to help guide you along your path.

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BENEFITS OF BEING AN EXPLORATORY STUDENT

“Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?”—Mary Oliver

Does it feel like you are the only student who does not know your major?

Or do you feel like you will be at a disadvantage because you are not sure what you should be studying right now?

You are not alone:

- Every fall semester, more than 1,000 students declare an exploratory major at Missouri State University
- 75% of students are unsure of what their future career should be when they enter college
- Only 1/3 of seniors will graduate in the field they preferred as a first-year-student.

There are advantages to exploring various majors:

Students who start as exploratory. . .

- tend to have a better GPA
- are more likely to enjoy college and less likely to dropout
- are more likely to graduate in under 6 years, saving a lot of money
- are less likely to choose a major based on extrinsic factors like pleasing their parents
- have more time to explore their interests, making them more likely to choose a career path that they will enjoy

Missouri State University Student Experiences:

Kayleigh: “Being undeclared gave me a sense of relief when it came to registering for classes. When picking from general education courses, you can literally pick from anything and get an idea of what that field entails. After high school, I thought the science route was for me but after taking an intro Biomedical Sciences class, I learned that it wasn't. I decided to go the business route and major in Human Resources Management because I love the business world. Without starting off college as an exploratory major, I wouldn't have gotten to experience other fields of interest. “

Luke (now an Academic Advisor): “It is awesome if you know from day one what you want to do as a career, but if you are uncertain at all, being undecided is the perfect way to find out what you want to do. The advisors here are welcoming and make it very easy on the student to make their own decision. The main benefit of being undecided is the flexibility and the freedom that it allows.”

This handbook for exploratory majors is designed to help you search for a major and career that will be just the right match for you. Please work your way through the handbook and talk with your advisor about the information you find here. Your advisor is a specialist in helping exploratory/undecided students discover their own path. Keep in touch with your advisor and let your advisor know what you are thinking.

WHY ARE YOU EXPLORATORY?

Before you can choose a major, it is important to know the reasons you are exploratory and just how uncertain you are about a major, or even a career.

Take a moment to think about why you haven't yet chosen a major. What are the reasons you are exploratory? What is preventing you from making a decision? Below are a few examples, but be sure to be honest about YOUR reasons for being exploratory. List the reasons in the space provided.

Some examples, just to name a few, for why some students claim to be exploratory:

- You don't want to make the "wrong" choice.
- You don't know yet what information or options are out there, or even where to look for that information.
- You don't have an interest in any area of study.
- You have too many interests and can't narrow down your options.
- You aren't used to having to make your own decisions.
- You are not ready to commit to a choice.
- You have a career chosen, but do not know which majors are best for that career.
- You are not sure that college is right for you *right now*.

Your reasons?



CAREER DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

<http://careercenter.missouristate.edu/ChartingYourCareerPath.htm>

Following is a recommended timeline for students to follow. Following a timeline such as this usually helps students make sure they are job ready and prevents the panic attack of being unprepared or not knowing what to do after graduation.

STEP ONE (USUALLY DURING THE FRESHMAN YEAR)

- If you have not declared a major or are unsure of a selected major, make an appointment with a Career Resources Specialist in the Career Center to clarify your career goals. This may include doing some career assessments and follow-up appointments to review the assessments and discuss next steps.
- Join a campus organization (preferably related to your major or career interest).
- Begin and/or continue developing skills that employers seek in job candidates.
- Research occupations and industries by reading books, periodical articles, and websites on careers. Learn realistic statistics on salary, locations for jobs, and entrance requirements.
- Participate in a job-shadow experience; conduct information interviews; talk to people working in jobs that interest you. Learn about their education, experience, and skills.

STEP TWO (USUALLY DURING THE SOPHOMORE YEAR)

- Locate an internship, volunteer experience, or part-time job that is related to your career field and will help you develop important communication and work-related skills.
- Access internship postings on Handshake.
- Enroll in IDS 120 for an in-depth course in career exploration and preparation.
- Make an appointment with the Career Center to learn how to write résumés and job-search letters as well as interview for jobs.
- Continue researching career choices, learning about the skills you need to be competitive in the job market; work on developing those skills.
- Build your network of contacts, including those made through job shadowing and information interviewing.
- Continue participating in campus organizations; find opportunities to develop strong leadership and communication skills.
- Develop a portfolio to showcase your accomplishments and skills.
- Develop a LinkedIn profile and have it reviewed at the Career Center.
- Attend activities and events sponsored by the Career Center.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

STEP THREE (USUALLY DURING THE JUNIOR YEAR)

- Continue participating in campus and professional organizations.
- Continue gaining experience in your field through internships, part-time, summer jobs, and volunteer experiences.
- Research employers who hire in your major. Learn what they seek and where the jobs are located.
- Conduct information meetings with individuals working in careers that interest you. Use those contacts to build your network.
- Continue developing your network by contacting potential mentors or references.
- Attend career fairs and other career events.
- Continue building your résumé; learn how to tailor your résumé to specific positions; have your résumé reviewed at the Career Center.

STEP FOUR (USUALLY DURING THE SENIOR YEAR)

- Update your résumé.
- Access job listings using Handshake.
- Participate in mock interviews through the Career Center.
- Use Handshake to access job postings and participate in on-campus interviews.
- Attend Career Center workshops, activities, and events.
- Keep records of all employers you contact, including date, method, and result of contact.
- Don't wait until after you graduate to begin looking for a job. Many job seekers are surprised to learn the average job search takes approximately six months.
- Continue building your network of contacts. Use your participation in professional organizations and clubs to make connections with people who may provide you with job leads.
- Continue researching potential employers. Learn as much as possible about them and determine how you would answer questions such as "Why are you interested in this company?" and "How would you fit into our organization?"

**"It does not matter how slowly
you go, as long as you do not
stop."**

- Confucius

MAJORS LIST ACTIVITY

Missouri State University has over 150 different options for majors!

Can you list them all? If not, you will want to check out what is available. Chances are you will find majors you never knew existed and one might be the perfect fit for you.

1. Print off the list of majors (<https://www.missouristate.edu/advising/58894.htm>).
2. Simply cross out those that you know you would never consider. Or, if you would feel more comfortable, circle the ones in which you feel you have some level of interest. Or, do both. The point is to make the potential list of majors more manageable.
3. Then, reflect upon those majors either that you did not cross off, and/or those that you circled on the list.

Write in the space below those majors that are still left on your list:

Discuss your responses with your academic advisor. What general trends do you see? Are there majors that are related to one another? What about the remaining majors is of interest to you? Where can you get more information about those majors?

Continue to keep and review the completed activity to reflect upon later in the exploration process.

**“Pursue some path, however narrow
and crooked, in which you can walk
with love and reverence.”**

- Henry David Thoreau

Kuder Journey

With Kuder Journey®, you gain insights and then explore a range of career and education options—all directly related to your interests, skills, and work values. This tool is free to Missouri State students and alumni. (Note: Kuder Journey® replaces the FOCUS 2 career-planning tool.)

Registration:

1. Visit <https://journey.kuder.com>
2. Select **I need to create an account**.
3. Select **I am a college student** or **I am a job seeker/career changer**.
4. Complete the four-step registration process.
5. Use Journey Activation Code (J-Code) **J6532854DKM**.
6. Create a username and password and set a security question and answer. Write down your username for future reference.
7. Select **Sign Me Up** to complete the process.

Using the system:

Once you have created your account, you will be directed to your home page. Begin by **Taking Assessments**—the first step in the education and career-planning process. You also can use the navigation menu to access the options under “Things to Do” and “My Portfolio Items.”

Do you see any common themes? Based on your list of careers, list three majors/areas of study that you are now interested in below:

Career	Major(s)	Reason(s) for interest

When you meet with your advisor, discuss these majors/areas of study. Are there options to pursue some of these as minors? Do these majors match the ones you selected from the Majors List Activity?

WHAT SUBJECTS DO YOU ENJOY?

Take a moment to reflect upon those subjects that you have completed both in high school, and in college up to this point, or the courses in which you are currently enrolled. Think about which courses and subjects you really enjoyed taking and those in which you found an interest. List those subjects/courses in the left hand column below.

Subjects/Courses you enjoyed or found an interest in:

Ability (1-10)

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

What was it about those courses that you enjoyed or liked?

Next, think about how strong you would rate your abilities in those subject areas from 1-10 (10 being the highest) in the column at the right above. Are there any subjects or courses in which you need to improve upon your skills and abilities in order to be successful? Are there others in which you excel?

WHAT SUBJECTS DO YOU ENJOY?

And, on the flip side, list below those subjects/courses in which you were bored, frustrated, confused, and/or did not like.

What was it about those courses that you did not enjoy or did not like?

Are there themes with the subjects that you enjoyed? What about those that you did not enjoy? Do the subjects in your first list match the majors that you also are interested in? If you are not sure, discuss these results with your academic advisor.

MY ACTION PLAN

You've reviewed the handbook and completed the exercises, so now it's time to make an action plan. Be sure to work together with your academic advisor on this plan.

Major(s) and/or minor(s) you are considering declaring:

What reservations do you have about declaring these majors/minors? Discuss these concerns with your academic advisor. Remember, your major does not always determine what you will do for the rest of your life!

What steps do you need to take to declare and when must you accomplish these steps? List this information below:

Other tasks to consider (meeting with a new academic advisor, changing your schedule, etc.):

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