What Your Test Scores Mean

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The Career Key® assessment in Career Key Discovery™ measures how similar you are to Holland’s six personality types, helps you identify occupations that match, and gives you up to date information about each one. You can also use your scores to identify programs of study and college majors that match your personality.

Introduction. The Career Key® test is based on John Holland’s theory of career choice, the best known and widely researched theory on this topic. Understanding it will help you make sense of your Career Key scores and how they relate to your career choice. This booklet will guide you.

According to the theory, you are most likely to be successful and satisfied in a career if your personality is like the personalities of the people who work in it. In other words, whatever career choice you make -- a career to enter; course or training program; college major; or a career change -- you are best off to choose one that matches your personality.

1. Summary of Holland’s Theory
2. How the Personality Types are Related (Hexagon)
3. Holland’s Six Personality Types
4. Holland’s Six Work Environments
5. Holland’s Six College Major Environments
6. Holland’s Theory and You
7. Limitations
8. A Good Decision
Summary of Holland's Theory
Holland's theory can be summarized in six statements:

1. In our culture, most people are one of six personality types: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional. See Holland's Six Personality Types on page 5 for a description of each type.

2. People of the same personality tend to "flock together." For example, Artistic people are attracted to making friends and working with Artistic people.

3. People of the same personality type working together in a job create a work environment that fits their type. For example, when Artistic persons are together on a job, they create a work environment that rewards creative thinking and behavior -- an Artistic environment. The same thing happens in an Artistic college major.

4. There are six basic types of work environments: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional. See Holland's Six Environment Types, starting on page 6, for a description of each.

5. People who choose to work in an environment similar to their personality type are more likely to be satisfied and successful:

For example, Artistic people are more likely to be successful and satisfied if they choose a job that has an Artistic environment, like choosing to be a dance teacher in a dancing school -- an environment "dominated" by Artistic type people where creative abilities and expression are highly valued.
6. How you act and feel at work depends to a large extent on your workplace environment. If you are working with people who have a personality type like yours, you will be able to do many of the things they can do, and you will feel most comfortable with them.

**How is this related to the scores you receive on the Career Key?** According to the theory, you want to choose an occupation whose type is the same as, or similar to yours. This is most likely to lead to your job satisfaction and success.

A good match up is called “Congruent” (meaning “compatible, in agreement or harmony”). **Example:** Imagine that your highest score on the Career Key is for the Realistic type. Looking at the table below, you can see that the most compatible job environment is Realistic. It is a congruent match. This suggests you choose from the jobs that are in the Realistic group. Or, you might choose from the jobs that fall in the Investigative or Conventional category.

**Compatible Work Environments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Personality Type</th>
<th>Most Compatible</th>
<th>Compatible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Realistic</td>
<td>Realistic</td>
<td>Investigative &amp; Conventional</td>
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<tr>
<td>Investigative</td>
<td>Investigative</td>
<td>Realistic &amp; Artistic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Artistic</td>
<td>Artistic</td>
<td>Investigative &amp; Social</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Artistic &amp; Enterprising</td>
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<td>Enterprising</td>
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<td>Social &amp; Conventional</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conventional</td>
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Most people, in reality, are a combination of types -- like Realistic-Investigative, or Artistic-Social. Therefore, you will probably want to consider occupations in more than one category.

If your two strongest personality types are Realistic and Social, Investigative and Enterprising, or Artistic and Conventional -- read about “inconsistent personality patterns” and their advantages at our website.

In summary, then, you are more likely to choose a satisfying job if you choose one that fits your personality type.
How the Types are Related
The relationship between the six types can be seen when they are placed on a hexagon:

Realistic
Investigative
Conventional
Artistic
Enterprising
Social

The physical distance between each type shows you how close they are psychologically. It is also true that the personality types next to each other on the hexagon are the closest psychologically.

For example, notice that the type that is the greatest distance from the Realistic type is Social. When you read the description for these two types below, you understand why: their personalities are opposites! Realistic and Investigative, on the other hand, are close.

Your Holland Scores. As you know, there are six Holland personality types. To understand your scores, you need to be familiar with the characteristics of each type. Take your time in reading them. See if you can think of people who fit them.
Holland’s Six Personality Types

**Realistic**
- Likes to work with animals, tools, or machines; generally avoids social activities like teaching, healing and informing others;
- Has good skills in working with tools, mechanical or electrical drawings, machines, or plants and animals;
- Values practical things you can see, touch, and use like plants and animals, tools, equipment, or machines;
- Sees self as practical, mechanical, and realistic.

**Investigative**
- Likes to study and solve math or science problems; generally avoids leading, selling, or persuading people;
- Is good at understanding and solving science and math problems;
- Values science;
- Sees self as precise, scientific, and intellectual.

**Artistic**
- Likes to do creative activities like art, drama, crafts, dance, music, or creative writing; generally avoids highly ordered or repetitive activities;
- Has good artistic abilities - in creative writing, drama, crafts, music, or art;
- Values the creative arts - like drama, music, art, or the works of creative writers;
- Sees self as expressive, original, and independent.

**Social**
- Likes to do things to help people - like teaching, counseling, nursing, or giving information;
- Generally avoids using machines, tools, or animals to achieve a goal;
- Is good at teaching, counseling, nursing, or giving information;
- Values helping people and solving social problems;
- Sees self as helpful, friendly, and trustworthy.

**Enterprising**
- Likes to lead and persuade people, and to sell things and ideas; generally avoids activities that require careful observation and scientific, analytical thinking;
- Is good at leading people and selling things or ideas;
- Values success in politics, leadership, or business;
- Sees self as energetic, ambitious, and sociable.

**Conventional**
- Likes to work with numbers, records, or machines in a set, orderly way; generally avoids ambiguous, unstructured activities;
- Is good at working with written records and numbers in a systematic, orderly way;
- Values success in business;
- Sees self as orderly, and good at following a set plan.

Notice that the description for each type lists, in order, its defining:
- Likes/dislikes
- Skills
- Values
- Self perceptions
Holland’s Six Work Environments

Realistic
Persons having a Realistic personality type "dominate" this environment. There are more of them than there are people of other personality types. For example, at a construction site there will be more people having a "Realistic" personality than there will be people who have a Social or Artistic type.

"Realistic" people create a "Realistic" environment. For example, they particularly value people who are practical and mechanical -- who are good at working with tools, mechanical or electrical drawings, machines, or animals.

Examples of occupations with a Realistic environment are:

- Farmer
- Police Detective
- Carpenter
- Locomotive Engineer
- Forester
- Engineering Technician
- Electrician
- Truck Driver
- Fire Fighter
- Aircraft Pilot
- Diesel Mechanic
- Dental Laboratory Technician

The two work environments that are most compatible to Realistic are Conventional and Investigative. The least compatible is the Social environment.

Investigative
Persons having an Investigative personality type "dominate" this environment. There are more of them than there are people of other personality types. For example, in a scientific laboratory there will be more persons having an "Investigative" personality than there will be people who have an Enterprising type.

"Investigative" people create a "Investigative" environment. For example, they particularly value people who are precise, scientific, and intellectual -- who are good at understanding and solving science and math problems.
Examples of occupations with an Investigative environment are:
Chemist          Mathematician         Environmental Scientist
Biologist         Dentist             Physician
Veterinarian      Pharmacist         Medical Laboratory Technologist
Computer Programmer Economist         Civil Engineer

The two work environments that are most compatible to Investigative are Realistic and Artistic. The least compatible is the Enterprising environment.

Artistic
Persons having an Artistic personality type "dominate" this environment. There are more of them than there are people of other personality types. For example, among a group of professional musicians there will be more persons of an "Artistic" personality than there will be people who have a Conventional type.

"Artistic" people create an "Artistic" environment. For example, they particularly value people who are expressive, original, and independent -- who have good artistic abilities in creative writing, drama, crafts, music, or art.

Examples of occupations with an Artistic environment are:
Dancer            Book                Talent Director
Editor            Graphic Designer    Multi-Media Artist
Fashion Designer  Actor              Disc Jockey    Comedian
Composer          Musician           Architect

The two work environments that most compatible to Artistic are Investigative and Social. The least compatible is the Conventional environment.
Social
Persons having a Social personality type "dominate" this environment. There are more of them than there are people of other personality types. For example, in a hospital, school, or counseling service there will be more persons having a "Social" personality than there will be people who have a Realistic type.

"Social" people create an "Social" environment. For example, they particularly value people who are helpful, friendly, and trustworthy -- who are good at teaching, counseling, nursing, giving information, and solving social problems.

Examples of occupations with a Social environment are:
- Counselor
- Probation Officer
- Dental Assistant
- Nurse
- Teacher
- Librarian
- Social Worker
- Physical Therapist
- Athletic Trainer

The two work environments that are most compatible to Social are Artistic and Enterprising. The least compatible is the Realistic environment.

Enterprising
Persons having an Enterprising personality type "dominate" this environment. There are more of them than there are people of other personality types. For example, in a business or legal setting there will be more persons having an "Enterprising" personality than there will be people who have a Investigative type.

"Enterprising" people create an "Enterprising" environment. For example, they particularly value people who are energetic, ambitious, and sociable -- who are good at politics, leading people and selling things or ideas.

Examples of occupations with an Enterprising environment are:
- Hairstylist
- Sales Person
- Engineering Manager
- Judge
- City Manager
- Sales Manager
- Travel Agent
- Lawyer
- Bank President
The two work environments that are most compatible to Enterprising are Social and Conventional. The least compatible is the Investigative environment.

**Conventional**

Persons having a Conventional personality type "dominate" this environment. There are more of them than there are people of other personality types. For example, in an office of a bank or real estate company there will be more persons having a "Conventional" personality than there will be people who have a Artistic type.

"Conventional" people create an "Conventional" environment. For example, they particularly value people who are orderly, and good at following a set plan -- good at working with written records and numbers in a systematic, orderly way.

Examples of occupations with a Conventional environment are:

- Court Clerk
- Secretary
- Bookkeeper
- Bank Teller
- Post Office Clerk
- Mail Carrier
- Air Traffic Controller
- Title Examiner
- Tax Preparer

The two work environments that are most compatible to Conventional are Realistic and Enterprising. The least compatible is the Artistic environment.
Holland’s Six College Major Environments

There are also six academic environments. If you are choosing a program of study -- training program, career pathway, or college major -- you want to choose an environment that encourages you, one where you are most likely to earn good grades and graduate on time. To learn about these environments, visit “The Holland College Major Environments” at The Career Key website.

Holland’s Theory and You

Holland’s theory and your scores can help you in a number of ways:

1. **The six personality types are a useful way to identify careers and educational programs you might choose.**
   Whatever your highest score was in taking the Career Key, you probably identified careers that had not occurred to you. That's good. In making any decision, it is important to identify all of the most promising options. To explore college majors and training programs by personality type, visit “Choosing a College Major or Training Program” at the Career Key website.

2. **Holland’s theory gives you insight about how groups of people create an environment and how they affect you.** It makes sense that if a group of Social types get together they are going to create a Social environment. If you are a Realistic type invited to a party of Social Workers and Counselors (Social types) you will understand why you probably feel a little awkward and out of place.

   a. But, even more important, you can get a better idea of what kind of work environment in which you are most likely to experience job satisfaction and success. You know that if you are a Realistic person, you are more likely to have positive experiences in a Realistic environment and, secondarily, in Investigative or Conventional environments. A Social environment is least likely to give you that positive reinforcement.

   b. Similarly, if you are choosing between educational programs, you will have a better idea of how to do it. Visit “Personality-College Major Match Why it is Important” at the Career Key website to learn about more.
Limitations
Because Holland's theory simplifies personality and work environments, it has limitations that you will want to consider:

1. Within every occupation, you will find people representing a variety of personality types. For example, while most plumbers are Realistic you will find people with other personality types. And, even though, according to the theory they do not fit, they may be satisfied and successful.

2. Some people have flat personality profiles; for example, they may be equally high on the Artistic, Social, and Enterprising scales. Some have flat, low profiles. Some have contradictory profiles, for example, some are high in Realistic and Social. All of these can cause confusion. Regardless of your situation, consider having a professional career counselor help you.

3. Learning Holland's theory is helpful, but there are other, equally valuable, steps you can take. Review the recommended activities at the Career Key website listed under Choose a Career, Career Options, and the site map. The Career Key e-book, What job is best for me? is also highly recommended. Another e-book, Match Up! Your Personality to College Majors, will help you if you would like to explore more matching majors or training programs.

If you are young, like in middle school, your interests and personality are probably just beginning to crystalize. Trying out new and different activities is a good idea at this time, even if they don't work out. They will help clarify your interests. From the 8th grade on, most students' interests become pretty clear and stable.

The Career Key test results will help you as you begin making important decisions about your future. We recommend that you read two articles at our website -- "Choose a Career Cluster, Career Field, or Career Pathway" and "Choose a College Major or Training Program".

Adults will find many articles at our website helpful like: Job Satisfaction, Changing Careers, Identify Your Skills, and Military to Civilian Careers.

Is entrepreneurship or self-employment a career option? To explore this choice, go to our website, The Self-Employment Key.

A Good Decision
Our goal is to help you make a good career decision, one that you will not regret. Research studies show that there are four basic steps. If you follow these steps, you are less likely to make a mistake. The more
steps you leave out, the greater the chance you will. Read *High Quality Decision Making* at our website to learn more.

**The Author**
Lawrence K. Jones is President of Career Key, Inc. and Professor Emeritus, North Carolina State University. He earned his Master’s degree from the University of Pennsylvania and his Ph.D. in counseling psychology from the University of Missouri. He received the annual Professional Development Award from the American Counseling Association, and he is a National Certified Counselor. [More...](#)