Choosing a Major

Undecided? You’re not alone...

Being uncertain about your major is a common phenomenon. There are many things you can do to ease the process of choosing a major, and the Career Center is here to help.

You will excel at a major that you enjoy studying.

It makes sense that you will exert more effort and your grades will be better when you study something you’re interested in and enjoy. Which classes have you liked so far? Are there others that you are curious about?

Your college major puts FEW restrictions on your career choices.

Selecting a major and selecting a career are not the same thing. Some students who major in the Arts or Humanities decide to pursue careers in Business or any number of other fields. Most importantly, you should choose a major you enjoy and develop skills applicable to a variety of careers.

Develop transferable skills.

Beyond the skills you will gain through studying any major at Tufts, employers value skills that you develop outside the classroom. You should consider participating in internships, volunteer service, and extracurricular activities.

Resources for exploring majors:

- Check out the websites of Tufts academic departments. Here you can find information on majoring in that discipline, courses offered, and faculty.
- Get advice from your Associate Dean for Academic Advising or College Transition Advisor (CTA).
  
  A&S Advising in Dowling Hall: Dean Jean Herbert (last names A-G), Dean Carol Baffi-Dugan (last names H-O), Dean Robert Mack (last names P-Z), Joie Cummings (CTA), Michelle Thomas (CTA), Danielle Vizenza (CTA)
  
  Engineering Advising: Prof. Jason Rife (all Engineering students)
- Faculty of any department may be a good source of information on possibilities within their discipline.
- Talk to current students who are majoring in the discipline that interests you. Ask them about what they like and dislike about their major, and about requirements and favorite courses.
- Tufts alumni can provide helpful perspectives on Tufts majors and their applications in the world of work or in a particular graduate program. If you would like to contact alumni and speak with them personally, go to the Tufts Career Networking Group on the LinkedIn website.
- Remember, the Career Center can give you information on how majors connect with the world of work. Meeting with an advisor can help you to gain insight into your interests, skills, and values, and how these relate to majors and careers. Advisors can point you to additional resources, both in print and online. Stop by Dowling Hall 740 during our drop-in hours (M/W/F 12-3pm; T/TH 1-4pm) or call 617.627.3299 for an appointment.

Did You Know?

Our website provides links to a variety of helpful resources related to choosing a major. You’ll find self-assessment worksheets and activities, an online career guidance system called Focus 2, a What Can I Do with This Major? tool, and Careers A-Z, a collection of websites for different career fields.
What are your interests?

If you could teach a course on any subject, what would it be? To whom would you teach it?

Which world issues concern you?

Imagine that you are an expert/consultant in your field. What would it be?

You've been given time and resources to write a novel. What is it about?

You're invited to attend a conference of your choosing. What would be the topic?

If you could trade jobs with any 3 people, who would they be and why?

If you could travel anywhere for a day, where would you go and what would you do?

What themes do you see here?
Finding a Major

If you could design the perfect major, which classes would it include?

List the departments you know you don’t want to major in. What do they have in common?

Which skills would you like to develop while at Tufts?

Is there family pressure to major in (or NOT to major in) certain fields?

Are you preparing for a specific graduate or professional school? Does it require or prefer a specific major?

Is studying abroad influencing the range of subjects you can major in?

If you are having difficulty choosing a major, what additional information might be helpful?

What insight have the above questions given you?
MYTH #1: A major must be directly related to a future goal.

Reality: Most employers are more interested in why you chose your major and how well you did in it rather than what it is. A large proportion of graduates find themselves choosing work which is not directly related to their major field of study.

MYTH #2: When I choose my major, I can no longer take classes in my other areas of interest.

Reality: Tufts allows students a wide range of elective courses outside of one’s major in addition to the double major or minor options.

MYTH #3: Only my major will appear on my resume.

Reality: In the education section of your resume you can also include a minor, indicate other "areas of concentration" and/or list courses to show your educational experience in additional subjects.

MYTH #4: A major is the best indicator of the skills I’ve gained.

Reality: No major prepares you exclusively for a specific job or provides all the job-specific skills you will need. Many skills are developed through extracurricular activities, internships, volunteering, and summer employment. Keep in mind that employers want well-rounded college graduates. Self-management skills such as leadership and the ability to handle a heavy workload will also be taken into consideration.

MYTH #5: A liberal arts student is nothing without a graduate or professional degree.

Reality: Absolutely not! Thousands of liberal arts graduates are prominently employed in business, social services, government, communication fields, and elsewhere without having required advanced degrees.

MYTH #6: You must major in a certain field to go to law school.

Reality: There is no specific major necessary to be accepted into law school. The required skills for success in law are best obtained from courses that develop intellectual and communication skills, analytical thinking, and writing.

MYTH #7: Majoring in engineering limits you to working in the engineering field.

Reality: The fact is, as more aspects of everyday life become technologically based, engineering skills and expertise become increasingly important in other fields. Technical expertise is an asset in bridging the information gap between engineering and non-engineering worlds. Quantitative skills are applicable in a wide variety of occupational areas. Engineering majors find themselves in fields of technical writing, finance, law, and medicine.

MYTH #8: A liberal arts student has few marketable skills for the world of work.

Reality: Totally untrue! Liberal arts graduates have the ability to assemble and understand new information, come to reasonable and timely conclusions, and then communicate effectively. The analytical, communications, and interpersonal expertise derived from a liberal arts background is valuable to all employers.
How you can use informational interviews to choose your major

An informational interview is a self-initiated interview with someone majoring in a discipline that is interesting to you. During this phase, you gather first-hand information about different concentrations, which will help you make decisions and target majors so you can narrow your options. You learn about majors from students who know the most about the major. In essence, you are beginning the process of building a professional network. Your network will consist of students with whom you talk about particular majors. IT IS NEVER TOO EARLY TO START NETWORKING.

- An informational interview should be fun. You are asking questions about the major you may choose for the next few years.

- An informational interview places YOU in a position to ask questions and gives you the opportunity to gain an insider's view of a major. It's just a short discussion—nothing that should intimidate you.

- Start by asking your friends about their majors, and ask them for names of other people in their classes whom you do not know. It is good to get the opinion of someone who might tell you a different story.

- To prepare for a series of informational interviews, draw up a list of potential contacts. These contacts can be personal friends, relatives, and fellow students, as well as Tufts alumni. The Tufts Career Networking Group on the LinkedIn website is a useful source of information because these advisors have actively expressed an interest in serving as a resource for Tufts students. Go to the Career Center website to learn more about networking and using LinkedIn.

The meeting

- Be prepared with questions to ask about the major:
  - Why did you choose your major?
  - How much work and reading is involved?
  - What does your four-year schedule look like?
  - Do you regret choosing this major?
  - What do you want to do after you graduate?
  - Who are the most interesting professors and which classes should I take?
  - Is there anyone else with whom I should speak for additional information?
  - Are there any books or websites that you suggest?

- Record all of this information in a notebook or other document (include person's name, date of conversation, answers to your questions, and plans for follow-up).

- Take initiative to continue this task until you can choose a major.
TUFTS UNIVERSITY PROGRAM CONCENTRATIONS
http://as.tufts.edu/academics/majorsminors.htm

ARTS & SCIENCES MAJORS
Africana Studies
American Studies
Anthropology
Applied Physics
Archaeology
Architectural Studies
Arabic
Art History
Astrophysics
Biochemistry
Biology
Biomedical Engineering Sciences*
Biopsychology
Biotechnology*
Chemical Physics
Chemistry
Child Study & Human Development
Chinese
Classical Studies
Cognitive Science
Community Health
Computer Science
Drama
Economics
Engineering Psychology
English
Environmental Studies*
Film & Media Studies
French
Geological Sciences
Geology
German Language and Literature
German Studies
Greek
Greek and Latin Studies
History
Interdisciplinary Studies
International Literary & Visual Studies
International Relations
Italian Studies
Japanese
Judaic Studies
Latin
Latin American Studies
Mathematics
Middle Eastern Studies
Music
Peace and Justice Studies
Philosophy
Physics
Political Science
Psychology
Psychology/Clinical Concentration
Quantitative Economics
Religion
Russian Language and Literature
Russian and Eastern European Studies
Sociology
Spanish
Women’s, Gender, & Sexuality Studies

*available as a second major

ARTS & SCIENCES MINORS
Africana Studies
Arabic
Architectural Studies
Architectural Engineering
Art History
Asian American Studies
Asian Studies
Astrophysics
Biotechnology Engineering
Child Study & Human Development
Chinese
Colonialism Studies
Computer Science
Dance
Drama
Economics
Education
English
Entrepreneurial Leadership
Ethnic Groups in America
Film Studies
Finance
German
Greek
Greek Archaeology
Greek Civilization
Hebrew
History
Italian
Japanese
Judaic Studies
Latin
Latino Studies
Leadership Studies
Mass Communications & Media Studies
Mathematics
Medieval Studies
Multimedia Arts
Music
Philosophy
Physics
Political Science

ENGINEERING MAJORS
Biomedical Engineering
Chemical Engineering
Civil Engineering
Computer Engineering
Electrical & Computer Engineering
Environmental Engineering
Mechanical Engineering
Engineering Psychology
Engineering Physics
Engineering Science
Engineering - Architectural Studies
Engineering - Environmental Health
Engineering - General

ENGINEERING MINORS
Architectural Engineering
Biotechnology Engineering
Computer Science
Earth & Ocean Sciences & Geosystems
Engineering Education
Engineering Management
Entrepreneurial Leadership
Multimedia Arts
Music Engineering

All minors offered by the School of Arts and Sciences are open to Engineering students.