

Discover Your Strengths



Your natural talents are your competitive advantage. This workbook is your personal guide to uncovering what makes you uniquely effective—and how to use that knowledge to make smarter decisions about your future. Whether you're choosing a major, exploring career paths, or just trying to figure out what you're really good at, you're in the right place.

"Your talent is God's gift to you. What you do with it is your gift back to God."

— Leo Buscaglia

The Easy vs. Hard Test

Why Your Strengths Matter

Here's the simplest way to spot a strength: notice what feels easy to you but hard for others. You know that thing you do where people say "Wow, how did you do that?" and you're thinking "Wait, doesn't everyone do this?" That's a strength. It's like having a superpower you didn't know was special because it comes so naturally.

🌟 What Feels Easy?

Take five minutes right now. Be brutally honest. What activities energize you? When do you feel like you're in your element? Think about organizing events, explaining complex topics, calming people down, solving puzzles, making people laugh, designing things, researching rabbit holes, or leading groups.

Pro tip: If time disappears when you're doing it, that's a huge clue. Write down five activities where you feel energized and effective—no overthinking allowed.

😔 What Feels Hard?

Now flip it. What drains you—even when you're good at it? Maybe you can organize details perfectly but hate every minute. Maybe you can do public speaking but need a three-day recovery period. These aren't necessarily weaknesses—they're just not your strengths.

List three activities that exhaust you. This matters because knowing what drains you is just as important as knowing what energizes you. You want to spend your life doing more of the first and less of the second.

1

Spot the Pattern

Look at your "easy" list. Circle any words that appear more than once or feel related. Are you working with people? Ideas? Systems? Creating something new? Leading others? Supporting them? The pattern tells you something important about how you're wired.

2

Connect the Dots

Write one sentence about what you're noticing. It might be something like "I'm strongest when I'm helping people feel understood" or "I come alive when I'm solving complex problems" or "I'm at my best when I'm creating order from chaos." That sentence? That's gold.

Your Strengths Inventory

When Time Disappears

Your past holds clues to your future—you just need to know where to look. This inventory will help you dig up evidence of your strengths from your actual lived experience. No personality tests required. Just you, reflecting on what's already true about how you show up in the world.

01

When Time Disappears

What activities make you lose track of time? When do you get so absorbed you forget to check your phone (which, let's be real, is rare)? This is your flow state—where your strengths meet genuine interest. Write down those activities. They're showing you something important.

02

What People Ask You For

What do friends, family, or classmates consistently come to you for help with? Are you the person they call when they need advice? Help with a project? Someone to plan the hangout? A listening ear? Other people often see your strengths more clearly than you do—especially the ones you take for granted.

03

Moments You Felt Most Alive

Think of two or three specific moments—any age, any context—when you felt energized, confident, and completely yourself. What were you doing? Who were you with? Why did it feel so good? These peak experiences reveal your strengths in action. Write them down with as much detail as you can remember.

Take your time with this section. The more specific you are, the clearer your strengths picture becomes. Don't worry about making it sound impressive...worry about making it true. You're not trying to impress anyone. You're trying to understand yourself.

Mining for Patterns



Feedback You've Received

What compliments or observations have people made about you multiple times? Even if you dismissed them as "not a big deal" or "just something everyone can do"—write them down. When multiple people notice the same thing about you, pay attention. They're seeing a strength you might be blind to because it comes so naturally.

Think beyond "you're so smart" or "you're really nice." Look for specific observations: "You always know how to explain things so they make sense" or "You have a gift for bringing people together" or "You notice details no one else sees."

Good Experiences

Think of a positive experience that revealed a strength. What happened? What did you do? What strength did it show you? Maybe you organized a successful event and discovered you're great at coordinating moving parts. Maybe you helped a friend through a crisis and realized you're gifted at staying calm under pressure.

Challenging Experiences

Now think of a difficult experience that stretched a strength. Hard times reveal what you're made of. What happened? What strength did you have to dig deep to access? How did it stretch your capacity? Sometimes your greatest strengths show up when you're under pressure—when you have to rise to an occasion you didn't choose.

- **Pattern Recognition Time:** Look across all your answers from the last two cards. What words, themes, or patterns show up more than once? Write them down. The repetition is telling you something. Your strengths aren't random—they're consistent threads running through your life story.

Your Top 5 Core Strengths

Time to Narrow It Down

You've collected a lot of data about yourself. Now comes the fun part: distilling it all down to your top five core strengths. These are the abilities that are most natural to you, most energizing, and most central to who you are. Not the skills you've learned or the roles you've played—the innate talents that show up again and again, in different contexts, throughout your life.

Brainstorm Your List

Review everything you wrote in the previous exercises. List eight to twelve potential strengths. Use specific language—not just "good with people" but "making people feel heard" or "bringing diverse groups together." The more specific, the more useful this becomes.

Rank Your Top Five

From your brainstorm list, circle the five that feel most true to who you are at your core. Then rank them from strongest to fifth-strongest. Trust your gut here. You'll know which ones feel most essential to your identity—the ones you'd be lost without.

The "So What?" Test

For each of your top five, complete this sentence: "This strength matters because..." This is where you connect your strengths to actual impact. Why does it matter that you're good at this? What value does it create? How does it make a difference in your life or others' lives?

Once you've identified your top five, you've got something powerful: a clear picture of what makes you uniquely effective. This isn't about being better than anyone else—it's about understanding your distinctive contribution. What you bring to the table that no one else brings quite the same way. Hold onto this list. You're going to use it to make some important decisions in the next section.

Strengths Across Your Life



School & Learning

Which of your top five strengths shows up most in academic settings? Maybe you're the one who can synthesize complex information, or who asks the questions that unlock understanding for everyone. Give a quick example of this strength in action during school.



Friendships & Relationships

How do your strengths show up with friends? Are you the planner, the encourager, the truth-teller, the peacemaker? The one who always has the best ideas or who makes everyone feel included? Your friendships are a laboratory for your strengths.



Hobbies & Activities

When you're doing what you love outside of school, which strengths emerge? Whether it's sports, music, art, gaming, volunteering—your chosen activities often align with your natural abilities. Notice the connection.



Work & Volunteering

If you've had jobs or volunteer roles, which strengths made you effective? Maybe you're great with customers, or you're the one who figures out more efficient systems, or you're unusually reliable. Work contexts reveal strengths you'll use your whole career.



Family

How do your strengths show up at home? Are you the organizer, the mediator, the tech support, the one who remembers everything? Sometimes your family sees sides of your strengths you don't show anywhere else.

- ☐ **Signature Strength Alert:** Are there any strengths that show up in **EVERY** area of your life? If yes, that's your signature strength—the one most core to who you are. Circle it. Highlight it. **Remember it.** This is the ability you can't *not* use. It's part of your operating system.

Your Strengths Decision Filter

Making Smart Choices About Your Future

Now here's where this gets practical. Your strengths aren't just interesting to know about – they're a decision – making tool. Every time you're evaluating an opportunity (a major, a career path, a club, a job, a project), you can run it through this three-question filter. It'll tell you whether you're setting yourself up to thrive or setting yourself up to struggle.

This filter helps you distinguish between opportunities that align with who you are and opportunities that would require you to work against your natural wiring. Both might be possible, but only one will energize you long-term. Here's how it works:

Question 1: Does This Let Me Use My Strengths?

Look at the core activities required in this opportunity. Will you get to use at least three of your top five strengths regularly? If the answer is yes, that's a green light. If it's no, you'll be swimming upstream every day.

Question 2: Will This Energize Me or Drain Me?

Think about the day-to-day reality, not just the highlights. Based on what you know about yourself, will this feel energizing (you'll be tired but satisfied), neutral (mixed), or draining (exhausted and frustrated)? Energy is everything.

Question 3: Can I See Myself Excelling Here?

Not just "Can I do this?" but "Can I be really good at this without burning out?" There's a huge difference. You can force yourself to fit almost anywhere, but you can only truly excel where your strengths are in play.

1

Mostly YES Answers

Strong fit. This opportunity aligns with your strengths. You're likely to thrive here. You'll face challenges, but you'll be playing to your natural abilities. This is the kind of choice that compounds over time—getting better instead of harder.

2

Mostly MAYBE Answers

Proceed with caution. You can do this, but will you thrive? There's some alignment but also some friction. If you choose this path, go in with your eyes open. Know what you're signing up for. Have a plan for how you'll handle the parts that don't play to your strengths.

3

Mostly NO Answers

Wrong fit. This works against who you are. You might be able to do it— you might even be able to do it well—but it will cost you. The daily grind will wear you down. There are better paths that align with your natural wiring. Keep looking.

Practice: Apply the Filter



Try It Right Now

Think of one opportunity you're currently considering. Maybe it's a major you're thinking about declaring, a career path that sounds interesting, a club you might join, or a job you could apply for. Something concrete and real. Got it? Good. Now let's run it through the filter.

This isn't a pass/fail test – it's a clarity tool. You're gathering data about fit. The goal is to make a more informed decision, not to find the "perfect" answer. Perfect doesn't exist. But *better aligned* definitely does.

Name the Opportunity

Write down what you're evaluating. Be specific. Not just "business major" but "business major with focus on marketing" or not just "part-time job" but "retail sales position at campus bookstore."

Question 1: Strengths Usage

Which of your top five strengths would you actually use in this opportunity? Which ones would go unused? List them. If you're using three or more of your top five regularly, that's a strong indicator of fit.

Question 2: Energy Analysis

Picture a typical day or week in this role. Would it energize you, drain you, or land somewhere in between? Why? Be honest. This isn't about what should energize you – it's about what actually would.

Question 3: Excellence Potential

Can you see yourself not just doing this but excelling at it? Not through sheer willpower but through the natural application of your strengths? Why or why not? This question gets at sustainability, not just survival.

- ❑ **Your Overall Assessment:** Based on running this opportunity through the filter, does it feel like a strong fit, something to proceed with caution on, or a wrong fit? Write down one key insight from this exercise. What did you learn about the opportunity—or about yourself – that you didn't see before?

Your Personal Strengths Statement

Time to put everything together into something you can actually use. A Personal Strengths Statement is a clear, confident summary of what you're naturally good at. You'll use this in college essays, scholarship applications, job interviews, LinkedIn profiles—anywhere you need to articulate your unique value. Think of it as your professional origin story. The narrative of what makes you effective.

This isn't about bragging. It's about clarity. The ability to say "This is what I bring to the table" is one of the most valuable career skills you can develop. Most people can't do this—they either undersell themselves or resort to vague generalities. You're going to do better.

01

I'm Naturally Good At...

Start with your top one or two strengths. Use specific language. Not "working with people" but "helping groups find common ground when opinions are divided." Give yourself permission to own what you're actually good at.

02

People Come to Me When...

What do others consistently ask you for help with? This validates your strengths from an external perspective. It shows you're not just good at something in your own head—others recognize it and rely on it.

03

I'm at My Best When...

Describe the conditions where your strengths really shine. When you're leading a team? Solving complex problems alone? Creating something from scratch? Teaching others? This shows self-awareness about your optimal operating conditions.

04

What Makes Me Different Is...

This is your unique combination. Not just one strength but how several strengths work together in you specifically. Maybe you're analytical AND creative. Or you're detail-oriented AND a big-picture thinker. The intersection is your differentiator.

05

I Bring Value By...

Connect your strengths to actual impact. What changes when you show up? What gets better? How do you make things happen or help things work? This is the "so what" that makes your strengths statement compelling.

Put It All Together

Draft Your Statement

Now take your answers from the sentence starters and craft them into a three-to-five sentence statement. Use this formula: Start with what you're naturally good at (your top one or two strengths). Add how this shows up with evidence from your life. Explain what value this brings to others. Optionally, finish with how you want to use these strengths in the future. Here's what that looks like in practice:

"I'm naturally skilled at bringing clarity to complex situations and helping people see options they didn't know they had. Throughout high school, I've been the person friends come to when they're overwhelmed - I help them break down big problems into manageable steps. This ability to simplify and guide has shown up in my role as peer tutor, where I've helped over thirty students improve their grades by explaining difficult concepts in ways that finally click. I want to use this strength in a career where I can help people navigate important decisions and find their path forward."

See how that works? It's specific, confident, and backed by evidence. It doesn't sound arrogant...it sounds self-aware. That's the tone you're going for. Now write your own version. Take your time. Play with the wording until it feels authentic. This is **your** statement - it should sound like you, not like something you copied from a template.

5

3

1

Core Strengths Identified

Your unique competitive advantages mapped and ranked

Decision Filter Questions

A practical framework for evaluating opportunities

Personal Statement

Ready to use in applications and interviews

Module 1 Complete! 🎉 You now have a clear picture of your top five core strengths, evidence of where they show up across your life, a decision filter to evaluate opportunities, and a personal strengths statement you can use immediately. That's not theory - that's actionable self-knowledge. Your next step is Module 2: Clarify What Matters Most, where you'll discover your core values and learn how to use them alongside your strengths to make confident decisions about your future.

Quick Reflection: Before you move on, write down one thing you're taking away from Module 1. What surprised you? What confirmed something you already suspected? What are you going to do differently now that you know this about yourself? Write it down. Make it real.