The Major-Choosing Checklist

Eight steps to go from “no idea” to a short list you can explain out loud. Do one step a week, or all of them in a weekend. Tick the boxes as you go.

1 Start with what you already know

- [ ] 3 classes you would take even if they weren’t required
- [ ] 3 classes you would drop tomorrow
- [ ] What you like working with most: people, data, things, or ideas

2 Get a starting shortlist of 3

Take the assessment at majormatch.us/quiz (free, 10 to 20 minutes). It ranks majors for you with our proprietary scoring and shows your top 3. Or pick 3 yourself.

- [ ] My 3: _____ · _____ · _____

3 Find 2 real jobs for each major

Look each job up in the BLS *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (bls.gov/ooh): median pay, education needed, projected growth.

- [ ] Pay and growth written down for all 6 jobs
- [ ] At least one job I’d actually want

4 Check what new grads really earn

The New York Fed’s *Labor Market for Recent College Graduates* lists early-career pay and underemployment by major. College Scorecard (collegescorecard.ed.gov) shows earnings for a major at a specific college.

- [ ] Early-career pay noted for my 3
- [ ] Underemployment rate noted for my 3

5 Price it before you love it

Estimate the total cost of the degree and the monthly loan payment, then compare it with a realistic starting salary. Our free calculators do the math: majormatch.us/calculators.

- [ ] Loan payment is a comfortable share of starting pay

6 Read the second-year courses

Open one college’s four-year plan for the major. The required second-year courses show what the major really feels like.

- [ ] I could get through those classes for a full semester

7 Talk to one person in the job

Ideally someone 3 to 5 years in. Three questions that work:

- [ ] What does a normal Tuesday look like?
- [ ] What surprised you after your first year?
- [ ] Would you pick the same major again?

8 Test it cheaply, then decide

Try an intro or dual-enrollment class, a summer program, a job shadow, or a free online course. Then pick a first choice and a backup that shares most first-year classes.

- [ ] Tried one thing in my first choice
- [ ] First choice + backup written down
- [ ] I know my college’s deadline to declare

Remember: many first-year classes count toward more than one major, so a first choice is a direction, not a contract. See how majors connect to careers and pay on the free Major Earnings Continuum: **majormatch.us/blog/major-galaxy**

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Sources to use: BLS Occupational Outlook Handbook · NY Fed Labor Market for Recent College Graduates · U.S. Dept. of Education College Scorecard