



COMMON | The A Center THOUGHTS ABOUT MAJORS

WHAT COMMON THOUGHTS DO YOU HAVE ABOUT MAJORS?

- 1. Most freshmen at the University of Arizona have a major.
- 2. My parents, family, and/or friends need to be happy with the major I choose.
- 3. My major has to align with my career. Picking a major and career are the same thing.
- 4. Completing my major and earning my degree is all I need to get a good job.
- 5. Once I choose a major, I'm stuck with it forever.
- 6. The major I choose will determine the amount of money I make later in life.
- 7. There is one major that is best for me.
- 8. My family and friends determine which majors I can choose from.
- 9. My identity determines which majors I can choose from.
- 10. My high school GPA determines which majors I can choose from.
- 11. I'm planning on attending graduate or professional school and there is one major for the program .
- 12. I'm planning on going to medical school or law school and that limits the majors I can choose from.
- 13. I know the major I want to declare, but I'm not good enough for that major.
- 14. There are only certain majors that lead to a good job.
- 15. When I choose a major I should be 100% certain. .
- 16. If I change my major, it is a sign that I failed and it will set me back.
- 17. Choosing a major means giving up all other options .
- 18. Being undeclared means I will be behind.
- 19. Major Exploration means looking at requirements for all majors then choosing.
- 20. Major Exploration means figuring out what you're going to do for the rest of your life.



COMMON THOUGHT: #1:

Most freshmen at the University of Arizona have a major.

FACT:

In the A Center, where Academic Advising for undecided students takes place, we serve thousands (yes, thousands!) of freshman and sophomores every year. Why? **Because choosing a major requires research and reflection. Explore your options so you can make the most informed decision.**

COMMON THOUGHT #2:

My parents, family, and/or friends need to be happy with the major I choose.

FACT:

You are the one earning the degree- your values, your academic strengths, and your interests are key. When you research major and career options, you can feel more confident explaining to your family why your picks are the best choices for you!

COMMON THOUGHT #3:

My major has to align with my career. Picking a major and career are the same thing.

FACT:

True, some occupations require that you pick a specific major: Want to be an accountant? Yes, study Accounting. Most of the time, however, the relationship between majors and careers is much more dynamic. Most majors relate to jobs only as much as you want them to: Psychology major to psychology-related career or to event planning or entertainment or non-profit work or advertising. **Here's the thing about college: It is not a vocational school, teaching you how to do any one specific task. College is about becoming educated, learning about the complexity of the world around you, learning to communicate ideas, and taking part in research and discovery. That is what employers look for their employees.**

COMMON THOUGHT #4:

Completing my major and earning my degree is all I need to get a good job.

FACT:

A college degree can open doors, but there is a lot more to getting a good job than simply taking classes. **Balance your academics with career preparation: part-time jobs, internships, volunteering, etc. Employers will be looking at a lot more than just your major!**



COMMON THOUGHT #5:

Once I choose a major, I'm stuck with it forever.

FACT:

Within the students who graduate in four years, 50% changed their majors at least once. Change is good - finding the right major is worth searching for, even if it means trying out different majors to find your "match." Permission to explore your options is a great gift to yourself!

COMMON THOUGHT #6:

The major I choose will determine the amount of money I make later in life.

FACT:

With a Bachelor's degree, most majors make the about the same salary coming out of college (with the exception being Engineering). Increases in salary are determined by further study (Masters, Ph.D., etc.), certifications, and how long you've stayed in your position.

COMMON THOUGHT #7:

There is one major that is best for me.

FACT:

Instead of thinking about what major is the best for you, think about making an informed decision. **There is no perfect fit.** There will be classes you struggle in or classes you don't like that are required for your major, but that's okay. What matters is that you enjoy the majority of your coursework. Take a look at "What Matters When Picking a Major" at the end of this handout to help you determine what questions to ask yourself.

COMMON THOUGHT #8:

My family and friends determine which majors I can choose from..

FACT:

While your family and friends can help you learn more about yourself, which will be helpful in the major exploration process, you don't need to align your major or interests with theirs. **Family and friends' pathways aren't the only ones out there. Explore your options and figure out what aligns with who you are!**



COMMON THOUGHT #9:

My identity determines which majors I can choose from.

FACT:

Don't let society decide who you are or what you can do. You get to decide that for yourself.

Identity does not determine your major and does not limit the majors you can choose from. That is a misconception that should not influence your major exploration process. What matters is that you enjoy your major.

COMMON THOUGHT #10:

My high school GPA determines which majors I can choose from.

FACT:

When being admitted to the University of Arizona, high school GPA does play a part in the major declaration process. There are some majors that require a specific high school GPA or SAT score to be admitted. However, this is not true once you are a current University of Arizona student.

Majors are looking at your current college GPA and how you did in specific courses, not what happened in high school. College is a whole new chapter. Take advantage of this transition!

COMMON THOUGHT #11:

I'm planning on attending graduate or professional school and there is one major for the program.

FACT:

Most graduation or professional schools aren't looking for a specific major on your application. They're looking at your college GPA, your extracurriculars, and your experiences as well as your references or letters of recommendation. They're looking for people with a variety of experiences and skills, not just one specific program of study.

COMMON THOUGHT #12:

I'm planning on going to medical school or law school and that limits the majors I can choose from.

FACT:

You can major in anything and go on to medical school or law school! So long as you complete the prerequisite courses, you can go on to medical school. In 2017, the most accepted major to medical school was English! Same thing with law school. They will teach you how to understand and argue the law when you get there. **They are interested in the skills you acquired from your major, not the label it carries.**



COMMON THOUGHT #13:

I know the major I want to declare, but I'm not good enough for that major.

FACT:

You are good enough. **Just because you struggle in a core subject or this major has a high admission GPA doesn't mean that it is out of your reach. You might have to work a little harder than other students, but that doesn't mean you are any less deserving.** However, if it does become overwhelming, that's okay. Switching to another major doesn't mean you've failed or closed the door to dreams.

COMMON THOUGHT #14:

There are only certain majors that lead to a good job.

FACT:

All majors lead to good jobs, as long as "good" means that you enjoy the work you do. You should also enjoy your major. **You shouldn't choose a major entirely based on the career you think you should be shooting for, especially if you're choosing that career based on salary instead of your interests, values, and characteristics.**

COMMON THOUGHT #15:

When I choose a major I must be 100% certain.

FACT:

A little doubt is a good thing. It keeps us open to new experiences and ideas. **You're not going to be 100% in on your major, because there is so much more to a life than just that.: your family, your friends, your hobbies, etc.** However, if you feel that this doubt runs deeper, meet with an academic advisor to get more information about the major to make an informed decision or meet with an A Center advisor to discuss your doubts.

COMMON THOUGHT #16:

If I change my major, it is a sign that I failed and it will set me back.

FACT:

Changing your major is a sign of self-awareness. You are aware that you are no longer interested in coursework, you struggle in that coursework and want to find another path, or you've realized you have more options. Not everyone graduates in four years and that is okay. What matters is that you have achieved your dream of graduating with a major you enjoy. **If you're worried about being "behind" in a major, meet with that major advisor and discuss how far you are from graduation.** They can give you a clear idea of how many classes you have left to complete and when to complete those courses.



COMMON THOUGHT: #17:

Choosing a major means giving up all other options.

FACT:

Your major is one inch on your resume. It's made of so much more: clubs, volunteer work, internships, etc. Picking a major just means choosing an area of study you want to focus on. **But you can always add another major. You can always add a minor. You can always join a club or volunteer. There are other ways you can engage in all of your interests. And employers find that fascinating.** When you show that you're dedicated to more than just your major, you show that you are a well-rounded person.

COMMON THOUGHT: #18:

Being undeclared means I will be behind.

FACT:

Most students take the same classes during their first two years of college: General Education courses. These courses are required of all students regardless of major. If you're worried about being behind in your first two years, meet with your academic advisor to get a sense what is expected of you during those first four semesters. If you have a specific area of interest in mind, we will assist you in selected classes toward that interest.

COMMON THOUGHT #19:

Major exploration means looking at requirements for all majors then choosing.

FACT:

Major exploration looks different for everyone. It might mean looking at a few majors and their course requirements. It might mean reviewing this myth-busting sheet. It might mean interrogating your purpose in life or learning about your Holland Code. It will mean self exploration in addition to major exploration. **Remember that Major Exploration is a process. It's not one appointment, but a series of interactions with advisors and a lot of self-reflection.**

COMMON THOUGHT: #20:

Major exploration means figuring out what you're going to do for the rest of your life.

FACT:

Major exploration means figuring out what you want to do now. Your path might change in life and that's okay. You will be figuring out what you want to do for the rest of your life. It's not something that ends with a major decision. **As you change, so will your goals and your purpose in life.**



WHAT MATTERS WHEN PICKING A MAJOR:

- What will I learn about when studying this major? What kinds of skills will I develop?
- Is there a special application to the major? How competitive is admission?
- In what must I be particularly strong (math, critical thinking, persuasion, languages) to be successful in this major?
- What kind of career development opportunities (internships, clubs and organizations) are available with this major?
- What careers are directly associated with this major? What kinds of careers do students in this major pursue that might not be directly related?
- What do most students who are in this major love about it?
- How will this major contribute to my development or help me reach my goals?