



DEPENDABLE STRENGTHS

Activities to explore and identify your strengths

A career exploration process starts with you. You should reflect and ask yourself: *Who am I? What do I have to offer? What are my strengths, skills, talents, abilities—in general and that I've learned through my academics or major?* You can then use that information to explore areas of interest and career options. We know these questions are hard to answer, so we have included several activities below designed to help you identify your strengths and talents.

A Dependable Strength is a strength that shows up in past good experiences you have had. It is one that you almost can't help using whenever the opportunity arises, that you enjoy using and want to continue to use in the future.

There are certain criteria around what constitutes a "Good Experience" (GE) in this Dependable Strengths exploration process. A GE may be tied to an accomplishment of some sort but could also be a small "triumph" in your life that gives you a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment. A GE must meet the following criteria:

- **Something YOU feel you DID WELL** ...this means *your* opinion counts and you must have *actively made it happen*
- **Some you ENJOYED doing** ...the event brought out joy in you; do not include things you do well but do not enjoy
- **Something you are PROUD OF** ...the event was accompanied by a sense of pride

When thinking back and trying to decide what might be one of your Good Experiences, consider this:

- A GE can happen at **any time** or **any place** in your life. Consider experiences from your academics, extracurriculars, hobbies, etc. for possibilities
- A GE should be a **specific, concrete event** that describes a particular short story in your life, and *has a beginning and an end*

For further exploration, attend a Strengths Exploration workshop at the UW Career & Internship Center or visit WOIS

(<http://www.wois.org/use/depstren> // 2017-2018 sitekey: fgv271)

Examples of GEs:

- Taught myself how to cook (successfully!)
- Wrote a song and performed at an open mic night
- Managed fundraiser for my school club/RSO
- Trained for and completed a half-marathon
- Created project to earn Eagle Scout award
- Made a headboard following Pinterest DIY instructions
- Planned a friend's wedding shower

ACTIVITY #1:

Start by identifying “Good Experiences” (GE) in your life.

Remember that there are certain criteria around what constitutes a GE in this Dependable Strengths exploration process. Refer to the definition on page 1, but remember:

- **Something YOU feel you DID WELL**
- **Some you ENJOYED doing**
- **Something you are PROUD OF**
- Can happen at *any time* or *any place* in your life
- Must be a *specific, concrete event* with a *beginning* and an *end*

More examples of GEs:

- Created my own study abroad experience
- Business Management class group project
- Hiked Mount Rainier
- Tutored middle school-aged kids in math

Reflect on and list at least 10 GEs from your life. Consider GEs from all times in life—before the age of 10, adolescence, and more current experiences. Questions to consider that may help you think of GEs:

- What is a GE that first comes to mind?
- What activities give you the most enjoyment when you are not in school/work?
- In your most recent assignment/project/activity, which parts did you do best and enjoy most?
- In your educational experiences (UW and other), which 2-3 subjects did you do well in and enjoy?

10 GOOD EXPERIENCES

Instructions: Write down a phrase that helps you remember what the experience was

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	

ACTIVITY #2:

Writing stories about your Good Experiences

Look over your 10 GEs and identify which you feel most strongly about. **On a separate paper, for 4-5 of your top GEs, write one or two paragraphs describing the situation, the tasks you completed, the actions you took, and the outcomes you feel good about.** Use the STAR method to help you construct your "story." Focus on what you did, how you did it and the results you achieved.

Example of a GE "story":

Created my own study abroad experience

I wanted to have a study abroad experience, but could not afford the cost of existing programs. To make it happen, I first went to the registrar to find out what was needed for credit. I learned the school I attend must be accredited and that the credits could fulfill some of my general education requirements. Then I talked with professors and other students to gather ideas and checked all the bulletin boards near the language, culture and international studies departments. After identifying several accredited schools in Mexico and Peru, I emailed them for more information. To increase my finances, I secured additional work study employment and full-time employment during winter break. From my earnings, I saved \$1000.

I chose one of the accredited school in Peru that had everything I wanted: language, culture, history courses in Spanish and a home-stay. I researched transportation to Peru and found a cheap flight to Ecuador and a bus package taking me from Ecuador to Peru that was more affordable than a direct flight (a wonderful adventure on its own). In Peru, I attended a Spanish-speaking university, made friends with both locals and other exchange students, immersed myself in the culture and arranged my own travel throughout the country over the weekends. The experience exceeded my expectations, raised my confidence and provided me with lifelong friends. I fulfilled my goal of a multicultural educational experience and earned 8 credits toward my BA in Political Economy.

Now, go write your own!

STAR Method

When telling a story, using the **STAR method** is the most effective way to organize your answer. It helps you articulate *relevant, specific, descriptive examples of you using your skills*. Follow these 4 steps to clearly tell a story.

- 1. Situation:** Explain the context of what happened
- 2. Task:** Tell what you were supposed to do
- 3. Action:** Describe *in detail* the steps and actions you took to accomplish your tasks
- 4. Result:** What you learned and accomplished.

ACTIVITY #3:

Strengths Exploration Chart

Within your GEs, you had to have used strengths in order to do something well, enjoy it, and be proud of it. This chart is designed to help you see how strengths often appear and reappear in some of our experiences.

Instructions: On the chart, the numbers on the top line represent your top 10 GEs. Review one GE at a time and go down the full list. Check the strengths you strongly applied in that experience. If you feel you used strengths not listed on this chart, add them to the list. Complete this for all 10 GEs. *Note: This is intended to be completed fairly quickly. You are looking for a pattern of strengths that tend to show up in your GEs.*

STRENGTH	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total	STRENGTH	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Analyzing												Instructing											
Artistic ability												Investigating											
Budgeting												Leading											
Calculating												Logical thinking											
Clarifying												Managing											
Collaborating												Mechanical ability											
Communicating												Memorizing											
Competing												Negotiating											
Compiling												Operating											
Critical thinking												Organizing											
Composing												Performing											
Constructing												Persuading											
Coordinating												Physical ability											
Decision-making												Planning											
Designing												Problem solving											
(Handling) details												Promoting											
Determination												Relationship building											
Dexterity												Researching											
Emotional strength												Resilience											
Empathizing												Risk taking											
Encouraging												Selling											
Evaluating												Serving											
(Being) expressive												Strategizing											
(Using) facts												Supervising											
Following through												Surviving											
Guiding												Systems/ procedures											
Imagining												Teamwork											
Innovating												Technology											
Intuiting												Troubleshooting											
												Writing											

ACTIVITY #4

Strengths Reality Test

Items with the highest totals from Activity #3 *could be* “significant strengths.” A significant strength is inner-motivated (you can’t help but use it whenever possible) and one that you use consistently. A strength might be “dependable” for you, but to identify it as “significant” and to prove that you use it consistently, perform the following reality test. Do this with 6-12 strengths you have identified.

Instructions: Use your own words to describe the significant strengths you noticed from the chart. For each strength, identify 3 distinct examples in which you strongly applied it. For example ideas, you may want to review the GEs used to complete the chart. Next, think of other experiences that are good examples of using that strength. It should be relatively easy to come up with 3 examples if the strength you are testing is truly a significant strength. If identifying examples is challenging, move onto the next strength.

<p>Strength:</p> <p>Example 1:</p> <p>Example 2:</p> <p>Example 3:</p>	<p>Strength:</p> <p>Example 1:</p> <p>Example 2:</p> <p>Example 3:</p>
<p>Strength:</p> <p>Example 1:</p> <p>Example 2:</p> <p>Example 3:</p>	<p>Strength:</p> <p>Example 1:</p> <p>Example 2:</p> <p>Example 3:</p>

Strength:

Example 1:

Example 2:

Example 3:

Strength:

Example 1:

Example 2:

Example 3:

Implications: When exploring career and job opportunities, you are looking for a match between the skills needed to do the job and your significant strengths/skills.

Next steps:

- Reflect on how your strengths shape your academic and career path. Ask yourself: *How could you use these strengths/skills in your ideal job or major? Are there ways you could combine some of the skills to create opportunities?*
- Include your strengths in your resume, LinkedIn profile summary and/or other online media
- Practice integrating strengths into your elevator pitch and interviews
- Talk about your strengths with a career counselor, adviser, or mentor
- Explore the WOIS strengths activity for additional career implications at wois.org