

What Your Test Scores Mean

by Lawrence K. Jones, Ph.D., NCC

The Career Key™ test measures how similar you are to Holland's six personality types, helps you identify occupations that match, and gives you detailed, up to date information about each one -- each, a step toward making a good decision.

Brief Summary



The Career Key™ test is based on John Holland's theory of career choice. According to the theory, you are most likely to be successful and satisfied in a career if your personality is like the

personalities of the people who work in it.

In other words, whatever career choice you make -- a career to enter; course or training program; college major; or a career change -- you are best off to choose one that matches your personality.

Full Explanation

Your Holland Scores.

John Holland's theory of vocational choice is the best known and most widely researched theory on this topic, and is used by most career counselors.

Understanding it will help you make sense of your Career Key scores and how they are related to your career choice.

As you already know, there are six Holland personality types. To understand your scores, you need to be familiar with the characteristics of each type. Take your time in reading them. See if you can think of people who fit them.

Holland Personality Types

Realistic

- Likes to work with animals, tools, or machines; generally avoids social activities like teaching, healing, and informing others;
- Has good skills in working with tools, mechanical or electrical drawings, machines, or plants and animals;
- Values practical things you can see, touch, and use like plants and animals, tools, equipment, or machines; and
- Sees self as practical, mechanical, and realistic.

Investigative

- Likes to study and solve math or science problems; generally avoids leading, selling, or persuading people;
- Is good at understanding and solving science and math problems;
- Values science; and
- Sees self as precise, scientific, and intellectual.

Artistic

- Likes to do creative activities like art, drama, crafts, dance, music, or creative writing; generally avoids highly ordered or repetitive activities;
- Has good artistic abilities -- in creative writing, drama, crafts, music, or art;
- Values the creative arts -- like drama, music, art, or the works of creative writers; and
- Sees self as expressive, original, and independent.

Social

- Likes to do things to help people -- like, teaching, nursing, or giving first aid, providing information; generally avoids using machines, tools, or animals to achieve a goal;
- Is good at teaching, counseling, nursing, or giving information;
- Values helping people and solving social problems; and
- Sees self as helpful, friendly, and trustworthy.

Enterprising

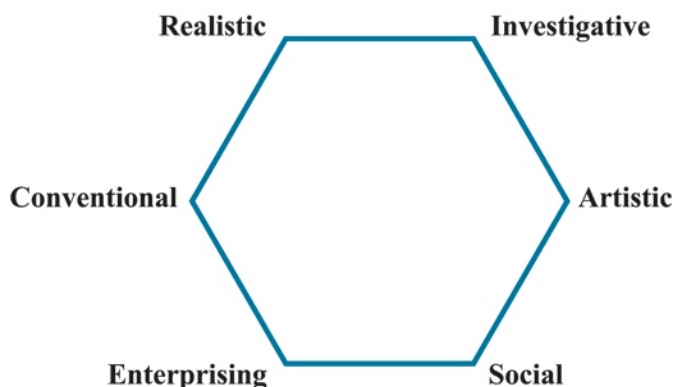
- Likes to lead and persuade people, and to sell things and ideas; generally avoids activities that require careful observation and scientific, analytical thinking;
- Is good at leading people and selling things or ideas;
- Values success in politics, leadership, or business; and
- Sees self as energetic, ambitious, and sociable.

Conventional

- Likes to work with numbers, records, or machines in a set, orderly way; generally avoids ambiguous, unstructured activities;
- Is good at working with written records and numbers in a systematic, orderly way;
- Values success in business; and
- Sees self as orderly, and good at following a set plan.

How the Types are Related

The relationship between the six types can be seen when they are placed on a hexagon:



The physical distance between each type shows you how close they are psychologically.

For example, notice that the type that is greatest distance from the Realistic type is Social. When you read the description for these two types, you understand why: their personalities are opposites!

You will notice that same is true for the other types. Conventional is furthest from Artistic; Investigative is the greatest distance from Enterprising; and the personalities of each of these pairs are opposites.

And, it is also true that the personality types next to each other on the hexagon, are the closest psychologically.

As you can see, the notion of types and the hexagon is a powerful concept . . . part of a potent theory. You will be surprised at how many situations you will be able to apply it -- not just choosing a career.

Yes, it is a simplification of personality. But the insights it will give you more than compensate for its limitations.

For example, from what you have learned, you will be able to make a good guess about the personality of the worker below (assume he likes his job):

- What do you think is his personality type?
- What are his interests? Skills? Values?
- What personality type is he least like?
- What does he likely avoid?



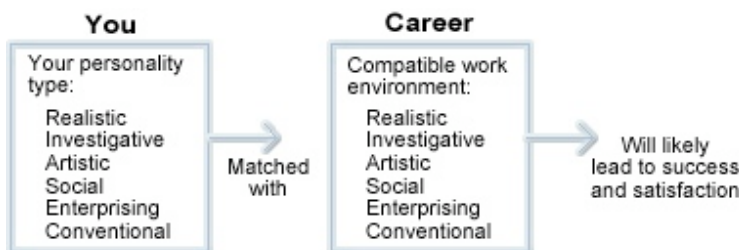
See answers bottom page 4.

Holland's theory describes how these six personality types are related to job success and satisfaction.

Take your time in reading the following statements -- think about how they apply to your life.

Holland's Theory Summarized in Six Statements

1. Most people are one of six personality types: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional.
2. People of the same personality tend to "flock together." For example, Artistic people are attracted to making friends and working with Artistic people; Social people are drawn to other Social people, and so on. *(Have you noticed this?)*
3. People of the same personality type working together in a job create a work environment that fits their type. For example, when Artistic persons are together on a job, they create a work environment -- one that rewards creative thinking and behavior -- an Artistic environment. *(Can you think of a situation where this is true?)*
4. There are six basic types of work environments: [Realistic](#), [Investigative](#), [Artistic](#), [Social](#), [Enterprising](#), and [Conventional](#). Be sure to click on these links to learn about them at our website.
5. People who choose to work in an environment similar to their personality type are more likely to be successful and satisfied.



6. How you act and feel at work depends to a large extent on your workplace environment. If you are working with people who have a personality type like yours, you will be able to do many of the things they can do, and you will feel most comfortable with them.

How are these six ideas related to the scores you receive on the Career Key? It means that you probably should choose a career whose type is the same as, or similar to, your personality type.

For example, imagine that your highest score on the Career Key is for the Realistic type. Looking at the table below, you can see that the most compatible job environment is Realistic. This suggests

Your Personality Type	Compatible Work Environments	
	Most Compatible	Compatible
Realistic	Realistic	Investigative & Conventional
Investigative	Investigative	Realistic & Artistic
Artistic	Artistic	Investigative & Social
Social	Social	Artistic & Enterprising
Enterprising	Enterprising	Social & Conventional
Conventional	Conventional	Enterprising & Realistic

that you choose from occupations that are in the Realistic group. Or, you might choose from those that fall in the Investigative or Conventional category.

Most people, in reality, are a combination of types -- like Realistic-Investigative, or Artistic-Social.



Therefore, you will probably want to consider occupations in more than one category.

If your two strongest personality types are Realistic and Social, Investigative and Enterprising, or Artistic and Conventional (opposites on the hexagon) -- [read the following](#) at our website.

In summary, you are most likely to choose a satisfying career if you choose one that fits your personality.

More Applications

Besides making a career choice, you can use your test scores and Holland's theory in other ways:

1. Choosing a course, training program, college major, or college to enter;
2. Understanding your past work/school experience -- your level of satisfaction and success; and
3. Analyzing social interactions: how and why you or others feel and act when in different Holland environments.
4. You can apply all of these insights with the confidence that you are using a valid test of Holland's types -- one of the few on the Internet ([*Beware of Harmful Career Tests*](#)).



If you are young, keep in mind that the personality of most people crystallize in the late teens, early 20's. It is normal to be uncertain about your abilities,

interests, and career direction.

This is the time to explore your interests and possibilities, try yourself out in different situations. The main thing is to keep your options open and get a good education. Be sure to read the many articles at our website that apply to you.



Adults will find, many articles at our website related to adults on such topics as *Job Satisfaction* and *Changing Careers*.

All of the articles are based on the best career counseling practices and science. They are concise and practical.



Is entrepreneurship or self-employment a career option? To explore this choice, go to our website, the Self-Employment Key™ at www.self-employmentkey.org

A Good Career Decision

Our goal is to help you make a good career decision, one that you will not regret. Research studies show that there are four basic steps. If you follow these steps, you are less likely to make a mistake. The more steps you leave out, the greater the chance that you will. Read [*High-Quality Decisions*](#) at our website to learn more.

The Author



Lawrence K. Jones is President of Career Key, Inc. and Professor Emeritus, North Carolina State University. He earned his Master's degree from the University of Pennsylvania and his Ph.D. in counseling psychology from the University of Missouri. He received the annual Professional Development Award from the American Counseling Association, and he is a National Certified Counselor. [More...](#)

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Answer to questions on pg. 2: This is a construction worker looking at a blueprint with a tape measure in his hand -- most likely a Realistic type. He is least like the Social type in his interests, values, abilities, and self-view -- and avoids the things they like to do.