Discover your strengths
with the Realise2 card sort

Being able to identify and understand your strengths can help you to identify career ideas that maximise use of your strengths and minimise use of weaknesses. Research from the field of positive psychology has shown that people who use their strengths more, and minimise use of their weaknesses, tend to be happier, more confident, less stressed and perform better at work.

What are strengths and weaknesses?
The Centre for Applied Positive Psychology (CAPP) has developed a strengths quadrant model to help people identify their strengths, learned behaviours, unrealised strengths and weaknesses. A strength is not the same as a skill, as the definitions below explain:

- **Strength**: Something you are good at doing (a skill), enjoy using and feel energised by. You may feel fulfilled when you use it, like the ‘real you’ and that you could use it constantly without becoming tired
- **Learned behaviour**: Something that you can do well (a skill) but which does not energise and you may find it draining to use. You may continue doing it because others tell you that you’re good at it and so you believe it to be a strength
- **Weakness**: Something that you don’t perform well at and which also leaves you drained, or de-energised. It may also leave you feeling demotivated, negative and disengaged
- **Unrealised Strengths**: Things that energise us, and that we could perform well in, but have not had much opportunity to use. Unrealised strengths are the areas of greatest potential for development

The aim is to understand how to identify career opportunities that would allow you to:
- Marshall and make the most of your strengths
- Minimise use of weaknesses
- Moderate use of learned behaviours
- Maximise your unrealised strengths by looking for opportunities to use and practice them

Discover your strengths
Use the pack of cards, available for reference in Careers and Placements, to help you identify your strengths and unrealised strengths.

Instructions:
- Take the pack of strengths cards and lay them out in front of you, with the picture side facing upwards.
- Work through the pack and read the description of each strength. Select all that show things you ENJOY doing
- From that selection, now choose cards that show things you are GOOD AT
- Now try to choose up to 7 that you feel are most important to you

Action:
- Consider how you use these strengths at present and make a record of some examples
- Use the Strengths Families list to identify whether your strengths fall into particular categories eg communicating, thinking
• Use The Strengths Book (Linley et al), available for reference in Careers, to find out more about your chosen strengths and find suggestions of occupations where those strengths might be used (this is an indication rather than a comprehensive list)
• Think about your career plans (if you have any) and whether they would use these strengths
• If you are unsure about your career plans you can discuss potential career ideas in a Careers Advice appointment (bookable via Careers Gateway)

Discover your unrealised strengths
Instructions:
• Review all the cards again, including the ones that you selected the first time but didn’t include amongst your most important strengths
• Select any that you are GOOD AT and ENJOY but DON’T USE VERY OFTEN
• Select any that you ENJOY and think that you COULD BECOME GOOD AT with practice

Action:
• Consider how and when you have used your unrealised strengths, why you feel they could be strengths and why you want to develop them?
• Now consider how you could practise and develop your unrealised strengths at University (eg opportunities on your course, training, work experience, hobbies or interests)
• Record any strengths you wish to develop or discuss (with your Supervisor or a Careers Consultant)

Discover your learned behaviours and weaknesses
If you wish to identify learned behaviours and weaknesses then repeat the above exercises selecting the relevant cards.
You can take an online strengths assessment and receive a full report, but there is a charge to the supplier for this (currently £10 +VAT for an introductory report, or £30 +VAT for an expert report) www.strengthsprofile.com/

Strengths and career planning
• Research career options carefully. Use www.york.ac.uk/careers, www.prospects.ac.uk and our information sheets on Career Planning and Explore your personality as starting points (available at www.york.ac.uk/careers/infosheets). Research the nature of the work, and the skills and personal qualities required to do the job effectively. Consider whether these match you strengths and limit use of learned behaviours and weaknesses (note that it’s often impossible to avoid all use of these behaviours). Discuss your ideas with a Careers Consultant
• Consider how you could use your strengths in job applications, interviews and assessment centres
• First Year undergraduates can take part in the York Strengths Programme (www.york.ac.uk/york-strengths), which involves exploring personal strengths via York Strengths Discovery (an online exercise) and the York Strengths Development Day (involving small group activities)

Understanding your strengths and weaknesses should help you to choose a career that you will find enjoyable and fulfilling. It will also help you in the recruitment process. A number of employers have now adopted a strengths based approach to all or part of their recruitment and selection processes (eg Nestlé, Aviva, Unilever, EY, and Thomson Reuters).

Further Information
• The Strengths Book, Alex Linley et al (available for reference in Careers)
• Average to A+, Alex Linley (available for reference in Careers)
• http://ukcareers.ey.com/graduates/insights/assessing-your-strengths/
• www.viacharacter.org

Please note: The websites listed here are not intended to represent a comprehensive list. Careers and Placements cannot be held responsible for the content of external websites.