A background graphic consisting of a network of interconnected nodes and lines. The nodes are represented by small circles in various shades of brown and orange, connected by thin lines. The overall structure is a complex web of connections, with some nodes having more connections than others. The background is a gradient from dark grey at the top to light grey at the bottom.

# The Dangers with Career Assessments

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bridgeprep



Choosing a career is not a simple feat, especially for students. Often students are not even aware of all the options the world has to offer. There are tens of thousands of possible career options for students. Narrowing the possible options is a daunting task for any student. Career assessments evaluate student's interests, skills, values, and motivations to match the student with the ideal career. Students should focus on the career that fits with them on multiple dimensions.

Career assessments are great because they efficiently provide a career recommendation. While a quick fix in the form of a test might seem like a great idea, it is good to have realistic expectations and be aware of potential downsides. Before we get excited, we must take a step back and ask ourselves do we really want students making life decisions solely based on the results of an assessment. Assessments are good but too often this is the only resource that students use to assist with career readiness.

## 01 Making a decision too early

Students often focus on a career without really understanding what the career entails. This premature decision has consequences later. Early on students should concentrate on building skills and exploring careers. This way they can make a more informed decision.

According to National Center for Education Statistics 80% of college students change their major at least 1 time. As you can see students are changing their minds in many cases because they decided before understanding what is required and developing necessary skills.



## 02 Skill development is ignored

Skill development gets lost in this process. Students go through the assessment, find their results, then brag about their newly found career path. This is a lost opportunity. The student should really explore the industry, develop critical skills, and apply that in some form. This serves two purposes 1) students will be more prepared at the next level and 2) students can better assess a fit.



### 03 Creates vulnerable students

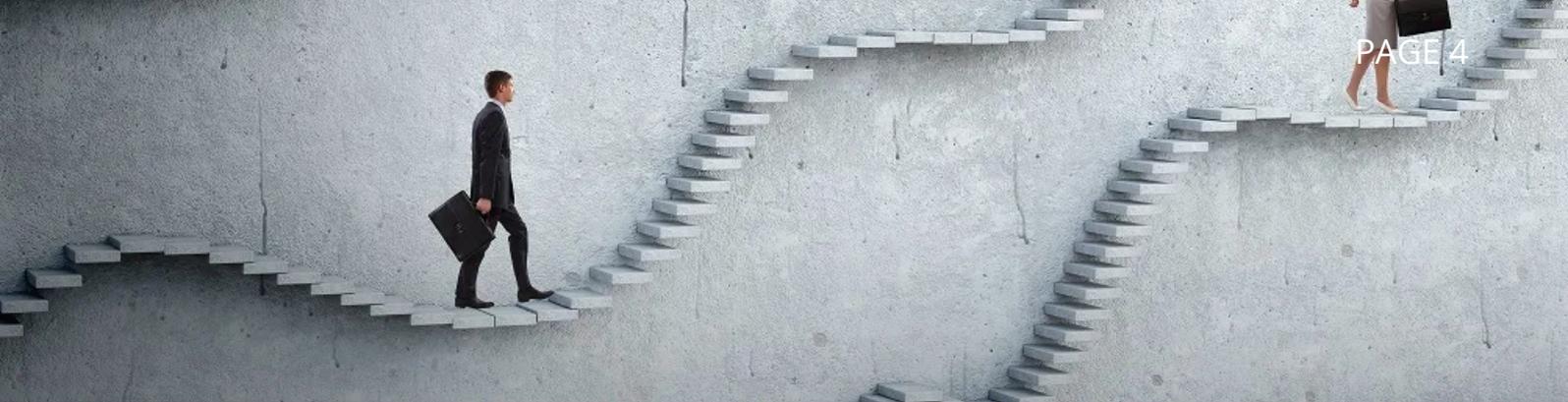


Almost all assessments recommend a career and then stop there. Now that students have the “ideal career” students feel like they can put things on cruise control. Since the student is not offered any information on the career to assess if it is a good fit the student feels confident in their choice.

This leaves students in a very vulnerable position. As a result, you find an interesting assessment with no action, which leads to undesired outcomes.

### 04 Too specific

Students evolve and change over time. As students grow and develop, often their interests change. Career assessments should identify broad areas to further encourage exploration. The student through research, talking to individuals and developing skills should select a desired career, not an assessment. This results in a much more informed decision.



## 05 Fixation on the goal

Yesterday the student wanted to be a teacher, today they want to be an engineer and tomorrow they want to be a doctor. There is nothing wrong with that. People change their minds all the time.

Students will get fixated on the recommended career without considering that the results are based on how they felt that day. Career development is a lifelong process where your focus will change based on skill, interest, and experience progression.

## 06 Remember it's just a test

Students should keep in mind that it is a test. All tests have limitations. The results are only as valid as the answers to the questions. Test takers may unknowingly answer questions inaccurately. Students may also answer questions based on what their parents want or based on how they think they should answer. An inaccurate recommendation can leave test-takers confused, frustrated, and disappointed.

Assessments are great tools when paired with exploration, planning and skill development. Assessments alone are extremely dangerous because it wastes time, creates blind spots, and places students in an unnecessarily vulnerable position. From a best practice the assessment should provide direction not absolutes. Also, it should be paired with an opportunity for the student to build skill and apply learnings. With this approach even if the student changes their mind, they have acquired skills and is changing based on actual experiences.