CLIFTON STRENGTHS FOR STUDENTS

Your strengths journey begins here

FROM GALLUP
TO COLLEGE STUDENTS EVERYWHERE WHO WANT TO APPLY THEIR STRENGTHS TO CHANGE THE WORLD
Inventor of CliftonStrengths® and recognized as the Father of Strengths-Based Psychology by an American Psychological Association Presidential Commendation
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Part One:
Your College,
Your Strengths,
Your Journey
CLIFTONSTRENGTHS

To get you started, this book includes an access code to take the CliftonStrengths assessment. This unique code is inside the front cover of the book. After you complete the assessment, you’ll receive a report that lists your top five themes of talent (your “Signature Themes”) and access to resources to help you better understand your unique talents.

Knowing what your leading themes are is the first step to turning them into strengths. After you learn your top five themes, look them up in the second half of this book. For each theme, you will find several action items, which include questions, ideas and suggestions you can use to develop your talents in each theme and start turning them into strengths.

Understanding how to use your unique strengths will make your college journey — and the rest of your life — happier, more fulfilled and more successful. That’s the point of developing your strengths. It may be the most useful thing you’ll ever learn.
Strengths-Based Philosophy

You are different from the people sitting around you. In fact, you are so unique that the chances of you having the same top five talent themes as someone else are about one in 275,000. The odds of having the same top five themes in the exact same order is one in 33 million.

Because of your talent themes, your experiences and your environment, you look at life in a unique way. Many people think they need to be exactly like someone else, whether that’s a celebrity, some other towering figure of success, or somebody they know and admire. But trying to be someone else doesn’t work. Becoming more of who you already are is the key to your success.

Who you are is a gift given to you at birth — you are born with a set of talents that nobody else has. Turning your unique talents into strengths requires skills, knowledge, conscious effort and deliberate action — all applied to the things that matter to you. While success means different things to different people, everyone achieves their version of success by fully developing and applying their strengths. Nearly 70 years of research has proven it.

In the early 1950s, Don Clifton, a popular psychology instructor and researcher at the University of Nebraska, started thinking about all the ways the field of psychology had to describe what is wrong with people — medically, psychologically
and socially — and the very few ways it had to identify what is *right* with people.

Clifton began researching why some people become great at what they do and others don’t. For one project with ROTC students in the mid-1950s, he looked closely at the common factors of successful people. The study kept expanding, and in 1998, Clifton, who was then chairman of Gallup, sought to invent a common language and talent themes to describe what people do well.

So Gallup researchers mined their database, which contained more than 100,000 talent-based interviews at the time, and looked for patterns. They examined specific questions that Gallup had used in studies of successful executives, salespeople, customer service representatives, teachers, doctors, lawyers, students, nurses and people in several other fields.

Through this process, Clifton and Gallup researchers established the 34 themes of talent. Researchers then developed the first version of the CliftonStrengths assessment to measure these distinct talents. As of this writing, more than 15 million people have taken the assessment. And the American Psychological Association officially gave Clifton a presidential commendation as the Father of Strengths Psychology.

What CliftonStrengths actually measures is talent, not strength. The assessment is called “CliftonStrengths” instead of “CliftonTalent” because the ultimate goal is to build a
true strength, and talent is the primary component in the strengths formula.
THE BIG SIX

To better understand what makes a college experience great for students like you, in 2014, Gallup and Purdue University began measuring the impact of the experiences students have in college on their later lives. This study of more than 30,000 U.S. college graduates, called the Gallup-Purdue Index, assesses alumni’s perceptions of their undergraduate experiences and how those experiences relate to their engagement and job quality later in life.

The Gallup-Purdue Index shows that there are six key collegiate experiences — the “big six” — that are critical to being engaged at work. Among college graduates who had all six of these experiences, 65%, on average, were engaged. Of the alumni who didn’t have any of the big six experiences, only 25% were engaged.
The Big Six: Internships and Careers

Experience 5 Had an internship or job that allowed you to apply what you were learning in the classroom

From childhood on, well-meaning people have been asking, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” The pressure to make the right career choice only intensifies as you head to college. Choosing a career is a daunting task, and you’re not alone if you struggle with it. Some people avoid making a choice as long as possible. Others choose whatever job turns up or whatever career they think will make their parents happy.

For many years, Gallup has been asking employed adults, “Do you like what you do each day?” Given that adults employed full time in the U.S. report working an average of 47 hours per week, this might be the most basic yet important question to ask. Unfortunately, only 20% of people give a strong “yes” in response to this question. Only 13% of employees say they find their work meaningful, and a mere 20% think they’re in jobs that use their talents.

You may not know the best career choice for you right now. However, an internship or job that allows you to apply what you are learning lets you explore a career so you can discover the things you might love about it as well as the things you might not. You get to decide what’s best for you, and these
opportunities can help you figure out what that is. What’s more, alumni say that having a job or internship in college that allowed them to apply what they learned in the classroom played a part in their short-term and long-term success.

Isabella started college with a pre-med major. But during her junior year, after a semester-long internship at a hospital, she realized that while she loved biology, she just wasn’t drawn to becoming a doctor. Her adviser suggested that she could have a fulfilling career in biological research. So after graduate school, Isabella got a great job in a research center.

Three years later, Isabella was asked to lead a team that would explore small research projects and dissertations that have an impact on a larger scale. With Significance, Learner and Individualization in her top five, Isabella discovered how much she enjoyed getting to know her team members as individuals, and she loved that they could achieve so much together.

Although laboratory work fascinated her, Isabella realized she had the talent for — and got the biggest rush from — leadership. So she went back to school, got an MBA and now runs a biotech research company. When she graduated from high school, she had no idea that any of the jobs she had after college even existed, but an internship and knowledge of her strengths gave her the perspective she needed to be successful.

The opportunity to choose your career, rather than taking whatever job you can get to pay the bills, is one of the reasons
you are in school. But that doesn’t mean you have to have your entire career path plotted on the first day of your freshman year. College gives you an outstanding opportunity to match your innate talents and strengths to your interests and apply them to hands-on experiences on campus.
YOUR STRENGTHS AND LEADERSHIP

As you look beyond the experiences you have in college and start thinking about your career, get involved in leadership roles on campus. Employers look for leadership experience, and they will ask about it in job interviews. Maybe that means becoming the president of a club. Maybe you would prefer a behind-the-scenes role. Leadership isn’t restricted to the position you have. You can lead from whatever role you have in a club or organization.

The good news is, you can apply any CliftonStrengths theme to leadership roles and responsibilities because they are all useful — even the themes that don’t seem like it at first. For example, you can use Relator to understand team members’ points of view so you can guide them better and include them more. You can use Input to collect all the information you need so you can make well-informed decisions. Context can show you where your group’s purpose fits in the larger campus environment. So when you assume leadership roles in college, you can develop leadership strengths regardless of your top themes of talent.

Also, if you get the chance to manage others, take it. Managing people can be one of the most important aspects of
leadership. Gallup has found that the most effective managers are those who capitalize on their greatest talents and consciously use them as they manage others.

If you look at great leaders such as Winston Churchill or Mahatma Gandhi, you will notice more differences than similarities — and the differences are what defined them. Churchill’s bold and commanding leadership succeeded in mobilizing a war-ravaged nation. Gandhi’s leadership during and after India’s struggle for independence was based on peaceful resistance — the polar opposite of Churchill.

Both men knew their strengths and used them wisely. That’s more unusual than you might think. All too often, leaders are blind to the obvious — their own personality. People who don’t know their own strengths and weaknesses can develop self-concepts that are miles away from reality. Gallup has spoken with several leaders who claim to be great at developing their people, but their employees tell a very different story.

Although less noticeable than blind spots for weaknesses, blind spots for strengths are harmful too. Unfortunately, many leaders haven’t discovered where they have the most potential for growth.

But you can. You’ve already started. And college gives you a magnificent opportunity to gain leadership experience that can lead to a more engaging career where you can use your strengths. The key is to be intentional. Look for every opportunity to refine your greatest talents in leadership roles.
STARTING THE JOURNEY

When you know your strengths, you know the value you bring to the world around you. You know when and where you’re at your best. When you know your strengths, you have a holistic view of all the people and experiences that shape your life on campus and beyond.

SO NOW, IT’S UP TO YOU. IT’S YOUR STORY, YOUR JOURNEY AND YOUR FUTURE.
Part Two: CliftonStrengths Themes in Action
The following pages list all 34 CliftonStrengths themes of talent and action items for each theme. These action items will give you deeper insight into your top talent themes — and maybe even help you identify blind spots — so you can make the most of your college experience by using your strengths.

- Achiever
- Activator
- Adaptability
- Analytical
- Arranger
- Belief
- Command
- Communication
- Competition
- Connectedness
- Consistency
- Context
- Deliberative
- Developer
- Discipline
- Empathy
- Focus
- Futuristic
- Harmony
- Ideation
- Includer
- Individualization
- Input
- Intellecction
- Learner
- Maximizer
- Positivity
- Relator
- Responsibility
- Restorative
- Self-Assurance
- Significance
- Strategic
- Woo
Your Achiever theme helps explain your drive. Achiever describes a constant need for achievement. You feel as if every day starts at zero. By the end of the day you must achieve something tangible in order to feel good about yourself. And by “every day” you mean every single day — workdays, weekends, vacations. No matter how much you may feel you deserve a day of rest, if the day passes without some form of achievement, no matter how small, you will feel dissatisfied. You have an internal fire burning inside you. It pushes you to do more, to achieve more. After each accomplishment is reached, the fire dwindles for a moment, but very soon it rekindles itself, forcing you toward the next accomplishment. Your relentless need for achievement might not be logical. It might not even be focused. But it will always be with you. As an Achiever you must learn to live with this whisper of discontent. It does have its benefits. It brings you the energy you need to work long hours without burning out. It is the jolt you can always count on to get you started on new tasks, new challenges. It is the power supply that causes you to set the pace and define the levels of productivity for your work group. It is the theme that keeps you moving.
Achiever Action Items

- Look for internships that will draw on your deep reservoir of internal motivation, stamina and determination.

- How often do you stop to celebrate your success before worrying about what’s next? Remember to acknowledge your accomplishments — finishing a big project or acing an exam — before you move on to the next thing on your long to-do list.

- You are good at simplifying overwhelming projects into attainable steps, and that’s a talent many groups need. Pay attention to bulletin boards around campus, and look for opportunities to join teams that need your ability to make complex tasks achievable.

- Join groups and clubs with members who have a strong work ethic. Working with others who share your drive for accomplishment will intensify your Achiever talents. You will challenge each other to excel and make the group stronger.

- Use your energy as efficiently as possible, and take regular study breaks so you can connect with others in person. Partner with someone with strong Discipline or Focus talents who can help you sort through your priorities.
Intentionally form and nurture friendships with students in your classes or residence hall who are as driven as you are. These relationships will make you feel challenged and alive, and that will bring out the best in you.

You likely have a to-do list for every day, week and month. Be careful not to take on too many goals at once. You need to be able to sustain your energy until you graduate, so try to pace yourself.

What financial aid will you need this semester? How much debt do you have to carry to complete your degree? Create an itemized list to manage your debt accumulation and personal expenses. Every semester, review your financial to-do list to figure out if you are on track. Seeing the progress you make toward your financial goals over time will satisfy your Achiever talents.

When you are working on a project or studying for long periods of time, be sure to take breaks. Get up and walk around to recharge. Your inner drive may cause you to lose track of time when you are working hard. If so, schedule breaks so you don’t burn out.

Even though you may feel like you don’t need as much sleep as others, adequate sleep is essential to
your health and is linked to learning retention and cognitive ability. You likely have a lot going on in your classes and on your own time. Make sure you get enough sleep so you will achieve everything on your list and more.

- At the next activity fair on campus, focus on clubs and organizations that have the kind of mission and values you are drawn to — those with ambitious goals or projects and measurable outcomes.

- Make the most of your determination by taking on a challenging volunteer opportunity. Explore organizations on and off campus that could benefit from your intense efforts and that link to your long-term career goals.

- Your Achiever talents will flourish in roles that challenge you and reward your hard work. Look for leadership opportunities on campus that offer career-related experience or that will add to your personal development — as well as bolster your résumé.
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