

CAREER OPTIONS THAT MATCH YOUR PERSONALITY

THE HOLLAND CODES



WORKBLOOM

The Holland Codes or RIASEC: Career Options That Match Your Personality

by Marquis Matson



Searching for a job can be like a time consuming job in itself. Whether you are just beginning your career or you are making a shift in the path you are already on, it is helpful to have a clear idea of exactly where to focus your search. Even more helpful in this endeavor is to know how your own personality traits and lifestyle preferences can help guide your search. The Holland Codes or the Holland Occupational Themes (RIASEC), a set of career clusters organized by personality traits, can be a helpful tool in focusing your search.

The Theory Behind the Holland Codes

John Holland was an American Psychologist that dedicated his professional life to studying personality and the workplace. As a result he created what are now known as the Holland Codes, a set of six major personality types that can indicate a person's general interests, work habits and lifestyle choices. Once the codes were published in 1958 they became a popular tool in career counseling and guidance, and are still used nowadays.

Holland argued that personality traits are incredibly important when selecting a job because they will help determine whether or not you thrive in a position. A job is essentially, according to him, an extension of your personality. Though he argues that your personality traits are important in finding a good career fit, your personality cannot be summed up by one trait. Instead, he recommended that we use this assessment tool in order to identify *tendencies* and *clusters* to help guide our search.

As an assessment tool we can highlight our natural tendencies and use this information to guide our career paths. Its original conception was in order to help guide this drive in young adults but has since been made even more useful for individuals no matter the point of their job search. This is so because of the Career Cluster Map, which offers a list of countless jobs that fit with almost any combination of personality traits identified.

Finding a Reputable RIASEC Assessment Tool

With a quick Internet search you will likely find a long list of websites that offer an assessment tool under the guise of the Holland Codes. The most reputable—and free—Holland Code assessment can be found online at The Occupational Information Network ([O*Net](#)). The U.S. Department of Labor adopted Holland's theory and then created their Interest Profiler, an assessment made compatible with the Holland Codes. The U.S. Department of Labor made it available to the general public since the late 90s as a way to help its citizens focus their job search while seeking employment.

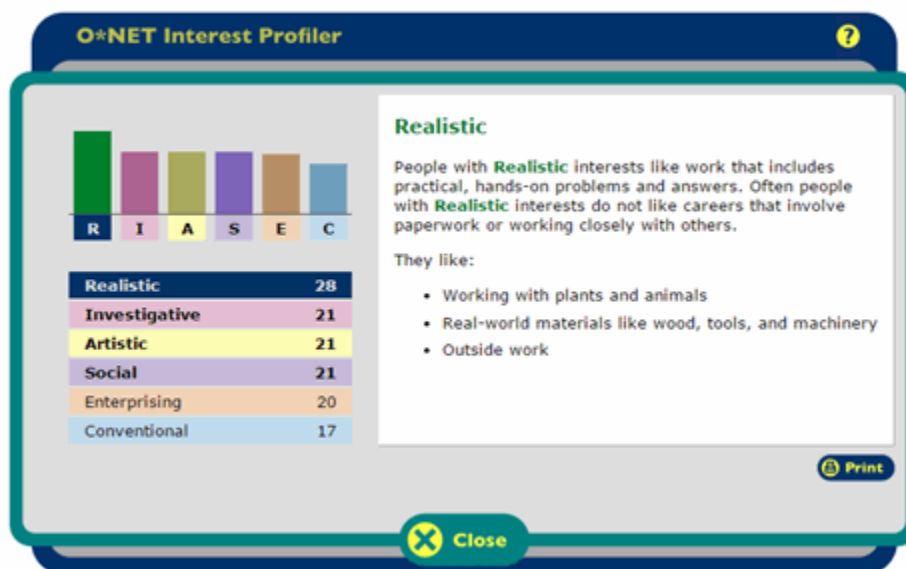
The assessment itself can take anywhere from 10 to 30 minutes, depending on your own pace. The questions are not meant to be considered logistically, as in the time commitment and salaries associated with your potential career, but instead are meant to be considered simply based on how much fun you might have in each position described. By being honest about yourself and which activities interest you the assessment is able to make more appropriate lifestyle matches. This is truly where the assessment carries its most value: it is able to highlight potential career matches without the added weight of salary and expectations. In this way you are exposed to many more possibilities for your job search.

You may also find [similar assessments available on university websites](#), which can also be regarded as trustworthy tools. These, however, are created with the undergraduate in mind and so may use language that is more supportive of choosing a major more so than choosing a job. While these particular assessments can be helpful they may not be the best option for you if you are not currently a university student. Even so, regardless of where you stand in your search this assessment can still work for you.

The RIASEC Personality Types

Once you have completed the assessment you will be able to see your scores in each personality trait. In general the top three scores are used in order to guide your search. Just like you wouldn't say that your personality could be summed up in one trait, your single highest score cannot guide your job search. Each trait offers different qualities and skills that can be used in your professional life and so are matched accordingly.

After you have completed the assessment you will come to a screen like the one below. The O*Net Interest Profiler does a fantastic job matching the traits to potential jobs but it doesn't give much detail on what each personality trait entails. Below is a brief description of each trait to help give you a better idea of what your scores can tell you about yourself.



Realistic (*Doers*) – People that are identified as “realistic” are generally more independent and stable than their peers. They tend to prefer working with *things* rather than people and value the outdoors and nature in their work.

Investigative (*Thinkers*) – Investigative thinkers are curious individuals that prefer *concepts* to people as well as experiments, investigation and methodology in their work.

Artistic (*Creators*) – Artistic people are naturally creative, sensitive and innovative. These people tend to work well in the field of arts but also thrive in other areas that lend to abstract thinking and concepts.

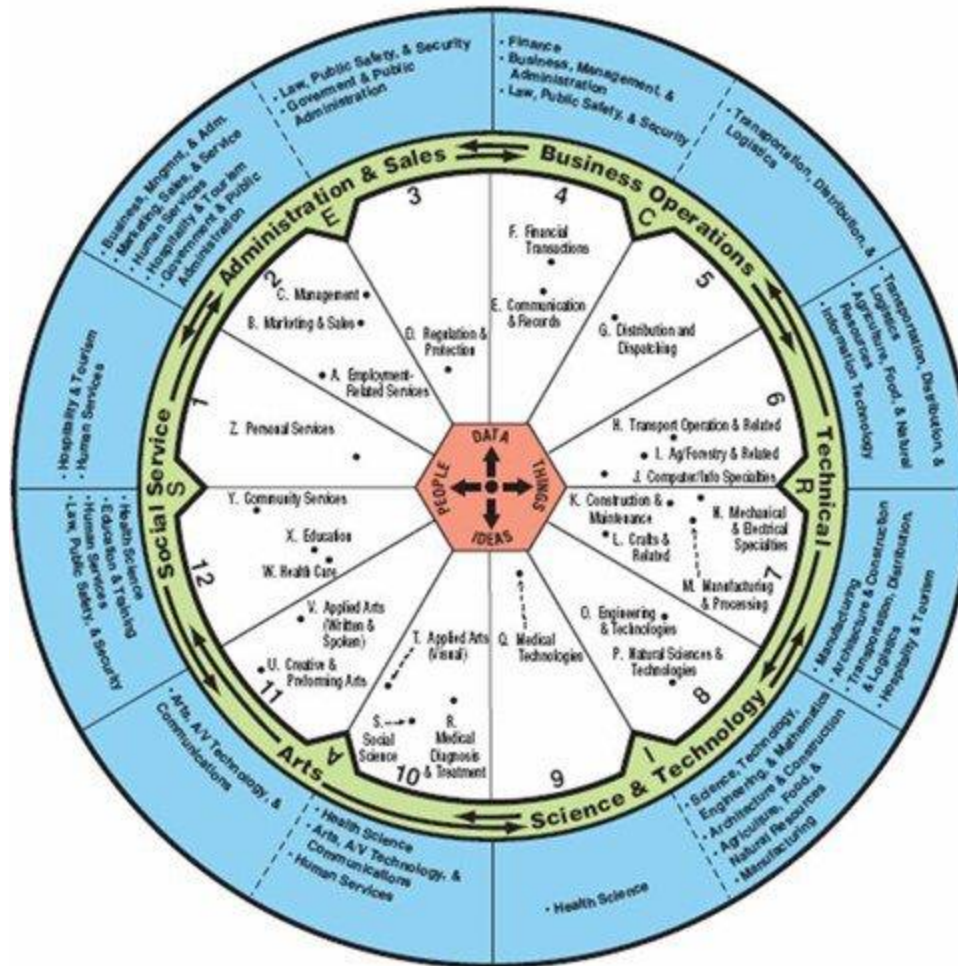
Social (*Helpers*) – The helpers of the world are indeed kind and generous but also tend to use these traits in order to help benefit others. We can see these social helpers in the roles of teachers, counselors and in non-profit capacities.

Enterprising (*Persuaders*) – The enterprising individuals of the world thrive in leadership positions because they tend to be outgoing, ambitious and charismatic. These traits combined with their innate internal motivation makes for powerful leaders.

Conventional (*Organizers*) – Conventional thinkers are logical and efficient workers that prefer practicality to creativity in any task. Order and structure are hallmark traits for this group, which makes them excellent in math-related work alongside clerical work.

The Holland Career Cluster Map

The main attraction to this assessment tool might be the Career Cluster Map. After viewing your results from the assessment you still may not have an idea of how to use the information to search for a job. The map, however, can help give you very specific career matches with which your personality traits will work well. Even more helpful is that the traits are organized in clusters so that you aren't limited to a job search that only satisfies one trait. Instead, you can search for jobs that will utilize all of your greatest skills according to your top three traits as scored in the assessment.



The map, in the shape of a wheel, is populated with different clusters that correspond with the Holland Codes. Each code, or personality type, has distinct characteristics that vary from each of the other codes or types. The wheel, as pictured above, uses these codes in order to organize careers and fields of interest in a way that matches identified personality traits.

On the outer rim of the wheel, where it is blue in the picture above, are the general career clusters, such as “health science” or “education” for example. You might notice that these broad clusters are naturally grouped into different fields of work such as sciences, arts, technology and so on. The green ring identifies these fields of interest while also matching them up with the six Holland Codes, RIASEC, in order to help guide you to your general cluster. Based on your scores you can generally see which cluster would be the best fit for you, professionally.

As you move closer to the center of the wheel, however, the career details become more specific. Depending on your scores with the assessment you may notice that you have more than one highest score. If this is the case, then notice how the wheel is arranged so that there is possible overlap, meaning that there are some jobs that are a good match for multiple traits.

Most job hunts begin with a very broad search in a particular field, making it a needle-in-the-haystack sort of endeavor. With this assessment tool and the corresponding wheel, however, you can begin to learn about very specific and possibly very new opportunities for you as you begin your job search.

How to Use the Holland Codes for Your Job Search

As a job seeker it can oftentimes be overwhelming when searching for a job in a broad field that you are qualified for. Psychology, for example, is a popular field that many people may be qualified for. This field, however, is so much more expansive than the highly educated psychologists that many of us immediately think of. In fact, the field of psychology can include counseling roles as well as roles in business management, such as human resources. These opportunities may be otherwise dismissed without a tool, such as the Holland Codes assessment, to highlight their relevance.

Using the Holland Codes and assessment can help you not only pay better attention to your personality traits and corresponding work environments but it can also list a set of jobs that perhaps you had not previously considered. Furthermore, this assessment can also help you identify some quality traits that you possess that may have otherwise been overlooked. In terms of searching for a job, this is invaluable information that can help you build your cover letter, as well. Use this assessment tool to strengthen your job search and render more meaningful matches.

RIASEC Personality Type: Realistic (Doers)



John Holland formulated an assessment tool to help determine dominating personality traits in a person in order to help make job searches more meaningful. With his assessment tool he came up with the Holland Codes, a set of six main personality types, based on the patterns he found in the general population at the time that he created the assessment. The codes are often quickly identified by the acronym RIASEC, with each letter representing a different personality type.

The first of the **RIASEC Holland Codes** is the *Realistic* type. People that are identified as “realistic” are generally more independent and stable than their peers. Just like the name suggests, those with this personality type think in very straightforward and logistical terms. In fact, because these personality types prefer to work and live in very technical and realistic terms they generally avoid social situations where logic and reality tend to be more fluid.

Characteristics of the Realistic Personality Type

The *Realistic* types of people have earned the nickname as the “doers” because they are frequently drawn to problem-solving tasks. They tend to value very practical things that are based in reality such as things that you can see and touch right in front of you. Plants, animals, tools and mechanics are very comfortable subjects of study for the

doers as they are clearly defined objects that are easily observable. As such, they tend to prefer working with *things* rather than people and value the outdoors and nature in their work.

As a friend you might describe the *Realistic* type as reliable, down to earth, sensible and practical. These doers also tend to be more adventurous and physically strong than others because they feel very comfortable using their bodies to explore the world. While they are very cautious and reserved, typically, you won't find them missing out on activities because of these things. Instead, they use their cautious nature in order to better explore the world.

As a *Realistic* type, yourself, you might describe yourself as persistent, self-reliant, handy and practical. Things tend to appear very simple, as well, to you as most things have a clear solution or explanation. If something does not have a clear solution or explanation then you might find yourself avoiding it altogether as a *Realistic* person.

This type of person seeks out friends that also have these qualities, as they don't have the patience or understanding for nonsensical behavior. They gravitate toward people that demonstrate common sense, dependability and practicality. Because of their typically quiet nature, however, you may not hear them complain too loudly in the face of disorder. You might, however, sense some discomfort!

Preferred Work Environments for Realistic Personality Types

Most people thrive in an environment that supports their personality types.

For *Realistic* employees it is usually a very organized environment that highlights their best personality traits. Organization and clear lines of authority make working a simple and straightforward endeavor for these doers. Outdoor positions with routine and a clear purpose are very attractive work environments, as well, for this type.

Typical Occupations for Realistic Personality Types

A person that most identifies with the *Realistic* personality type would thrive most in jobs related to engineering and manufacturing where there are clear guidelines as well as measurable goals. Order and logic are paramount in these positions and are also valued in *Realistic* people. For an outdoor position they match well with forestry and wildlife related positions. Our national parks in the United States offer the perfect working environment for someone that craves order as well as physical activity.

If a doer finds himself or herself in a job unlike any of these then it may be an aggravating situation, to be sure. For this reason we can usually find them in the work environments described above where structure, order and purpose are the key characteristics. Similarly, employers in these particular fields are searching specifically for these personality types to fill their positions, as they are known to provide reliable quality work.

RIASEC Personality Type: Investigative (Thinkers)



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The second personality type in **Holland's personality types** is the *Investigative* thinker. These people are commonly called the “thinkers” of whatever group they find themselves in as they notoriously think things through until a solution is found. Though they value logic and order they also tend to differ from the *Realistic* type in that they prefer to use their investigative qualities in order to explore more innovative ideas. In fact, though they are seemingly on a quest to answer unknown questions they also prefer loosely structured environments without too strict of rules or regulations. This lack of rules allows them to curiously and passionately explore exactly what they want and for as far as their inquisitive brains will take them.

Characteristics of Investigative Personality Types

These thinkers are typically more curious about what mechanisms make things work versus how things are working. The *Investigative* type would prefer to understand how things function or come into existence, much like a scientist will work hard to understand gravity or cancer. While these personality types may use this natural drive to understand something in a way that serves others, it's not always the case. In the example of an *Investigative* type seeking to understand cancer, this person may not necessarily seek a cure. The thrill of the task is truly to understand it.

As a friend or a lover the *Investigative* person is usually described as very analytical, intellectual and complex. At the same time they can be viewed as very thoughtful, curious, introspective and insightful as well. This is because while they are leading regular lives they are also always analyzing their surroundings, seeking answers and as a by-product gaining insight.

As an *Investigative* type you might find yourself irritated with limits and mainstream ideas and trends. The thinkers of the world don't usually fit in with the masses very well, though this is not a bad thing. Instead, the thinkers can be found tinkering away at a task or abstract idea that allows for expansion, which is incredibly valuable in our ever-changing technological world.

Preferred Work Environments for Investigative Personality Types

As a very curious person the *Investigative* type will seek out environments that allow them both constant stimulation as well as freedom to explore. They prefer to be working with new ideas, new at least to them, and crave a challenge, albeit a solvable one. They work best in an academic setting where intelligence is both valued as well as expected, thus allowing them to fully explore their interests.

The *Investigative* type values analyzing ideas down to its very inception; driven by the desire to understand. This tends to put this group of people in very scientific professions that support innovative thinking, intelligence and independent research. They are typically self-motivated and as such they gravitate toward work environments that support creative scientific research. If an *Investigative* type doesn't particularly like research then they will likely be in a sort of teaching position where they can fully explain a topic.

Typical Occupations for Investigative Personality Types

The *Investigative* type will seek out environments that allow them to fully explore their curiosity. Because of this you will likely find them in research positions, no matter the topic. As a researcher one can formulate the questions as well as search for the answers, which is a dream come true for these thinkers. Many biologists, pharmacists and computer programmers can identify with this particular personality type. The less frequent, but just as relevant, position you can find them in is as college professors.

If you feel like you could identify with many parts of this article then you could indeed be an *Investigative* thinker. Though what is described here is only one personality type you may find that you have certain parts of this personality type that match well with others. This is very common and in fact makes for the best teachers, dentists and doctors, as these are professions that rely on a combination of personalities beyond *Investigative*. Though this is the less frequent personality type among people it is certainly a very important one that lends characteristics to many of us. If you identify with this personality type then it is important to seek out jobs that allow you to creatively explore your interests.

RIASEC Personality Type: Artistic (Creators)



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The *Artistic* types are the most creative of all of the **Holland personality types**. They explore their curiosity in very expressive ways by using many different mediums in their activities. No matter the position or field of work the *artistic* type works in you will find him or her thinking creatively to solve problems. Often times they can be found experimenting with their ideas or working to recreate pre-existing systems. They are known as the “creators” among people and so they seek out environments that allow them space to explore their creativity. This unconventional creative is often described as the “free-spirited” one of the group.

Characteristics of Artistic Types

An *artistic* friend can be described as impulsive, independent and sensitive. These qualities drive this personality type into very loosely structured environments and friendships. Because of this impulsive nature the *artistic* types can form warm relationships with others fairly quickly, even sometimes intensely. They are also very romantic in their general view, which fosters more creativity in almost everything they do.

Friends will describe the creator as complicated, open, and idealistic. Just like their tendency to romanticize otherwise mundane activities, they also view problems from idealistic standards. The *artistic* types tend to thrive in relationships and settings that allow them the freedom to not only explore their beliefs and ideas but also express them openly and regularly. They are abstract thinkers no matter the topic and so they can sometimes get caught up in deep conversations.

While their characteristics often times make traditional office work some kind of torture for them they are still great employees. The *artistic* person values change and independence as much as they practice their creative expression, making them diligent and busy workers. The same can be said in their roles as friends; they openly and loyally express their emotions and encourage the same from others.

Preferred Work Environments for Artistic Types

The creative souls indeed love being able to express themselves and so naturally love work environments that allow them to do that. Painters, musicians, writers and dancers stereotypically thrive in positions that allow them to practice their creative expression. Not all *artistic* types, though, are necessarily stereotypical artists. Instead, you might find their particular characteristics playing out in the work place. For instance, the creative employee may be the person to offer their time on marketing or illustration needs within a work place.

The *artistic* types don't just practice art as a creative expression, though. These types also tend to exhibit stylish fashion choices and be creative chefs or bakers, as well. Journalism, and the general creative side of communication, can also serve as ideal work environments for the *artistic* types as they allow a little more creativity in its tasks. In fact, they tend to avoid very ordered environments with mundane and repetitive activities.

Typical Occupations for Artistic Types

If you were to observe the college population then you would find all the *artistic* types listed under majors such as Art, Journalism, Music, Fashion Design and even Philosophy. The common factor in each of these majors is that they provide incredible space and freedom to allow creative thinking and experimentation. Outside of the university setting you can still find these types in related fields of work. Music, theater and art teachers and performers are likely satisfied creators. You can also find them, however, working advertising, writing, and even reporting as these fields also allow flexible and creative thinking.

Whether the job is in the creative profession or not is not necessarily representative of whether or not it satisfies the characteristic of the *artistic* type. Instead, look to see how the work environment is structured because the *artistic* type can always find comfort in a place that allows them to simply be creative within their position.

RIASEC Personality Type: Social (Helpers)



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The *social* personality types, according to the **Holland Codes**, are best known for their warm and friendly personalities. What is more is that they are great problem solvers with a great ability to work with others. In the occupational setting these personality types are known as the “helpers.” They tend to be concerned with the welfare of others and use that as a guiding principle in their work. The *social* types rely on their capacity to empathize in order to help with problem solving, making them great leaders as well as workers.

Characteristics of Social Types

The *social* types are best known for their humanistic nature, a general philosophy that serves the betterment of people. You can see this by observing which activities they are most drawn toward. Usually someone of a humanistic nature will volunteer to help

others or organize workshops or events to help others in some capacity. Their humanistic tendency makes them very warm people to be around, both in and out of the workplace. Because of their friendly nature they usually tend to have very developed communication skills as well. This combination of friendliness, communication skills, and desire to help others tends to be the most identifiable part of a *social* type.

Social types describe themselves as caring, responsible and patient. Just like their developed communication skills are a positive byproduct of their friendly nature, it seems that they can also be very patient with others as a byproduct, as well. Working with people and communicating with them openly and often certainly helps develop patience in the *social* types.

Preferred Work Environments for Social Types

The *social* types really value people and work places that demonstrate cooperation, good communication skills and help foster a sense of community. They also are sometimes great cheerleaders of the group by encouraging others in their endeavors, as well. As such they will gravitate toward work environments that foster a sense of support and collaboration. A work environment that helps others and encourages problem solving by way of communication is also a great fit for the *social* type.

Within a workplace these helpers are usually the ones to lead discussions and organize group activities. No matter the field, in fact, a *social* personality type will surely seek out a workplace that allows for collaboration and teamwork.

Typical Occupations for Social Types

The valued characteristics just described will drive *social* types toward fields such as teaching, nursing, social work and non-profit community organizations. In these professions they can use their skills in understanding others in order to serve them better. Whether this means as a teacher or as a facilitator in training at a corporate job makes no difference, as either position will draw upon the *social* types' best qualities.

Though teaching and serving are the two most likely professions that the *social* personality types gravitate toward they are not the absolute professions for

them. Instead, we can look more closely at what motivates the *social* personality type when looking for work to determine what kind of occupation may be the best fit. The most notable characteristic is that they value nurturing others as well as empowering them. These two general goals combined with their friendly and generally outgoing nature makes them not only great teachers but also great leaders, as well. As such, community non-profit organizations and family services are also great fields of work for the *social* occupational personality type.

RIASEC Personality Type: Enterprising (Persuaders)



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The movers and shakers of the world are likely the *Enterprising* types according to the [Holland Codes](#). They are better known as *persuaders* because of their ability to convince others of their ideas. This personality type also tends to demonstrate a witty and outgoing personality, adding to the gravitational pull the person has on people. These valuable characteristics help *Enterprisers* build and coordinate teams of people both in the workplace and in personal circles.

Characteristics of Enterprising Types

This personality type is very ambitious and persuasive. This energy and drive makes them unafraid of risks and fills them with an optimistic confidence in their work and projects. They are usually described as adventurous in their work ethics as well as their personal hobbies. In fact, they tend to be popular among groups because they are interesting and super sociable.

The persuaders can also be described as materialistic with a keen eye for the-next-best-thing. This materialism perhaps fuels their ambition in most of their endeavors. As a result it is common to learn that this personality type is always looking to make a profit and/or lead others. While other personality types might try to avoid conflict the *Enterprisers* enjoy debate and political maneuvering. It is likely that their charming personalities make debate a bit more fun than usual!

Preferred Work Environments for Enterprising Types

The hungry ambition of a person with this personality type will often take the person into a business-oriented career. What they thrive on the most is creatively thinking of ways to expand current ideas, provide services and increase profit. Fast-paced environments are most comfortable to the persuaders as it gives them constant stimulation. Because they are especially sociable compared to the other personality types as outlined by the [Holland Personality Types](#) these people work well in groups. The teamwork mentality is especially valuable as an employee and so the *Enterprising* types tend to thrive in workplaces that provide lots of group and team coordination.

In the same fashion they also thrive in **sales positions**. Their likability and enthusiasm easily convinces customers and investors to trust what they have to offer. From car dealership sales to **pharmaceutical sales**, any capacity would prove to be a good fit for the persuaders.

Typical Occupations for Enterprising Types

Sales representatives are the most common occupation for the *Enterprising* type, as mentioned above. This is because this kind of position utilizes the exact characteristics that *Enterprising* types generally have. That's not the only type of work that is a good fit, though. Management positions in any field usually have an *Enterprising* personality type in the position as they can organize and rally troops easily.

No single field is best for this type of personality because the characteristics of the *Enterprising* type can help them succeed in many different fields. Instead, you can be sure to find them in a management or sales position in whatever field of work.

RIASEC Personality Type: Conventional (Organizers)



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The last of the **Holland Personality Types** is the *Conventional* type. People with these personality traits are known as the “organizers” of the group for their organizational skills and orderly work. They are detail-oriented and make excellent workers as they steadfastly finish any task before them. Traditionally, these *Conventional* types have found satisfaction in secretarial work but the skill sets in this particular personality type can actually be useful in many occupations beyond that of a secretary.

Characteristics of the Conventional Types

The *Conventional* types will likely describe themselves as very organized and orderly. These types are commonly also very diligent in their work and known for their general perseverance in menial tasks that others might shy away from. Their efficiency and practical thinking, usually earns them a lot of trust from others to handle the complicated tasks, as well. The great thing about these personality types is that because they enjoy doing these tasks, anyway, they are also often very much appreciated and respected by others.

In fact, they most closely identify themselves as “**Type A**” personalities as many of the characteristics in the *Conventional* personality type align with the Type A types. These overlapping qualities—that of precision, accuracy and diligence—make them very reliable friends and even better employees. If you are not sure whether or not you are a *Conventional* type then look for a to-do list: if you have a to-do list then you likely have a bit of this personality type, as well.

Preferred Work Environments for Conventional Types

Understandably, very organized work environments fit best for the organizers. An organization or program that has clear structure, clear lines of communication and clear demand for precision is ideal because it allows the *Conventional* types to utilize their skill sets on a daily basis. Rules and order are imperative in a work environment and can be very attractive for organized types as it eliminates a lot of potential headache surrounding organization.

In the workplace these organizers will usually be very professional at all times. It is another common trait for this personality to be very respectful at all times and to always be aware of positions of power. Predictability and security are very important qualities to have in a work environment if the *Conventional* type is to fit in nicely.

Typical Occupations for Conventional Types

As you can imagine this personality type fits in very well with banks and accounts. It is imperative that bankers and accountants alike rely on their organizational abilities in order to complete daily tasks well—and legally. This makes the banking profession, in general, a snug fit for the *Conventional* types. Likewise, the role as Accountant is often a good one, as well. Dealing with supreme organization lends well to working with numbers and so often times you will find that Accountants have predominately *Conventional* traits.

Another great fit for this personality type is the legal system. While many people aspire to be lawyers it is also true that paralegals allow the same benefits. In fact, the *Conventional* personality type provides all the necessary traits and characteristics to be a successful and profitable paralegal. As mentioned in the beginning, the role of secretary is also a great and reliable fit for this personality type.

No matter the profession the skills held by *Conventional* types can be found all over the professional world. Perhaps you identify greatly with the traits described above, in which case you will have a clear idea of what your most valuable skills are in the workplace. If you do not identify completely with this personality type then it is possible that you

possess a lot of the same qualities, anyway. Either way, it is a great set of traits to be aware of and use during your **job search** in order to find the most fitting profession for you!