

How Students Can Use Their CliftonStrengths to Succeed

A guide to getting the most from
your natural talents and turning
them into CliftonStrengths

MAY 2017

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About This Guide

The dedication in *CliftonStrengths for Students* says it best:

“To college students everywhere who want to apply their strengths to change the world.”

We designed this guide to help you achieve that goal. We expect great things from you!

Discovering your CliftonStrengths is just the beginning of your journey.

Real, meaningful personal improvement begins only when you learn to *do something* with your these talents.

Gallup research finds that developing talents into strengths happens with the help of a trained coach — someone who knows the necessary proven techniques for leading others to succeed using their CliftonStrengths.

The activities in this guide give you the opportunity to reflect on and document the thoughts, feelings, aspirations and goals that come to mind as you explore your CliftonStrengths. Capture the ideas, the details and the feelings that surface during the activities so you can reflect on and process them later.

Then, your coach will use your reflections as a starting point for your personal CliftonStrengths development.

There are no wrong answers along the way. The questions and comments, activities, and discussions simply give you an organized way to document just how unique you are.

The odds of someone having the same top five CliftonStrengths themes as you in the exact same order is one in 33 *million*. You are *unique*, and it is our hope that this guide helps you communicate exactly who you are, what you want to be, and how you'll use your CliftonStrengths to change the world.

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About Your Journey

You've picked your school. You've taken the CliftonStrengths assessment. What next?

Well, it's up to you. The gift of your CliftonStrengths journey is that it is yours to craft. You can share your CliftonStrengths results with whomever you wish and apply them to any areas of life that you want.

However, there is an inherent challenge to such an approach.

Say you want to climb Mount Everest. You wouldn't just wake up one morning, grab your shoes and water bottle, and head out. While such thinking may seem fun in the moment, it could create great risk and lead to failure — things no one wants when seeking to have a successful adventure.

Instead, you should be thoughtful and intentional about how you develop and apply your CliftonStrengths to your life.

Consider what you want to accomplish. Consult with others who have started their own CliftonStrengths journeys. Ask them to share in their own words what worked and what didn't.

Finally, find others who are willing to take your CliftonStrengths journey with you. Life-changing adventures are better when shared with others.

The adventure is yours. The next steps are yours. The goals are yours. What journey will you choose?

Learning About Your CliftonStrengths Results

Talent is only part of the CliftonStrengths equation. Knowledge and skills are important, too.

When you intentionally practice using these important traits together, to the point that you can consistently provide near-perfect performance in a given activity, you've developed your CliftonStrengths.

All of that takes time and effort.

You'll likely develop knowledge and skills through your experiences in school, in your work and with hands-on practice.

So let's focus on your talents — on who you are today.

To start your journey, take a few minutes to reflect on your CliftonStrengths results and what they mean to you.

What was your first reaction after reviewing your CliftonStrengths results?

Review your Signature Theme Report. Copy and paste or type words, phrases and or sentences from your report that you feel describe you well.

What did you learn about yourself after reviewing your CliftonStrengths results?

What, if anything, surprised you about your CliftonStrengths results?

What new discovery have you made about yourself after reviewing your CliftonStrengths results?

Have you read your action items for each of your Signature Themes? If so, which two or three suggestions are you most interested in applying to your life?

Sharing Your CliftonStrengths Results With Others

As Don Clifton wrote in *Soar With Your Strengths*, “Strengths develop best in response to another human being.”

Gallup research finds that individuals and teams are more likely to experience performance breakthroughs and positive outcomes when they work with others to develop their CliftonStrengths.

Your options are seemingly endless: You can share your CliftonStrengths with your family, friends, peers at school, faculty and staff, program directors, and professional coaches.

Take some time to answer the following questions about sharing your CliftonStrengths with others.

Who are three trusted advisors in your life with whom you can have a conversation about your results?

Ask them if they’d be willing to talk about your CliftonStrengths and where you’re at your best.

Once you have shared your CliftonStrengths with them and met to discuss, answer the following:

What was their reaction to your results?

What did you learn about yourself after sharing and discussing your results with others?

Were you surprised to hear, read or learn any particular information or feedback after sharing your results? If so, what?

Creating Stronger Partnerships Using Your CliftonStrengths

The 34 CliftonStrengths themes interact and influence each other in ways we call theme dynamics. These dynamics appear during the everyday interactions we experience with others.

By understanding and using your CliftonStrengths in your work with others, you can create relationships and partnerships that are complimentary and effective.

Take a few minutes to reflect on the following questions.

Based on what you have learned about your CliftonStrengths, what types of people would be strong partners for you?

Think about a specific relationship or partnership you have. After reviewing your results, what ideas come to mind for using a particular CliftonStrengths theme to improve that relationship?

Accomplishing More Using Your CliftonStrengths

People perform better when they get the chance to do what they naturally do best.

You give yourself a better chance to succeed when you know your CliftonStrengths and use them in a thoughtful, meaningful way.

Take a few minutes to answer the following questions.

Briefly describe a recent success you've had.

How do you think your CliftonStrengths play a role in this success?

What is one goal or objective you are currently working toward?

Which of your themes do you think you can most rely on to accomplish this goal?

Mapping Out Your Next Adventure

Your school is counting on you to become your best self on campus and beyond.

But to do that, you have to be involved.

That means joining clubs. Making friends. Finding mentors and professors who care about you and your success. All while staying financially healthy and applying what you learn in the classroom.

These experiences are all part of a great college experience. And they're all aspects of your life in which you can succeed by using your CliftonStrengths.

In 2014, Gallup and Purdue University began measuring the impact of the experiences students have in school on their later lives.

This study of more than 30,000 U.S. college graduates, called the Gallup-Purdue Index, assesses alumni perceptions of their undergraduate experiences and how those experiences relate to their engagement and job quality later in life.

Use the following pages to reflect on how to use your CliftonStrengths to create the types of experiences identified by the research as critical to current and future success.

Your Professors Matter

When alumni look back on their college experience, they say their relationships matter most.

Not necessarily relationships with their friends, though.

The people who made the biggest impact were their professors.

Which professor uses a teaching style that inspires your learning? Who gives you valuable feedback, and who are you truly getting to know? Who has made you feel excited about learning?

Which of your CliftonStrengths could you use to get to know them more?

Which professor do you believe cares about you as a person? How did they show it?

Did the ways this professor taught, communicated and cared affect any of your CliftonStrengths? If so, which ones?

How can you use your CliftonStrengths to deepen your relationship with this professor?

Your Mentors Matter

Our research shows that to alumni, having a mentor who encouraged them to pursue their goals and dreams deeply mattered to their college experience.

A mentor might be a professor. Maybe a member of school administration or staff. Perhaps your boss.

Usually, your mentor is someone who has a wider perspective and more life experience than you.

The best mentors give you good advice and inspire you to further *your* hopes for *your* life.

They provide guidance that aligns with your CliftonStrengths and your plans.

Who in your life would you consider a mentor? What about them do you admire?

How do you hope a mentor could help you in your life, both in and out of school?

How do you think your mentor could work with you better by knowing your CliftonStrengths?

Compare your CliftonStrengths with your mentor's. What might you do well together? Where may you be challenged? How could you communicate most effectively?

Long-Term Projects Matter

Our research finds that when alumni look back on their college life, they realize that the ability to work on a project that took a semester or more to complete was vital to their career.

When you register for classes, ask yourself two questions:

1. Will I be able to apply my CliftonStrengths in this class?
2. Will I be able to apply my CliftonStrengths to a long-term project here?

Having a passion for what you're studying and being able to apply your CliftonStrengths in the classroom are vital to your engagement on campus.

How do your CliftonStrengths help or hinder your ability to work on a group project?

Which of your CliftonStrengths come into play when starting a project?

Who do you want involved in your project and why? Who would complement your CliftonStrengths best to help you successfully complete the project?

How will you know if your project is successful? How do your CliftonStrengths affect how you define success?

Internships and Applied Learning Experiences Matter

Our research indicates that engaged alumni identify the importance of an internship or job that allowed them to apply what they learned in the classroom.

You may not know the right career choice for you *right now*. But an internship or job that allows you to apply what you're learning lets you explore a potential career early.

From there, you can identify things you might love about that career, as well as things you might not.

What kind of internship or work interests you most? How can you use your CliftonStrengths to create an action plan to get there?

What subjects or fields interest you most?

How can you use your CliftonStrengths to develop greater skill in the fields that interest you? What knowledge do you need, and how can you use your CliftonStrengths to gain that knowledge?

Extracurricular Activities Matter

Our research shows that alumni who were deeply engaged and thriving on campus were extremely active in extracurricular activities and organizations.

Plus, those who say they were extremely active in those types of activities are nearly two times more likely to be engaged at work than their peers.

Being extremely active doesn't mean being involved in every activity possible. Rather, these alumni got *deeply* involved and connected. They gained knowledge, experience and responsibilities that they could apply in the future.

Which clubs and organizations seem to align to your interests and values? How do those interests and values align to your CliftonStrengths?

Which clubs and organizations would help you create networks that would make a lasting impact on the issues that matter to you? How can you use your CliftonStrengths to learn more about the individuals already in those groups?

What kind of impact do you want to make on your school? How can you pair your CliftonStrengths with particular extracurricular activities to chart your course?

Your Next Steps

When you know your CliftonStrengths, you know the value you bring to the world around you.

You know when and where you're at your best.

You can hold a holistic view of all the people and experiences that shape your life on campus and beyond.

So, how will you use your CliftonStrengths to lead an engaged and thriving life?

For help, consider the following next steps:

- Share your CliftonStrengths with others.
- Read *CliftonStrengths for Students*, available via e-book on your dashboard.
- Revisit your CliftonStrengths results and student-specific action items to look for new ideas.
- Seek out a coach — a mentor, an advisor, someone trained in strengths coaching — to help you apply your natural talents to succeed.

This is your journey and your future. It's up to you to make the most of it. Have fun!

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