

Exercise 7

What Are Your Skills and Interests?

Think about the various jobs and roles you've had throughout your working life—everything from being a camp counselor when you were sixteen to working as a cashier in a convenience store to your longer stints and bigger gigs in recent years. In the chart on pages 54–55, list jobs that stand out in your memory in the first column. In the second column, write down some of the things you remember doing in those jobs using words that end in *-ing*, such as planning, talking, building, designing, coaching, cooking, communicating, writing, giving feedback, and so on. In the third column, write down the focus of the job or what the work was about, such as banking, youth activities, health care, law, construction, wildlife conservation, insurance, or technology.

As an example, here's what I'd put for my two longest career stints, as well as some random short-lived jobs—even internships—I had when I was younger.

Jobs	-ing Words	Focus/Topics
Nonprofit professional	Writing, speaking, advocating	Encore careers, baby boomers, social entrepreneurship
Lawyer	Counseling, advising, researching, billing hours	Advertising, publishing, business
Journalist/writer	Researching, interviewing, writing, speaking	Careers, work, publishing, nonprofits
Teacher	Lecturing, mentoring, reading	Education, writing
Legal intern, prosecutor's office	Researching, observing, filing, reading, reviewing documents	Criminal justice
Law clerk	Filing, taking notes, doing research, reading, editing	Business, real estate, contracts
Motel desk clerk	Talking, helping customers, answering the phone, giving travel advice, managing conflicts	Travel/tourism

After you’ve done that for most of the jobs that come to mind, do the same thing for parts of your life outside of work. Look at what stands out as activities where you’ve spent a lot of your nonwork time—volunteer work, education, clubs, associations, family time.

Here are a few examples I’d add to the nonwork part of my chart:

Nonwork Activities	-ing Words	Focus/Topics
Advisory board member, The OpEd Project	Connecting people, coaching and mentoring, advising, writing	Diversity, communications, training, education, writing, women’s advancement
Executive committee member, New York Writers Workshop	Teaching, organizing, and promoting community events, coaching and mentoring writers	Writing, community events, publishing
Playing poker	Organizing the game, talking, socializing, analyzing people, honing my card skills	Games, play
Long walks or hikes	Exploring the outdoors, walking, talking, socializing	Nature, environment

Now it’s your turn. Fill in as many rows as come to mind, being as comprehensive or brief as you like.

Jobs	-ing Words	Focus/Topics

After you've got the chart nicely filled out, cross out anything in the second or third columns that you know you don't want to carry forward into your next phase of work. Of the remaining items, circle the *-ing* words and the focus/topic words that are most interesting to you at this point in your life.

Use this chart to create a list of your favorites.

YOUR LIST OF FAVORITES	
Favorite -ing Words	Favorite Focus/Topics
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
6.	6.
7.	7.
8.	8.
9.	9.
10.	10.