



BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES GRADUATE PROGRAM

Professional Development Workshop Series 2016

How to Start a Job Search - or What Do I Do with this PhD?

Exercise 3: Identifying your skill set through reflection

For this exercise, you will work one-on-one with a partner. Review the three prompts below and identify a response to each. Then share your experiences with your partner. Work together to identify skills that are associated with your responses. Note that *skills do not equal interests, but if interest exists, then skills can be built.*

1. What compliments or other positive feedback have you received for particular activities? Positive feedback may be as simple as a smile or as significant as a pay increase. Write down the compliments, briefly explaining each situation.
2. When have you felt the most alive and energetic? List specific situations. Examples: giving a presentation and getting rave reviews, running in a 10K, planning and preparing food for a dinner party.
3. When have you felt the most confident and capable? List specific situations. Examples: passing your qualifying exams with honors, having someone ask for your ideas or advice about a particular technique.

For example, I received a compliment that the procedures that I write for our office administration are very thorough.

The skills that I would associate with the ability to write clear procedures are:

- Organization
- Communication
- Logical thinking
- Project management

I feel most alive when I am managing and organizing a large project; I like to break it down to its constituent parts and then provide my team with instructions on how to make those parts work. In general, I like to figure out how things work and to solve problems. If I start looking at these pieces, I can see pretty clearly that I would enjoy work as a project manager. However, without any formal training as a project manager, I may want to start to look at how my experiences map onto the job requirements for a project manager or I may want to get PM certification through additional courses.

When you do this exercise on your own, try to list as many experiences as possible. Make sure to focus on those things that make you feel alive, energetic, confident, and capable. Have you received compliments from others on these types of activities? Your goal is to identify (1) things that really interest you and (2) the skills associated with those things (whether you have the skills or not)