

## What Your Test Scores Mean

by Lawrence K. Jones, Ph.D., NCC

The Career Key™ S-E test measures two personality dimensions and how similar you are to Holland's six personality types. Here, you learn what your scores mean and how they are related to self-employment and entrepreneurship.

### Brief Explanation



**Your Holland scores.** The Career Key™ test is based on John Holland's theory of career choice. According to the theory, you are most likely to be successful and satisfied in a career if your personality is like the personalities of the people who work in it.

In other words, whatever career choice you are making -- a business venture to start; a career to enter; or a career change -- you are best off to choose one that matches your personality. The six personality types are described on the next page.

You used the personality type(s) with the highest scores to identify the occupations and business areas that look like good options. By clicking on each of their titles, you received detailed, up to date information about them. These are all steps toward making a good decision.

**Your Two Personality Dimension Scores<sup>1</sup>.** Another group of psychologists has identified five broad personality dimensions. They call these the Big Five. Recent research suggests that two of these are related to success as an entrepreneur:

**Conscientiousness.** High scorers on this dimension tend to be dependable, hardworking, and achievement-oriented. They are organized, efficient, planful, thorough, and persistent.

**Openness to Experience.** People high in this area generally like new ideas and concepts, are interested in trying new and different things. They are imaginative, insightful, creative, and broadminded; and enjoy art, music, and literature.

In general, the higher your scores are on these two scales the more likely you are to succeed as an entrepreneur.

Note: These two scales are experimental. For more information, see the endnote on page 6.

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## Full Explanation

(*Your Personality Dimension Scores* begins on page 5)



### Your Holland Scores.

John Holland's theory of vocational choice is the best known and most widely researched theory on this topic, and is used by most career counselors. Under-

standing it will help you make sense of your Career Key scores and how they are related to your career choice.

As you already know, there are six Holland personality types. To understand your scores, you need to be familiar with the characteristics of each type. Take your time in reading them. See if you can think of people who fit them.

### Holland Personality Types

#### *Realistic*

- Likes to work with animals, tools, or machines; generally avoids social activities like teaching, healing, and informing others;
- Has good skills in working with tools, mechanical or electrical drawings, machines, or plants and animals;
- Values practical things you can see, touch, and use like plants and animals, tools, equipment, or machines; and
- Sees self as practical, mechanical, and realistic.

#### *Investigative*

- Likes to study and solve math or science problems; generally avoids leading, selling, or persuading people;
- Is good at understanding and solving science and math problems;
- Values science; and
- Sees self as precise, scientific, and intellectual.

#### *Artistic*

- Likes to do creative activities like art, drama, crafts, dance, music, or creative writing; generally avoids highly ordered or repetitive activities;
- Has good artistic abilities -- in creative writing, drama, crafts, music, or art;

- Values the creative arts -- like drama, music, art, or the works of creative writers; and
- Sees self as expressive, original, and independent.

#### *Social*

- Likes to do things to help people -- like, teaching, nursing, or giving first aid, providing information; generally avoids using machines, tools, or animals to achieve a goal;
- Is good at teaching, counseling, nursing, or giving information;
- Values helping people and solving social problems; and
- Sees self as helpful, friendly, and trustworthy.

#### *Enterprising*

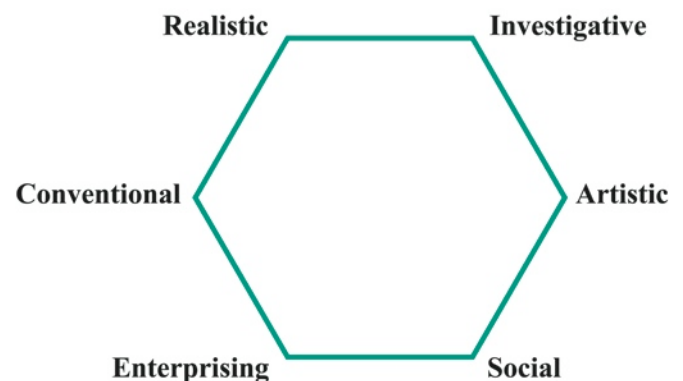
- Likes to lead and persuade people, and to sell things and ideas; generally avoids activities that require careful observation and scientific, analytical thinking;
- Is good at leading people and selling things or ideas;
- Values success in politics, leadership, or business; and
- Sees self as energetic, ambitious, and sociable.

#### *Conventional*

- Likes to work with numbers, records, or machines in a set, orderly way; generally avoids ambiguous, unstructured activities;
- Is good at working with written records and numbers in a systematic, orderly way;
- Values success in business; and
- Sees self as orderly, and good at following a set plan.

### How the Types are Related

The relationship between the six types can be seen when they are placed on a hexagon:



The physical distance between each type shows you how close they are psychologically.

For example, notice that the type that is greatest distance from the Realistic type is Social. When you

read the description for these two types, you understand why: their personalities are opposites!

You will notice that same is true for the other types. Conventional is furthest from Artistic; Investigative is the greatest distance from Enterprising; and the personalities of each of these pairs are opposites.

And, it is also true that the personality types next to each other on the hexagon, are the closest psychologically.

As you can see, the notion of types and the hexagon is a powerful concept . . . part of a potent theory. You will be surprised at how many situations you will be able to apply it -- not just choosing a career.

Yes, it is a simplification of personality. But the insights it will give you more than compensate for its limitations.

For example, from what you have learned, you will be able to make a good guess about the personality of the worker below (assume he likes his job):

- What do you think is his personality type?
- What are his interests? Skills? Values?
- What personality type is he least like?
- What does he likely avoid?



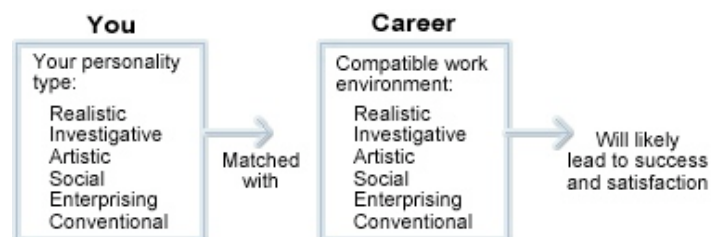
See answers bottom page 4.

Holland's theory describes how these six personality types are related to job success and satisfaction.

Take your time in reading the following statements -- think about how they apply to your life.

## Holland's theory summarized in six statements:

1. Most people are one of six personality types: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional.
2. People of the same personality tend to "flock together." For example, Artistic people are attracted to making friends and working with Artistic people; Social people are drawn to other Social people, and so on. (*Have you noticed this?*)
3. People of the same personality type working together in a job create a work environment that fits their type. For example, when Artistic persons are together on a job, they create a work environment -- one that rewards creative thinking and behavior -- an Artistic environment. (*Can you think of a situation where this is true?*)
4. There are six basic types of work environments: [Realistic](#), [Investigative](#), [Artistic](#), [Social](#), [Enterprising](#), and [Conventional](#).
5. People who choose to work in an environment similar to their personality type are more likely to be successful and satisfied.



6. How you act and feel at work depends to a large extent on your workplace environment. If you are working with people who have a personality type like yours, you will be able to do many of the things they can do, and you will feel most comfortable with them.

How is this related to the scores you receive on the Career Key? It means that you probably should

choose a business whose type is the same as, or similar to, your personality type.

For example, imagine that your highest score on the Career Key is for the Realistic type. Looking at the table below, you can see that the most compatible business environment is Realistic. This suggests that

Your Personality Type	Compatible Work Environments	
	Most Compatible	Compatible
Realistic	<a href="#">Realistic</a>	Investigative & Conventional
Investigative	<a href="#">Investigative</a>	Realistic & Artistic
Artistic	<a href="#">Artistic</a>	Investigative & Social
Social	<a href="#">Social</a>	Artistic & Enterprising
Enterprising	<a href="#">Enterprising</a>	Social & Conventional
Conventional	<a href="#">Conventional</a>	Enterprising & Realistic

you choose from businesses that are in the Realistic group. Or, you might choose from those that fall in the Investigative or Conventional category.

Most people, in reality, are a combination of types -- like Realistic-Investigative, or Artistic-Social.

Therefore, you will probably want to consider businesses in more than one category. If your two strongest personality types are Realistic and Social, Investigative and Enterprising, or Artistic and Conventional -- [read the following](#) on the Internet.



*Answer to questions on pg. 3: This is a self-employed carpenter looking at a blueprint with a tape measure in his hand -- most likely a Realistic type. He is least like the Social type in his interests, values, abilities, and self-view -- and probably avoids the things they like to do.*

## Holland's Theory and Entrepreneurship



How is starting and running a business related to Holland's theory? Here are several ways it can be applied:

1. Your predominant personality type(s) will affect how well you are able to do the activities required for your business to be a success.

For example, people high in *Enterprising* are generally good at leading people and selling things or ideas so are likely to do well at getting financing for their business idea, leading the business, marketing and advertising. On the other hand, they tend to be less strong in their analytical thinking abilities; this may affect their ability to do certain kinds of problem solving.

Each personality type will have its strengths and weaknesses. And, each business enterprise will have different kinds of demands. You will want to ask yourself: How do the strengths and weaknesses of my personality match up with the demands of this business?

If you identify a business activity that you are not especially interested in doing, or strong in, you will want to consider how you will handle it. It may be that you can delegate that activity to someone else. Or, you can strengthen your ability in that area through further training.

Reading business plans, and creating your own, will help you in doing this analysis. [The SBDCNet.org](#) is a good source for sample plans.

2. With your knowledge of personality types and work environments, you now will have a useful

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way to think about the kind of work environment you want to create for your business and how to do it. If you have employees in your business, what mix of personality types would be most desirable? What kind of work environment do you want to create?

Of course, there are many factors to consider in hiring employees, but Holland's theory gives you a useful tool.

3. The theory gives a useful insight into people and how they interact with each other. It also makes you better appreciate the phrase, "people with differing gifts." And, it gives you a way of understanding the people you work with, in or out of your business.
4. You can apply all of these insights with the confidence that you are using a valid test of Holland's types -- one of the few on the Internet ([See \*Beware of Harmful Career Tests\* at our website.](#))



**If you are young,** keep in mind that for most youth, personality really begins to crystallize in the late teens, early 20's. It is normal to be uncertain about

your abilities, interests, and your career direction. This is a great time to explore your interests and possibilities -- including entrepreneurship. [Explore Young Entrepreneurs](#) at our website.

### Your Personality Dimension Scores.

In contrast to vocational psychologists like Holland, there is another school of psychologists that view personality in a different way -- industrial-organizational or personality psychologists. Their research shows that there are five broad personality dimensions, or factors. They call these the Big Five. Recent research shows that two of these are related

to success as an entrepreneur:

**Conscientiousness.** High scorers on this dimension tend to be dependable, hardworking, and achievement-oriented. They are organized, efficient, planful, thorough, and persistent.

**Openness to Experience.** People high in this area generally like new ideas and concepts, are interested in trying new and different things. They are imaginative, insightful, creative, and broadminded; and enjoy art, music, and literature.

A major study of studies in this area was published in the *Journal of Applied Psychology* in 2006. The researchers analyzed 23 studies that compared entrepreneurs with managers. They found that entrepreneurs were significantly higher in *Conscientiousness* and *Openness to Experience*.

As with all studies, this one has limitations. But this report is helpful in raising our awareness of the importance of these two dimensions.

To interpret your scores, we suggest that you think of the scores from 28 to 21 as **High**; 20 to 13 as **Moderate**; and 12 or less as **Low**.

### Conscientiousness and Entrepreneurship

*Conscientiousness* is obviously important. Studies show it is the most consistent personality predictor of job performance for all types of work and occupations. One aspect of it, the *need for achievement*, seems to be particularly important for people who are successfully self-employed.

Logically, it makes sense. Successful self-employment requires a person to be highly motivated and hardworking.

Unlike the Holland personality types, if you are weak in *Conscientiousness*, it is not something for which you can easily compensate. You cannot strengthen your motivation to work hard through training, or delegating it to someone else.

Consequently, it is especially important to choose a

business area that will have a strong and enduring attraction for you. Besides choosing a business that matches your Holland personality, we recommend that do activities that will help you know yourself better. Go to the [Learn More about Yourself](#) section of our website; it describes those most frequently recommended by professional career counselors.

### ***Openness to Experience* and Entrepreneurship**

Many, if not most, new business ventures require the entrepreneur to explore new ideas, and to develop an innovative approach to products, business methods, or strategies. As markets change, new knowledge and technologies appear, and new competitors emerge -- creativity, intelligence, and openness are needed. These qualities seem especially important in the startup and early stages of a business.

If you are low in *Openness is to Experience*, it will be helpful to be aware of that trait, to remind yourself of it and strive to be as open and imaginative as you can. It may also be helpful to team up with someone high in it. Generally speaking, people who are high on the Investigative and/or Artistic scales are more likely to possess this quality.

Businesses will vary with respect to the need to be open and innovative. So, as you explore self-employment and business possibilities, you will want to find out the extent to which this is important.

*(Your Holland Scores begins on page 2)*

### **Exploring Other Occupations**

You can use the results of your Holland scores to identify a broad range of matching occupations at our companion website, [The Career Key™](#) at [www.careerkey.org](http://www.careerkey.org). It includes occupations where the opportunities for self-employment are low or non-existent, unlike this website. You will get complete, accurate information about each of the occupations you identify.



**Women** will be interested in research regarding men and women entrepreneurs. For example, The Center for Women's Business Research,

recently reported that women and men business owners have different management styles. Women emphasize relationship building as well as fact gathering and are more likely to consult with experts, employees, and fellow business owners.

For more information and resources, visit [Women Entrepreneurs](#) at our website.

### **A Good Career Decision**

Our goal is to help you make a good career decision, one that you will not regret. Research studies show that there are four basic steps. If you follow these steps, you are less likely to make a mistake. The more steps you leave out, the greater the chance that you will. Read [High-Quality Decisions](#) at our website to learn more.

### **The Author**



Lawrence K. Jones is President of Career Key, Inc. and Professor Emeritus, North Carolina State University. He earned his Master's degree from the University of Pennsylvania and his Ph.D. in counseling psychology from the University of Missouri. He received the annual Professional Development Award from the American Counseling Association, and he is a National Certified Counselor. [More...](#)

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<sup>1</sup> The scales for these two dimensions are experimental. You can take a test validated by research, *The Big Five Personality Test* at [www.outofservice.com](http://www.outofservice.com)