

HOW CAN I ASSESS MY STRENGTHS?

CHEAT SHEET

INTRODUCTION TO STRENGTHS

THESTRENGTHSLAB

A MICHELLEMCQUAID PROGRAM

THE VIA SURVEY

(WWW.VIACHARACTER.ORG)

Created by a team of leading social scientists who scoured the world for ways to identify, measure and develop what is 'good' in people, the VIA Survey identifies your character strengths. These positive personality traits reflect what is good (moral), practical (valued outcomes) and authentic (existential) about you (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

The 24 strengths fall under six broad virtues, including:

- **Wisdom (strength of head):** Creativity, Curiosity, Judgment, Love of Learning & Perspective
- **Courage (strength of heart):** Bravery, Perseverance, Honesty & Zest
- **Humanity (strength of others):** Love, Kindness & Social Intelligence
- **Citizenship (strength of community):** Teamwork, Leadership & Fairness
- **Temperance (strength of self):** Forgiveness, Humility, Prudence & Self-Regulation
- **Transcendence (strength of spirit):** Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence, Gratitude, Hope, Humor & Spirituality

They are 'how' you like to go about your work, regardless of whether anybody pays you or recognizes you for it, because they're aligned to the values you hold. It's also important to note, that while your strengths exist within you, they are also shaped by the situations you find yourself in, so they will move around a little bit. Thus, we recommend retaking the VIA Survey annually.

GALLUP CLIFTONSTRENGTHS ASSESSMENT

(WWW.GALLUPSTRENGTHSCENTER.COM)

Created by Donald Clifton and his grandson Tom Rath in the mid 1990s while they were working for the Gallup Research, CliftonStrengths assesses people's talents in the workplace. Drawing on Clifton's decades of research of employees across a range of professions, organizations, and roles they identified 34 themes of talent.

The themes fall under four leadership categories, including:

- **Executing:** Achiever, Arranger, Belief, Consistency, Deliberative, Discipline, Focus, Responsibility, and Restorative.
- **Influencing:** Activator, Command, Communication, Competition, Maximizer, Self-assurance, Significance, and Woo.
- **Relationship Building:** Adaptability, Developer, Connectedness, Empathy, Harmony, Includer, Individualization, Positivity, and Relator.
- **Strategic Thinking:** Analytical, Context, Futuristic, Ideation, Input, Intellection, Learner, and Strategic.

Your final results don't attempt to define you completely or label you as one type or another, or "strong here" and "weak there." Rather, the results have been designed to reveal your five dominant themes of talent, known as your "signature themes." Researchers believe the "signature themes" represent your greatest potential for developing your strengths and the best pathways to help you achieve consistent, near perfect performances that are both excellent and fulfilling (Rath, 2007).

STRENGTHS PROFILE

(WWW.STRENGTHSPROFILE.COM)

In 2009, based on extensive research with individuals and organizations, Dr. Alex Linley and his colleagues at The Center for Applied Positive Psychology (CAPP) decided it was time for a second-generation strengths-development and assessment tool. They believed that while the CliftonStrengths assessment and the VIA Survey were helpful in establishing shared vocabularies around strengths, additional benefits could be gained by giving people more insight into how to apply their strengths.

Based on years of research, CAPP collated their observations regarding strengths and high performance and refined their descriptions and definitions into particular attributes. Having examined over one hundred different strengths, they narrowed this down to 60 strengths that are used as the basis for their Strengths Profile survey.

They have clustered the 60 strengths on a conceptual basis into “strengths families” that include:

- **Strength of Being (your way of being in the world):** Authenticity, Centered, Courage, Curiosity, Gratitude, Humility, Legacy, Mission, Moral Compass, Personal Responsibility, Pride, Self-awareness, Service, and Unconditionality.
- **Strengths of Communicating (how you give and receive information):** Counterpoint, Explainer, Feedback, Humor, Listener, Narrator, Spotlight and Writer.
- **Strengths of Motivating (your drive towards action):** Action, Adventure, Bounceback, Catalyst, Change Agent, Competitive, Drive, Growth, Improver, Persistence, Resilience, Self-belief and Work Ethic.
- **Strengths of Relating (how you relate to others):** Compassion, Connector, Emotional Awareness, Empathic, Enabler, Equality, Esteem Builder, Personalization, Persuasion, Rapport Builder, and Relationship Deepener.
- **Strengths of Thinking (your approach to situations):** Adaptable, Adherence, Creativity, Detail, Incubator, Innovation, Judgment, Optimism, Organizing, Planner, Prevention, Resolver, Strategic Awareness, and Time Optimizer.

The CAPP team also believe that in different contexts, some strengths will advance to the foreground and others will recede to the background. Thus, they recommend retaking the survey at regular intervals to check in on how your strengths may be shifting.

WHAT DO MY RESULTS MEAN?

We believe that more important than your actual results in any of these self-report tools is how you feel about your results. Most people tend to have one of three responses:

- "Yes, that's me!" – If this is your response, the challenge becomes finding ways to use these strengths at work consistently.
- "Why is that strength down there?" – If this is your response, the challenge becomes finding ways to put more energy into the strengths you value but haven't been using lately.
- "That doesn't look anything like me." – If this is your response, it's good to be aware that sometimes we're blind to what we do best, or the ways we've interpreted a survey question can skew our results. To help figure out what might have happened share your results with people who know you well. Ask them what they think your strengths are and trust their guidance and your own experiences to prioritize the strengths you want to develop.

WHICH STRENGTHS SHOULD I FOCUS ON?

In the past, researchers for the VIA Survey and Gallup CliftonStrengths have found that focusing on your top five strengths can be particularly beneficial. It's thought you'll find these strengths the most energizing and engaging because they feel like you at your best. Some studies suggest they are particularly important for people feeling low in meaning and purpose at work (Niemic, 2013).

New research also suggests that taking a more balanced approach to your strengths may help you adapt better to the demands of different situations. For example, your middle strengths, can be great to draw upon in different situations or build up capacities you want to cultivate. And developing your lesser strengths – your bottom five – seems to be beneficial if you score highly across all other strengths (Young, Kashdan, & Macatee, 2014).

The Strengths Profile research also suggests that based on how good you are at each strength (performance), how much energy you get from doing it (energy), and how often you get to do it (use), you should think about your strengths in the following categories:

- Realized strengths – those you already use regularly, find energizing and do well and should continue to draw on wisely.
- Unrealized strengths – those you don't use often and could be used more.
- Learned behaviors – those that don't energize you and should only be used when needed.
- Weakness – those you don't perform well at and should be used less (Linley, 2008).

We recommend focusing on developing the strengths you most “want-to” (rather than “have-to”, “should-do” or “expected-of-you”) prioritize and experimenting with how they impact your sense of confidence, engagement and energy as researchers continue to learn more about how our strengths consistently serve us best.