

COMPANION GUIDE

# CliftonStrengths<sup>®</sup> for Students

Discover what makes you exceptional  
and maximize your potential



GALLUP<sup>®</sup>

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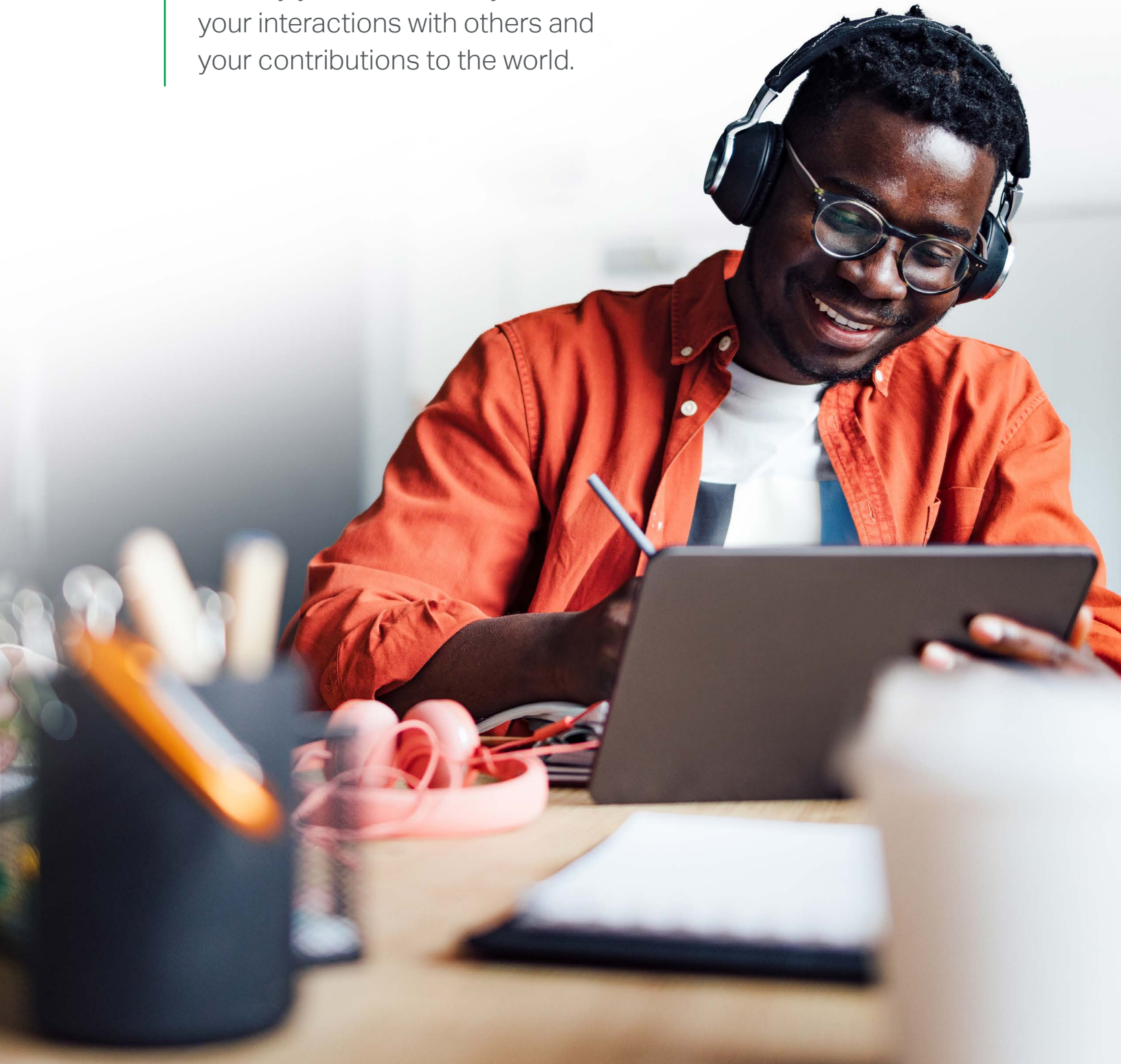
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# What are my strengths?

Answering this question will transform the way you think about yourself, your interactions with others and your contributions to the world.



We know that **everyone is different** and that we're all **special** and **unique**, but in reality, we pay little attention to these important insights.

It's not until we closely consider people's talents and the amazing variety and intricacy in how each person naturally thinks, feels and behaves that we understand just how truly unique each of us is.

Everyone has a specific set of natural talents and abilities. When we intentionally apply our talents, they can become our greatest source of success and contribution. When we find ways to tap into these talents, we become more confident, happy and energetic and are more likely to achieve our goals.

To find more ways to tap into our talents, we have to ask ourselves three questions:

- 1 How do I pinpoint what I do best?
- 2 How can I use my talents to accomplish what is most important to me?
- 3 What unique contributions can I make?

*This guidebook will help you find the answers to these questions and many more. You'll learn more about talents, strengths and how to make the most of your innate potential for excellence.*

# CliftonStrengths® for Students

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## “What would happen if we studied what was right with people versus what’s wrong with people?”

This simple question sparked decades of groundbreaking research into what people are like, how they develop and what leads to exceptional performance.

True growth is about incrementally improving great performance, expanding your knowledge and influence, and understanding who you are on a deeper level. The most effective way to learn, grow and achieve exceptional performance is by investing in your greatest talents — the ways in which you most naturally think, feel and behave.

It starts by discovering what makes you exceptional. When you know your set of talents, you feel empowered to succeed by doing what you naturally do best. Every. Single. Day.

The key to personal development is to fully understand how to apply your greatest talents, those that come naturally to you in your everyday life.

People who know and use their strengths are **six times** more likely to be engaged at work.

People who know and use their strengths are **three times** as likely to report having an excellent quality of life.

**GALLUP ANALYTICS**





# Are We Focusing on the Wrong Things?

## It's in our nature to critique ourselves.

Often when people consider their growth and development, their first instinct is to look for mistakes and opportunities for improvement. They focus on the steps they miss, the skills they lack or the information they get wrong.

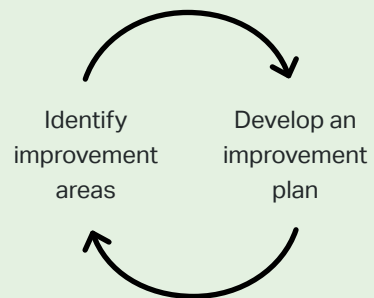
The way most of us approach our personal growth and development actually limits our opportunities for greatness.

The conventional approach to development appears logical and simple:

- 1 Identify areas that need improvement, and
- 2 Develop an improvement plan.

### CONVENTIONAL APPROACH TO PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

**Maintain your strengths and work on fixing your weaknesses.**



Poor assumptions:

- You can learn most, if not all, behaviors to a level of excellence.
- If you try hard enough, you can master anything.
- Fixing weaknesses leads to success.



# What Makes a Person Excel?

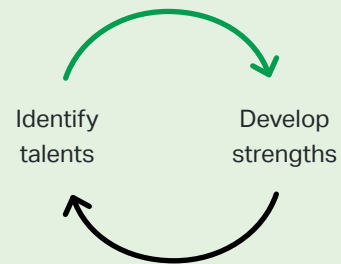
## A person's talents do more than make them a unique individual.

A strengths-based development strategy starts by focusing on what people do well. It then emphasizes and builds on those strengths to help individuals become even more productive.

A person's greatest talents — the ways in which they most naturally think, feel and behave — represent their innate power and potential.

### STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

**Focus on developing a person's talents into strengths and managing weaknesses.**



Only some behaviors can be learned.

The best in any role deliver the same outcomes using different behaviors.

Fixing weaknesses prevents failure; building strengths leads to excellence.



# Discover Your CliftonStrengths®

We often take our most powerful talents for granted, and many of us may not be fully aware of them.

The ways in which you most naturally think, feel and behave as a unique individual are so inherent to you that they are always evident — they're everywhere you go and in everything you do. But because your greatest talents are such an innate part of you, they might be harder for you than anyone else to identify and appreciate.

We all need a little help learning more about our talents and strengths. That's where CliftonStrengths comes in.

Knowing your talents will allow you to build on them and develop them into strengths, which can help you achieve academic, career and personal success.

## Five Things to Know About CliftonStrengths

- 1 It is grounded in more than five decades of research.
- 2 It measures the presence of talent in 34 general areas or "themes."
- 3 It is designed to help you develop your talents into strengths.
- 4 It gives you a language to talk about your talents with others.
- 5 It can help you identify your unique contributions.

# Themes Are the Basic Language of Talent

Some talents — such as natural dependability, a strong sense of commitment and avoidance of excuses — have a “responsibility” theme.

That’s what they have in common — their theme. So to begin thinking and talking about them, we call them Responsibility talents.

## 34 CliftonStrengths Themes

The CliftonStrengths assessment measures the presence of talent in 34 general areas, or themes, that are most directly related to the potential for success.

Decades of research showed that the talents most directly related to the potential for success could be grouped into 34 themes. Each theme includes many talents.

<u>Achiever</u>	<u>Connectedness</u>	<u>Harmony</u>	<u>Relator</u>
<u>Activator</u>	<u>Consistency</u>	<u>Ideation</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>
<u>Adaptability</u>	<u>Context</u>	<u>Includer</u>	<u>Restorative</u>
<u>Analytical</u>	<u>Deliberative</u>	<u>Individualization</u>	<u>Self-Assurance</u>
<u>Arranger</u>	<u>Developer</u>	<u>Input</u>	<u>Significance</u>
<u>Belief</u>	<u>Discipline</u>	<u>Intellection</u>	<u>Strategic</u>
<u>Command</u>	<u>Empathy</u>	<u>Learner</u>	<u>Woo</u>
<u>Communication</u>	<u>Focus</u>	<u>Maximizer</u>	
<u>Competition</u>	<u>Futuristic</u>	<u>Positivity</u>	

Themes are a starting point for thinking and talking about a person’s talents and contributions.

- The CliftonStrengths assessment can help a person discover the source of their natural talents.
- Themes are the basic language of talent. They help a person begin to discover and talk about their greatest talents. Many talents make up each CliftonStrengths theme.
- Strengths develop when people intentionally use their talents to accomplish tasks or achieve desired outcomes.

# CliftonStrengths® Themes: 34 Paths to Excellence

<b>Achiever®</b>	People exceptionally talented in the Achiever theme work hard and possess a great deal of stamina. They take immense satisfaction in being busy and productive.
<b>Activator®</b>	People exceptionally talented in the Activator theme can make things happen by turning thoughts into action. They want to do things now, rather than simply talk about them.
<b>Adaptability®</b>	People exceptionally talented in the Adaptability theme prefer to go with the flow. They tend to be “now” people who take things as they come and discover the future one day at a time.
<b>Analytical®</b>	People exceptionally talented in the Analytical theme search for reasons and causes. They have the ability to think about all of the factors that might affect a situation.
<b>Arranger®</b>	People exceptionally talented in the Arranger theme can organize, but they also have a flexibility that complements this ability. They like to determine how all of the pieces and resources can be arranged for maximum productivity.
<b>Belief®</b>	People exceptionally talented in the Belief theme have certain core values that are unchanging. Out of these values emerges a defined purpose for their lives.
<b>Command®</b>	People exceptionally talented in the Command theme have presence. They can take control of a situation and make decisions.
<b>Communication®</b>	People exceptionally talented in the Communication theme generally find it easy to put their thoughts into words. They are good conversationalists and presenters.
<b>Competition®</b>	People exceptionally talented in the Competition theme measure their progress against the performance of others. They strive to win first place and revel in contests.
<b>Connectedness®</b>	People exceptionally talented in the Connectedness theme have faith in the links among all things. They believe there are few coincidences and that almost every event has meaning.
<b>Consistency®</b>	People exceptionally talented in the Consistency theme are keenly aware of the need to treat people the same. They crave stable routines and clear rules and procedures that everyone can follow.
<b>Context®</b>	People exceptionally talented in the Context theme enjoy thinking about the past. They understand the present by researching its history.
<b>Deliberative®</b>	People exceptionally talented in the Deliberative theme are best described by the serious care they take in making decisions or choices. They anticipate obstacles.
<b>Developer®</b>	People exceptionally talented in the Developer theme recognize and cultivate the potential in others. They spot the signs of each small improvement and derive satisfaction from evidence of progress.
<b>Discipline®</b>	People exceptionally talented in the Discipline theme enjoy routine and structure. Their world is best described by the order they create.
<b>Empathy®</b>	People exceptionally talented in the Empathy theme can sense other people’s feelings by imagining themselves in others’ lives or situations.
<b>Focus®</b>	People exceptionally talented in the Focus theme can take a direction, follow through and make the corrections necessary to stay on track. They prioritize, then act.

<b>Futuristic</b> ®	People exceptionally talented in the Futuristic theme are inspired by the future and what could be. They energize others with their visions of the future.
<b>Harmony</b> ®	People exceptionally talented in the Harmony theme look for consensus. They don't enjoy conflict; rather, they seek areas of agreement.
<b>Ideation</b> ®	People exceptionally talented in the Ideation theme are fascinated by ideas. They are able to find connections between seemingly disparate phenomena.
<b>Includer</b> ®	People exceptionally talented in the Includer theme accept others. They show awareness of those who feel left out and make an effort to include them.
<b>Individualization</b> ®	People exceptionally talented in the Individualization theme are intrigued with the unique qualities of each person. They have a gift for figuring out how different people can work together productively.
<b>Input</b> ®	People exceptionally talented in the Input theme have a need to collect and archive. They may accumulate information, ideas, artifacts or even relationships.
<b>Intellection</b> ®	People exceptionally talented in the Intellection theme are characterized by their intellectual activity. They are introspective and appreciate intellectual discussions.
<b>Learner</b> ®	People exceptionally talented in the Learner theme have a great desire to learn and want to continuously improve. The process of learning, rather than the outcome, excites them.
<b>Maximizer</b> ®	People exceptionally talented in the Maximizer theme focus on strengths as a way to stimulate personal and group excellence. They seek to transform something strong into something superb.
<b>Positivity</b> ®	People exceptionally talented in the Positivity theme have contagious enthusiasm. They are upbeat and can get others excited about what they are going to do.
<b>Relator</b> ®	People exceptionally talented in the Relator theme enjoy close relationships with others. They find deep satisfaction in working hard with friends to achieve a goal.
<b>Responsibility</b> ®	People exceptionally talented in the Responsibility theme take psychological ownership of what they say they will do. They are committed to stable values such as honesty and loyalty.
<b>Restorative</b> ™	People exceptionally talented in the Restorative theme are adept at dealing with problems. They are good at figuring out what is wrong and resolving it.
<b>Self-Assurance</b> ®	People exceptionally talented in the Self-Assurance theme feel confident in their ability to take risks and manage their own lives. They have an inner compass that gives them certainty in their decisions.
<b>Significance</b> ®	People exceptionally talented in the Significance theme want to make a big impact. They are independent and prioritize projects based on how much influence they will have on their organization or people around them.
<b>Strategic</b> ®	People exceptionally talented in the Strategic theme create alternative ways to proceed. Faced with any given scenario, they can quickly spot the relevant patterns and issues.
<b>Woo</b> ®	People exceptionally talented in the Woo theme love the challenge of meeting new people and winning them over. They derive satisfaction from breaking the ice and making a connection with someone.

# You've Got Your CliftonStrengths®, Now What?

## First Impressions

First impressions are important. Review your top five CliftonStrengths themes in your results report and answer the following five questions. These questions will help you think more deeply about your CliftonStrengths themes.

- 1 What was your first reaction to your top five themes?
- 2 What did you discover about yourself after reading your report?
- 3 What part of your top five themes surprised you?
- 4 What theme did you expect to see among your top five, but didn't?
- 5 Which theme among your top five stands out to you, and why?

# Name, Claim and Aim Your CliftonStrengths®

Building your talents into strengths requires practice and hard work, much like developing physical strength.

When you become aware of your talents, you can practice using them every day. And you can add to or develop new knowledge and skills and learn new ways to use your talents to be more effective. Investing skills, knowledge and practice will give you strength — the ability to consistently produce a specific positive outcome. To help you develop your talents into strengths, we have devised a process of *naming*, *claiming* and *aiming* your CliftonStrengths.

<b>Name It</b>	<b>Claim It</b>	<b>Aim It</b>
Understand your strengths profile. Identify what these themes mean to you.	Gain awareness and acceptance of your talents. Appreciate the unique power and value you have and bring to others.	Turn your talents into strengths. Intentionally practice using and developing your talents.

The first step is to **Name It**. Make your strengths your own. Identify what these themes mean to you.



## Name It

### Make a Difference Using What Makes You Exceptional

Your greatest potential for success comes from understanding your CliftonStrengths themes and using them every day.

Similar to your fingerprint, the sequence of your themes is unique to you. There are nearly 34 million possible combinations of top five themes.



Naming your CliftonStrengths means developing an understanding of the traits in each of your strongest CliftonStrengths themes.

- What words or phrases resonate with you when you look at the theme description?
- How would you describe this theme to another person?
- Do you know someone who also has this theme in their top five? How does this person use this theme?
- Do you think people see these talents in you?
- Describe a time when you used the talents in this theme to achieve academic or personal success.

# In Your Own Words

Identify what your top five CliftonStrengths themes mean to you.

*Carefully read the descriptions of each of your top five CliftonStrengths themes and identify parts of the theme descriptions that are undeniably you. Next, describe a recent situation when you used your themes.*

My Top Five CliftonStrengths Themes	Why It Can Be a Strength and What It Can Enable Me to Do	A Recent Situation When I Used This Theme
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

# Claim It: Gain Awareness and Embrace the Power of Your Talents

## **Power and Opportunities**

The second step in your strengths discovery journey is to “claim it.” To claim your talents, you must understand that they are the keys to your success.

When you closely examine your top five CliftonStrengths themes, you can start to see how they shape your innate thoughts, feelings and behaviors.

Most importantly, the more time you spend exploring your CliftonStrengths themes, the more likely you are to see each theme’s value and potential contribution.

A person with high **Activator** talents is driven to jump in and get things started.

A person with strong **Deliberative** talents has a strong desire to ponder what they hear.

A person with high **Responsibility** talents feels immense satisfaction when doing the right thing.

# Your Superpowers

## CliftonStrengths 34: A Taxonomy of Human Potential

### Executing

People with dominant Executing themes make things happen.

Achiever	Discipline
Arranger	Focus
Belief	Responsibility
Consistency	Restorative
Deliberative	

### Influencing

People with dominant Influencing themes take charge, speak up and make sure others are heard.

Activator	Self-Assurance
Command	Significance
Communication	Woo
Competition	
Maximizer	

### Relationship Building

People with dominant Relationship Building themes build strong relationships that hold a team together and make it greater than the sum of its parts.

Adaptability	Includer
Connectedness	Individualization
Developer	Positivity
Empathy	Relator
Harmony	

### Strategic Thinking

People with dominant Strategic Thinking themes absorb and analyze information that informs better decisions.

Analytical	Intellection
Context	Learner
Futuristic	Strategic
Ideation	
Input	

What are your academic success superpowers? How?

# The Unique Way You View the World Around You

Everyone has a unique filter — a characteristic way of responding to the world around them. Your talents help to form your filter. Your talents influence which stimuli to notice and which to ignore, which to love and which to hate. Your filter influences your attitude: Are you naturally optimistic or cynical, calm or anxious, empathetic or distant? It shapes your distinct patterns of thought, feeling and behavior.

The purpose of CliftonStrengths is to help you use your talents in ways that are productive and fulfilling. You can't do this if you don't appreciate your CliftonStrengths. By closely examining your talents, you will discover what makes you special and understand how to use your talents to do things exceptionally well.

## Your strongest CliftonStrengths can help you understand why ...

**... you make  
certain choices.**

People with strong Discipline yearn to find routines for order and structure.

People with strong Harmony talents are motivated to find ways to build consensus.

People with a lot of Woo are compelled to take the initiative to meet new people.

**... you like certain things.**

People with a lot of Competition need to compare one team with another or one individual's performance with another's.

People with strong Intellection talents need time to think and reflect.

People with strong Consistency are more interested in group needs than individual wants.

**... you are better at some  
things than others.**

People with strong Arranger have a natural ability to orchestrate people and resources to maximize effectiveness.

People with strong Ideation talents have an instinctive sense of innovation that helps them to think outside the box.

People with high Individualization are intrigued by each person's unique qualities and have a gift for figuring out how different people can work together productively.

# The Unique Way You View the World Around You

It's one thing to have the opportunity to use your CliftonStrengths every day. It's another to know exactly how they make a positive difference in your academic success and add value to the engagement and wellbeing of others.

*Complete the table below to discover the ways in which you can use your strengths for success and add value to others.*

<b>Your Top Five CliftonStrengths Themes</b>	<b>What This Theme Means to You</b>	<b>How You Have Used This Theme For Academic Success</b>	<b>The Positive Results of You Using This Theme, The Value This Theme Can Bring to You and Others</b>
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

# Aim It: Turn Your Talents Into Strengths

## Strengths Make a Difference

Our greatest talents do more than make us unique individuals. They also represent our best opportunities for excellence.

Gallup researchers have examined decades of data on individual performance and personal development.

People who know and use their strengths every day ...

- ... have higher levels of energy and vitality
- ... are more likely to achieve their goals
- ... are more confident
- ... perform better
- ... are more engaged at work
- ... experience less stress
- ... are more effective at developing themselves and growing as individuals

## Talent

a natural way of thinking, feeling or behaving

## x Investment

time spent practicing, developing skills and building a knowledge base

## = Strength

the ability to deliver consistent, near-perfect performance in a specific task



# Strengths Development in Action

Here's what strengths development sounds like:

## HARMONY THEME APPLIED TO CREATE A STRENGTH

“

My Harmony helps me build collaborative and productive partnerships and teams. When I sense tension or inefficiencies, I lean on my Harmony to make sure everyone moves along together without any conflict or delays.”

## IDEATION THEME APPLIED TO CREATE A STRENGTH

“

I get a real buzz from generating and discussing ideas with others. Many of the ideas I've worked on with others have been implemented, saving the shelter close to campus a great deal of money. Subsequently, I've become the idea go-to person in our fraternity.”

## DISCIPLINE THEME APPLIED TO CREATE A STRENGTH

“

I use my Discipline to create and control my schedule. I can do many things and get many tasks done by managing my time. Every Sunday I sit down to plan my week. I account for course and on-campus clubs responsibilities, what needs to be done and by when. This gives me a clear view of my week. When I don't make the time to do this, my life can become very chaotic.”

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Did you notice that each person's successes are a result of their talents — those thoughts, feelings and behaviors that come effortlessly? Each person is doing things that they do naturally — getting work done promptly, generating ideas and collaborating with others.

# Use Your CliftonStrengths® to Respond to Daily Situations

One way to aim your talents is to think about how you can use your CliftonStrengths to help you respond to situations you are facing or goals you are working toward. Below are five common situations that you likely experience.

Identify one of your top CliftonStrengths themes you could use when each situation arises. Describe how this theme would help you respond to the situation.

Common Situation	Describe How Your Strongest CliftonStrengths Themes Could Help You Respond to This Situation
When I need to bring order, structure or clarity to a situation, I use this theme ...	
When I have to work hard to complete a project or get something done, I use this theme ...	
When I attend an event with people I don't know, I can use this theme to connect with others ...	
When I need to absorb and think about new information, I use this theme ...	
When I need to determine or clarify priorities, I use this theme ...	

# Use Your CliftonStrengths® to Accomplish Important Tasks

Another way you can aim your CliftonStrengths is to connect your talents to your daily tasks. When preparing your to-do list for the week, consider your talents. For each task, think about how you can best use your talents to accomplish it. Also consider the skills and knowledge you can add to your talents to build more strength.

In the “Important Tasks” column below, list five important tasks that you need to accomplish. Then, identify one or more of your top CliftonStrengths themes you can use to accomplish each task.

Important Tasks	Theme I Will Use to Accomplish This Task

# Study Your Successes

## Spend more time studying your successes to better understand your talents.

Think for a moment about a recent success — something that went exceptionally well. It can be anything: something you did in class, at home or in your community.

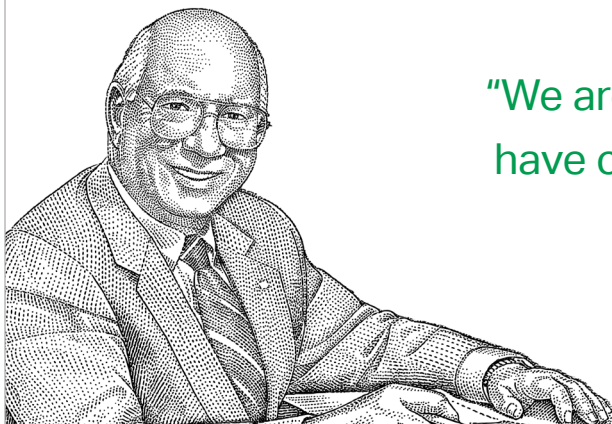
When you have this success clearly in mind, describe it in two to three sentences below.

How did your CliftonStrengths themes help you achieve success and reach your goals?

What other success would you like to duplicate? How could you make that happen?

Moments of success are clues to your natural talents. The more you explore these moments, the more you see how your CliftonStrengths help you achieve success.

Relive your successes. Spend time thinking about one recent success, and relive it. The more times you think of yourself doing your best work, the more you are inviting success in the future.



**“We are never so strong as when we  
have clearly in mind our successes.”**

**DON CLIFTON**  
1924-2003

# Tips for Using Your Strengths Every Day

## ● **Learn about your dominant strengths.**

Read and reflect on your CliftonStrengths results and complete the activities in this guidebook.

## ● **Talk to someone about your strengths.**

Share your results with the people closest to you.

## ● **Apply your strengths.**

Use the action items from your report every day.

## ● **Learn about your full strengths profile.**

Expand from your top five themes. Read and reflect on your full results.

## ● **Target how to use your strengths.**

Apply actions designed for academic and career success.

## ● **Engage in a coaching conversation.**

Talk to an expert, coach, teacher or advisor about your individual growth and development.

## ● **Bring others along.**

Influence others to discover their strengths.

## ● **Use strengths as you grow.**

Use your strengths as you prepare for life after school.

## NOTES





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