



IDENTIFY YOUR CHARACTER STRENGTHS

Why?

Researchers in positive psychology have identified 24 character strengths that are based on six universal virtues: wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance and transcendence. All people possess all 24 character strengths to varying degrees. We also express and practise them in unique ways. All character strengths are of equal value and can be developed.

When we can identify, use and develop our character strengths, we are better prepared to face challenges and lead a good life. Knowing your character strengths is also useful in career planning and job search. Knowing your strengths will help you plan your career because you can seek out career options that allow you to enjoy the work, be yourself and play to your strengths. Prospective employers are interested not only in your skills and experience, but also in the kind of person you are and the way you naturally act in different situations.

With the help of this assignment, you can identify your top character strengths either through a self-assessment or the VIA Character Strengths Survey and understand how they feature in your life. VIA stands for Values in Action, and the survey is based on positive psychology research.

How?

You can identify your character strengths by taking either a) the self-assessment based on the VIA survey or b) the free online VIA Character Strengths Survey, which is developed by positive psychology researchers. The VIA Character Strengths Survey requires registration, and the results are used for research purposes.

- a) **Self-assessment:** Read the brief descriptions of the 24 character strengths on the following pages. Choose and list the five character strengths that you feel are the strongest and most representative of you (your so called signature strengths).
- b) **The VIA Character Strengths Survey online:** If you want an independent assessment of your character strengths, take [the VIA Character Strengths Survey online](#). The survey is free but requires registration. Once you have completed the survey, you can download a report of your character strengths profile.



Character strengths:

1. **CURIOSITY:** You take an interest in all kinds of things. You ask a lot of questions and find all kinds of topics interesting. You like exploring and discovering new things.
2. **LOVE OF LEARNING:** You love learning new things both on your own and formally. You have always liked school, reading, museums and any place that allows you to learn something.
3. **JUDGMENT:** You find it important to think things through and examine them from all sides. You do not jump to conclusions. You rely on only solid evidence when making a decision. You are able to change your mind.
4. **CREATIVITY:** You often think of novel ways of doing things. If there is a better way, you never settle for the traditional way of doing things.
5. **SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE:** You are aware of the motives and feelings of others. You know what to do to fit into different social situations and to make others feel comfortable.
6. **PERSPECTIVE:** Although you may be blind to it, others value your wisdom. They value your ability to look at things from different perspectives and ask you for advice. You have a way of looking at the world that makes sense both to yourself and to others.
7. **BRAVERY:** You are a brave person who does not shrink from threat, challenge, difficulty or pain. You speak up for what is right even if you meet with opposition. You act on your convictions.
8. **PERSEVERANCE:** You work hard to finish what you started.
9. **HONESTY:** You are an honest person. You not only speak the truth, but also live your life in a genuine and sincere way. You are down to earth and without pretence. You are true to yourself.
10. **KINDNESS:** You are kind and generous to others and always eager to do someone a favour. You enjoy performing good deeds even to people who you do not know well.
11. **LOVE:** You value close relations with others, especially those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated. The people who are closest to you also consider you to be one of the closest people to them.
12. **TEAMWORK:** You work well as a member of a team or group. As a team member, you are reliable and committed, you always pull your weight and work hard for your team's success.



13. **FAIRNESS:** Treating everyone equally and fairly is a guiding principle in your life. You do not let your personal feelings bias your decisions about others. You want to give everyone a fair chance.
14. **LEADERSHIP:** You work well in leader roles. You encourage your group to get things done while maintaining harmony in the group by making everyone feel noticed. You are good at organising and ensuring that things get done.
15. **SELF-REGULATION:** You can consciously manage your feelings and actions. You are disciplined. You are in control of your appetites and emotions, and not the other way around.
16. **PRUDENCE:** You are careful about your choices. You do not say or do things that you might later regret.
17. **HUMILITY:** You do not seek to be the centre of attention, but instead let your accomplishments speak for themselves. You do not consider yourself to be more special than others. Others notice and value your humility.
18. **APPRECIATION OF BEAUTY AND EXCELLENCE:** You notice and appreciate beauty, excellence and skilled performance in all domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experience.
19. **GRATITUDE:** You are aware of the good things around you and do not take them for granted. Your family and friends are aware of your gratitude because you take the time to genuinely express thankfulness to others.
20. **HOPE:** You expect the best in the future and work to achieve it. You believe you have control over your future.
21. **SPIRITUALITY:** You have strong and coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe.
22. **FORGIVENESS:** You forgive those who have wronged or hurt you. You are always willing to give people a second chance. Your guiding principle is forgiveness and mercy, not vengeance.
23. **HUMOUR:** You like to laugh and tease others. You find it important to make other people smile. You try to look on the bright side of things.
24. **ZEST:** You approach life with excitement and energy, never doing things halfway or halfheartedly. You live your life as an adventure.



Follow-up assignment

- **If you took the VIA survey online:** First think about how well the results of the VIA survey correlate with your own experience of your character strengths. Do the signature strengths listed in the report feel like your true self? If not, how would you describe your strengths instead?

- **Consider the following after either test:**
 - In which situations have you used one or more of your signature strengths (top five strengths) during the past week?

 - What links can you see between your major subject and your signature strengths? What about between your career ambitions and your signature strengths?

 - A good rule of thumb for practising character strengths is to use the right amount of the right strength in the right place. In which situations or roles related to your studies or work do you already get to play to your signature strengths enough? In which roles or situations do you find yourself using too little or too much of your strengths?

 - Which other character strengths could you consciously practise more to benefit you in your studies or work? Think of concrete situations in which these strengths could be beneficial.

 - Think of a person you appreciate and whose behaviour you are familiar with. Which character strengths can you identify in their actions? How do they express them in practice?

Source: (Adapted from) Uusitalo-Malmivaara, L. & Vuorinen, K. 2016. Huomaa hyvä! – Näin autat lasta ja nuorta löytämään luontevahvuutensa.