



10 TIPS: HOW TO TALK TO YOUR PARENTS ABOUT MAJOR CHOICE

- 1. Start the conversation early:** The longer you wait, the more shocked your parent(s) will be. Make no assumptions, and take the initiative to begin the discussion.
- 2. Focus on your common ground and understand that they have good intentions:** Both you and your family want you to be successful and happy. If they ask tough questions, it is only because they want to confirm that you are making an informed decision.
- 3. Lead with the facts instead of emotional appeals:** Identify the reasons you disliked your initial major. Then share the research you have collected about yourself and your options. If you met with or shadowed a professional in the field, share the information you acquired. This dispels the misconception that you made the decision impulsively, while also helping them learn more about your new program of study.
- 4. Celebrate the experience:** Mention that nearly half of all college students change their major before they graduate. This will help them understand that this exploration is not only common, but it is also beneficial.
- 5. Be realistic:** No career or academic program is perfect. Identify any disadvantages that surfaced in your research to demonstrate that you have examined it from every angle.
- 6. If some concerns still remain, identify the course of action you will take to address them:** For example, if you learned that the job outlook is only growing at an average rate in your new occupation, outline the internships, employment or co-curricular activities that you will pursue to gain a competitive edge.
- 7. Provide some peace of mind:** Share that you will be meeting with an advisor to develop a plan of study. This again conveys your careful analysis of the decision. Also emphasize the activities you will pursue to verify your decision, such as finding a part-time job related to your new major or enrolling in an introductory class.
- 8. Provide specific examples of how they can learn about your new major or career:** Share with your parent(s) the websites that you have visited, such as your university's catalog, O*Net, UVM Career Center or the Occupational Outlook Handbook.
- 9. Ask for their support**
- 10. Assess the importance of your own voice and the voice of others:** More than likely, your culture and background will influence your perceptions. Some Americans value independence, while others value communal decision making. Only you can determine the role and importance others will play in the process.