

CAREER EXPLORATION INVENTORY



by John J. Liptak, Ed.D. ■ Fourth Edition

A Guide for Exploring Work, Leisure, and Learning

Administrator's Guide

What Is the *CEI*?

The *Career Exploration Inventory (CEI)* is a self-scoring and self-interpreting career interest instrument. Like other instruments, the *CEI* can help people explore their career and job alternatives based on their interests. Unlike other instruments, the *CEI* offers the advantage of including three major interest areas—work, leisure, and learning—in one device. It provides a developmental approach that measures not only interests from the past and present but also those anticipated for the future. This approach is unique and has proven to be helpful for many people.

The *CEI* helps individuals identify work, leisure, and learning interests and explore the relationship between them. It also helps individuals assess their lifelong interests rather than simply identify their current interests. Thus, a person who takes the *CEI* is able to evaluate work, leisure, and learning experiences from the past and the present before making career-related decisions about the future.

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A distinct advantage of the *CEI* is that it is easy to administer, score, and interpret. The instrument was designed to be scored by the individual who completes it. The *CEI* helps people identify their major interest clusters; explore a variety of work, leisure, and educational options; and develop a career action plan. This approach makes the *CEI* particularly useful for various individual and group counseling situations.

The fourth edition of the *CEI* has been updated to illustrate changes in the world of work and in our culture. For example, some items have been revised to reflect advances in technology and changes in the workplace and kinds of occupations available. Occupations have been updated to include the latest job titles from the O*NET database, and leisure activities and educational opportunities have been updated to reflect new and growing interests and postsecondary education and training options. Finally, instructions for taking the assessment have been rearranged and streamlined to make it even easier to use, and the action plan has been expanded to allow for more-focused goal setting.

This guide is designed to provide only a brief overview of the *CEI* and tips for administration. For additional information about administering and interpreting the *CEI*, please consult the *Career Exploration Inventory Professional Manual* and the *Career Exploration Workshop Manual*, available for free download from jist.com.

Who Can Use the *CEI*?

The *CEI* was normed on employed and unemployed adults aged 18 to 73 and can be used with working and unemployed adults, students, and youth. It can also be used with special populations such as the economically disadvantaged, people in correctional facilities, and those with substance abuse problems. Care has been taken to make the device easy to read and simple to interpret with minimal counselor or instructor intervention. In addition, the *CEI* is cross-referenced to standard occupational information sources, so it can be used as the basis for a comprehensive exploration of career alternatives.

The combination of leisure and learning elements with more-traditional career considerations makes the *CEI* particularly useful for many populations. Many career counselors see leisure and learning as integral components of an individual's career. Identifying work, leisure, and learning interests is an important part of choosing a career. In the past, professionals have had to rely on separate inventories to measure occupational, leisure, and educational interests. The *CEI* helps professionals measure and assess an individual's interests in all three areas at the same time. For this reason, the *CEI* is more helpful than more-traditional interest inventories. In addition, a *CEI-Spanish* version and a *CEI-EZ* version are available at www.jist.com for career counselors to use with special populations.

The *CEI* can be used to help individuals explore opportunities they might have overlooked when using more traditional assessment instruments. For example, after taking the *CEI*, a frustrated administrative assistant who enjoys needlework as a leisure activity might decide to explore other career opportunities such as doing alterations or opening a small crafts business. A heavy-equipment operator may discover a strong interest in literature and fine arts and choose to pursue those activities during leisure time. A young person who fixes electronics equipment

as a hobby might consider formal training and education in electronics. Another person may discover leisure interests to develop prior to retiring. Because of its easy-to-administer format, the *CEI* has been proven to provide a more comprehensive view of careers and of peoples' interests throughout their lifetimes. Because the *CEI* helps people assess interests in three areas of their lives—work, leisure, and learning—it is a valuable tool that can be used with a wide variety of populations.

Some Tips for Administering the *CEI*

The *CEI* can be used in many environments by many professionals, including counselors, instructors, trainers, job search specialists, and career development researchers. The *CEI* was designed for self-administration and interpretation. The instructions are clear and easy to understand, and individuals should require little assistance in completing the device. Still, some people will invariably be confused about one point or another, and it may help if you provide a brief review of the assessment. Following are some suggestions.

Introduction to the *CEI*

Provide a brief review of the advantages of using a device such as the *CEI* to analyze interests and put them into a useful arrangement. Explain that any device simply takes an individual's responses and compares them to other people's responses. It is up to the individual to make decisions based on the results obtained.

Briefly explain that the *CEI* can help individuals plan their future by examining their past and present interests. People who complete the *CEI* will be considering their leisure and learning interests as well as their career interests. Ask participants to read the section titled "Introduction to the *CEI*" on the first page of the device. Answer any questions.

Overview of *CEI* Steps

The *CEI* is organized into seven sequential steps:

1. Exploring Work, Leisure, and Learning Activities
2. Taking the Inventory
3. Adding Your Total Scores
4. Interpreting Your *CEI* Scores
5. Exploring the Work, Leisure, and Learning Activities Guide
6. Researching Career, Leisure, and Learning Options
7. Creating an Action Plan

These seven steps are to be completed in numerical order. If participants seem uncertain about how to do this, you may want to show them where the first step begins and how to locate the other steps throughout the device.

Although this is enough instruction for most people, you may want to review the procedures that are explained in Steps 2, 3, and 4. The best way to do this is to show participants the sample

responses in those steps, ask them to read the instructions for each step, and answer any questions.

After individuals complete Steps 1–4, you may want to assist them in completing Steps 5–7. While much of this work can be done in one session, Steps 5–7 may require additional work in a library or other location. Again, the instructions provided in the *CEI* itself should be enough for most people, but you should mention any additional career exploration resources you know of or have available.

If possible, copies of the major reference books mentioned in Step 6 should be available for participants to use. These books are available through a variety of sources, including most libraries. You should, of course, become familiar with these and other resources yourself. In addition, Internet access, when available, can provide participants with most of the career information they will need.

As individuals complete the *CEI*, take a few moments to encourage them to follow up on what they have learned. They may need to go back to the library or talk to other people. Help them feel positive about themselves. If you cannot be available for additional counseling, suggest other resources they can use to obtain individual assistance in their career and life planning.

Using the *CEI* with Individuals

The *CEI* can be given to an individual for self-administration and interpretation without counselor intervention; however, this approach is not recommended unless there is no reasonable alternative. The reason is that most people will benefit from discussing their results and feelings with a knowledgeable professional, such as you.

Because available resources differ from one setting to another, few specifics are offered here on counseling those who take the *CEI*. You should advise participants of the resources available to them and explain how these resources can be accessed. Refer participants to books and other information and to community resources. For additional information about administering and interpreting the *CEI*, please consult the *Career Exploration Inventory Professional Manual* and the *Career Exploration Workshop Manual*, available for free download from jst.com.

Using the *CEI* with Groups

The *CEI* lends itself to group administration and has a variety of self-exploration and planning elements that encourage group discussion and the sharing of insights. Depending on how much time you have available, the *CEI* can help you conduct one session or several. Following are some ideas you can adapt to your situation and time constraints.

For starters, you may want to pace the group so that all the participants complete and discuss each *CEI* step before individuals go on to the next step. This will slow down group members who work more quickly and will allow you to cover the major steps more thoroughly. Group discussion is particularly effective after Steps 5 and 7. If time is short, you may want to have group discussion after those two steps only.

If you wish to use the *CEI* to structure more than one group session, you can do this in a variety of ways. Steps 1–4 could be completed in one class session, followed by a discussion on interpreting the results. This could productively occupy a one-hour session, with one or more of the remaining steps to be completed either as homework or in future sessions.

The content of Step 5 could productively occupy a second one-hour session. You might divide the group into smaller groups of three or four. Individuals would then review their top interest clusters with the other members of their group. The group could present options and ideas for related occupational, leisure, and learning activities as the situation requires.

If time permits, additional one-hour sessions might be structured to introduce a variety of printed, online, and other information sources. This might include a review of the resources mentioned in Step 6 and of other resources specifically available to your participants. Individuals could explore these information resources in preparation for completion of the final action plan. For example, group members might be asked to visit someone in a particular occupation and gather information on educational options. These experiences could then be reported to the group and discussed.

One or more sessions could also be structured for completing a preliminary action plan as described in Step 7, shaping and refining it in small group discussions, and developing a more detailed final plan.

Your own knowledge and experience can supplement the *CEI*'s structure and content. Please feel free to be creative in using the *CEI* as a basis for your career, leisure, or learning programs. Consider the ideas presented here as suggestions for developing your own programs.

For additional information about using the *CEI* in a group setting, please consult the *Career Exploration Inventory Workshop Manual*, available for free download from jist.com.

Restrictions on the Use of This Device

Because the *CEI* has been designed for self-administration and interpretation, there are few restrictions on its use. Administrators should have a basic understanding of the nature and limitations of assessment instruments if they intend to help others interpret the *CEI* properly. As the instructions on the *CEI* itself emphasize, no device can tell an individual the right thing to do. Nevertheless, many participants believe that simply using an assessment tool such as this will give them the direction they have been unable to find elsewhere.

The *CEI* is a tool of self-discovery. When properly used, it helps people organize information about themselves and access additional information they can use in making decisions. Administrators may need to assist participants in understanding the limitations of this or any such device. They may also need to present information about additional resources and provide personal counseling.

Technical and Research Information

The *CEI* was normed on employed and unemployed adults aged 18 to 73. Its validity was found to be comparable to existing work and leisure interest inventories. This brief piece is intended to give you an overview of the *CEI*. Substantial additional technical information on its development, theoretical basis, normative data, workshop guidelines and ideas, and other details can be found in the *Career Exploration Inventory Professional Manual*, available for free download from jst.com.

The publisher and author are interested in encouraging additional research and formal reviews of the *CEI* and its use with different populations. If you are interested in using the *CEI* as the basis for formal research, please contact the publisher for additional information.