

Researching Career Interests: (General)
(Using Appropriate Sources of Information)

This activity is to help you explore education and/or career subject that are of personal interest to you. If you have already decided on a specific career or major, you may choose to use that. However, if you have yet to decide on a major, or are curious about other options, you may choose a topic as you wish. However, to simplify your process, you are advised to focus on one subject. The point of this activity is to learn the skill of knowing how to research your interest. If you have additional interests, you are advised to follow up on your own time – after you have completed this project.

Places to Find Good Career Information:

1. **Library Resources:**

Periodicals (magazines, newspapers, professional and/or educational journals) are those publications that are published on a repeating cycle.

Books – include at least one book reference in your research. This book can give you more information on a particular industry (publishing, agriculture, engineering, education, etc.) or on a specific career (teacher, doctor, lawyer, journalist, etc.), or on job searching information in general. To be effective, books should be less than ten years old.

Reference Books – Reference books are those books not intended to be read from cover to cover. Rather, like a dictionary or telephone book, you refer to them only for specific information at a given time. Most libraries will contain reference manuals containing career-related information. These are often a good place to start, and they often can give you basic information about careers such as working environment, required skills, and experience.

2. **Career Centers & Transfer Centers**

Most college campuses have career centers, and most community colleges will have transfer centers as well. These offices will have a lot of resources including books and online tools, on their respective topics. Many of their resources may be accessed online, and may be open for public use. Most college campuses may require you to be a currently-enrolled student to use some of their resources. Check their website for their policies and hours of availability.

3. **Internet Research:**

Using the Internet, find out more about your area(s) of interest as related to majors and careers. If need be, the library or Counseling Services should have a list of addresses, or you can surf on your own. Be sure to cite the addresses in your final report, as well as any helpful information you happened upon.

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- a. **Occupational Outlook Handbook:** (<http://www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm>)
The Occupational Outlook Handbook can give you information on employment trends. Be sure to include any employment trend information you find in your research paper. For example, what if you discover that the career that interests you is a dying trade? Would you want to invest four years of study for something that may not be marketable when you graduate?
- b. **O-Net:** <http://www.onetonline.org/> Is a searchable online database created by the U.S. Government, Department of Labor to allow access to anyone wanting to search for occupation-related information. Gives information such as knowledge and skills needed to do a particular job.
- c. **Current Job Postings at possible future employers**
One good way to get information is to find postings for current job openings at an employer where you might want to work (*police officer recruitment for a certain city, nursing recruitment at a local hospital, teacher recruitment flyer for a preferred school district, etc.*). Such job postings will usually include information such as: Job description, examples of duties, minimum qualifications (including education, experience and technical skills), preferred qualifications, salary range, working environment and physical requirements to perform the job. They can also help you identify possible job titles. The best way to find these, is to go to a Human Resources Department website for a possible prospective employer and look at their: 1) List of current openings 2) List of job classifications (*if available*).
- d. **Professional Associations**, such as **AMA** (*American Medical Association*), **CTA** (*California Teachers Association*), **PRSA** (*Public Relations Society of America*), **APA** (*American Psychological Association*), etc. Most professions have associations which often establish codes of ethics and standards, oversee professional training programs, and keep their members informed of new laws and trends in their industry. These professional associations are often listed in the Occupational Handbook Outlook Guide and other career research tools) and links are often provided by schools which train for these careers. These associations can often be a good source of information regarding trends in the industry.
<https://www.careeronestop.org/Toolkit/Training/find-professional-associations.aspx>

When using this information for your career research, you need to indicate what information you found, where you found it, and whether the information

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interested you or turned you off. Also, like solving a crime, what clues or leads did this information provide?

4. **Academic Major:**

Obtain specific information about an academic major or educational preparation program that is designed to prepare future employees in the field that you are considering.

The kind of information you should try to discover includes the following:

- What schools offer such training programs?
- If you discovered more than one school, what are the differences between the way the different schools teach it (hands-on vs. lecture, etc.) and what each program emphasizes? (i.e. preparing great employees vs. preparing great thinkers, etc.)
- Upon completion, how much education should you expect to have (i.e. 6-month certificate program, Associates Degree, Bachelor's degree, Master's degree or Doctorate degree)?
- How long will the course of study take?
- What are some of the courses you would be required to take?
- What are some of the admissions requirements in order to be accepted into the program?
- What are some possible career opportunities for people who graduate from such a program?
- Do they offer some sort of "Introduction to Careers in this Profession" type of class that allows you to explore your opportunities within the field?

Where do you get this information?

- The School Research Project assignment offered:
 - Our campus's student support offices:
 - Career Center
 - Transfer Center
 - The school's website
 - The school's official catalog
 - The school's Admissions office
 - The school's academic department for your major

When using this information in your research, you need to indicate what information you found, where you found it, and whether the information interested you or turned you off. Also, as before, what clues or leads did this information provide?

Use Understanding Education to help you understand what the educational requirements will mean to you personally.

Any relevant information regarding the academic program of your choice can be found in the school's catalog (in print or online). The catalog will contain

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graduation requirements, course listings, course descriptions, and course prerequisites.

5. Informational Interviews:

(See “Informational Interview” assignment for more information.)

1. Professor Interview(s):

Once you have received as much information as you can from reading literature or Internet sites, you should set up an interview with a professor in an academic department that interests you. Ask about the curriculum, for the major, internship possibilities, career options, what makes a student a good candidate for the program, and what advice can s/he pass along to you.

In the final report, indicate what they told you, who said it, and whether the information interested you or turned you off. Also, what clues or leads did this information provide?

2. Professional Interview:

Set up an interview with someone who does the job in which you are considering. For example, if you are studying print journalism, then interview a reporter. Or if you are considering biology, then consider interviewing a doctor. If you are considering theology, consider interviewing a pastor. If you do not know of such a person, ask the professor whom you interviewed if they know of alumni (one of their graduates) that you could contact. Get two or three names in case the first doesn't work out. The purpose of this assignment is to get the perspective of a real-world practitioner. Refer to the handout “Conducting Informational Interviews” for more information.

Put it all together!

Your final project will summarize what you discovered about the career or major from your research and interviews. In addition to facts, relate the information to yourself...did this spark more of an interest for you, or turn you toward another direction? What will be your subsequent steps (e.g. declare this as your major, research other options, continue to look into the career options)?