



Researching and Understanding Career Information

Learning Objectives

- ▶ Identify and use several sources of occupational information
- ▶ Interview workers with questions that are related to your career concerns
- ▶ Use hands-on experience when you make career decisions
- ▶ Understand and use three standard methods of classifying occupational information
- ▶ Relate your personal characteristics to specific occupations and broad occupational groups

Students sometimes select an occupation without having enough information about it. A lack of career information can result in disappointment, dissatisfaction, and a feeling of failure. Satisfaction with your career choice depends on the extent to which it meets your personal, social, and economic needs and expectations. You therefore should investigate beyond your present knowledge of an occupation before making an occupational decision.

Enrich Your Vocabulary

In reading this chapter and doing the exercises, you will learn the following important terms:

classification systems	North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS)
computerized career information systems	Occupational Information Network (O*NET)
employment outlook	<i>Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH)</i>
<i>Guide for Occupational Exploration (GOE)</i>	Standard Occupational Classification (SOC)
InfoNet	tech-prep program
informational interview	transcript
integrate	U.S. Department of Education career clusters

Research will help you identify occupations that meet several of your personal needs. It will also help you anticipate the satisfaction that you may receive in one occupation as compared with another. Occupational information includes

- ▶ The title and specific duties of the occupation
- ▶ Its education and training requirements
- ▶ A description of the normal worksite
- ▶ The range of wages
- ▶ Possible career paths and related occupations
- ▶ The **employment outlook** (present and future employment trends)
- ▶ Sources of additional occupational information
- ▶ Organizations that hire workers in this particular occupation

An increased knowledge of occupations and a thorough understanding of your personal characteristics will help you evaluate, match, and integrate information about yourself and various occupations into a satisfying career choice. Learning how to acquire and use occupational information and exploring career choices within the area of education and training you select will also prepare you to make future career decisions. During their working years, most workers will make several career changes.

In this chapter, you will become familiar with commonly used systems for organizing occupational information. Additionally, you will learn about sources of occupational information and methods for studying specific occupations.

FIND OUT MORE

Career Voyages is a collaboration between the U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Department of Education. It provides information on high-growth, high-demand occupations along with the required skills and education. Type **Career Voyages** in your search engine, or go online at www.careervoyages.gov.

Planning Makes a Difference: Everyday Job Tasks Are Important

Latoria Lambert's understanding of her personal characteristics was very complete when she decided to become a teacher. She was an outstanding math student and enjoyed helping her younger brothers and sisters with their schoolwork. She achieved a 3.6 grade point average in high school while taking the most difficult courses offered. Latoria's teachers, neighbors, and relatives considered her to be friendly and helpful.

Latoria took summer classes every year and never gave a lot of thought to her future career. During her second year of college, Latoria was required to declare a major area of study. She selected the College of Education. Latoria had an image of a teacher's job, but she didn't have enough specific information about the occupation to understand the everyday tasks, problems, and rewards. For example, Latoria didn't realize that she would teach the same lessons over and over and spend most evenings preparing lessons and grading papers. Latoria also discovered that she would be required to complete additional college courses to maintain her state teaching certificate. Latoria has learned the importance of obtaining a complete understanding of an occupation before making a choice.

After two years of teaching mathematics at a local junior high school, Latoria has decided to leave teaching. She plans to spend her summer vacation looking for a different job.



Critical Thinking

List Latoria's personal characteristics. How do the characteristics on this list relate to the job tasks of a teacher? How do they relate to the job tasks of three occupations other than teacher? Be specific.

What action could you take to help you avoid making the same mistakes and experiencing the same career disappointments as Latoria?

Section 1: Researching Occupational Information

Rita Levell plans to enter a **tech-prep program** (a cooperative program that links high school technical education with two- and four-year college programs) at Greenfield High next year. She is presently taking a career-planning course to help her select the tech-prep program that is right for her.

KEY TO SUCCESS

Make certain that the occupational information you use is accurate, up-to-date, and complete.

CAREER FACT

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the United States will add 15.6 million workers to the economy between 2006 and 2016, bringing the civilian labor force up to 166.2 million workers. These new jobs will not be evenly distributed across major industrial and occupational groups. Changes in consumer demand, technology, and many other factors will contribute to the continually changing employment structure in the U.S. economy.



Rita uses the library because of its extensive occupational information resources. What should she be on the lookout for if she is to get an accurate picture of the occupation?

Rita has already found many occupational information resources in her guidance counselor's office and in the school and public libraries. She is careful to rely on recent information. Unfortunately, some of the information she finds is a few years old and of little value.

Occupational information concerning technology, economic conditions, demands for certain products and services, education and training requirements, and wages can change rapidly. To get an accurate picture of an occupation, Rita uses the resources described in this chapter.

Being able to locate various sources of occupational information and learning methods for studying

specific occupations are useful lifelong skills. Becoming familiar with the sources and systems used to categorize and describe occupations and industries will help you make suitable matches between workplaces and occupations. A good place to begin your search for information is the library.

An increased knowledge of occupations and a thorough understanding of your personal characteristics will help you evaluate, match, and **integrate** (combine) information about yourself and various occupations into a satisfying career choice. Ask your teacher, counselor, or librarian to help you locate and use the following sources of occupational information, or begin your occupation search by looking in the library's computer listings under *occupations*, *vocations*, or *careers*.

Books

The **Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH)** is an easy-to-read reference book researched and published by the U.S. Department of Labor every two years. It provides detailed descriptions of about 270 occupations, accounting for 9 of every 10 jobs in the U.S. economy. In addition, summary information on 128 occupations, accounting for another 7 percent of all jobs, is presented for occupations that are not studied in detail.

In this resource, occupations are grouped in categories according to the type of work performed and are also listed alphabetically in the index. Those requiring the most education or training provide the most information, including the nature of the work, working conditions, the education and training needed, advancement possibilities, earnings, job outlook, related occupations to consider, and sources for additional information.

Occupations described in the *OOH* are divided into the 11 categories listed under the heading "Standard Occupational Classification (SOC)

KEY TO SUCCESS

Don't eliminate an occupation from consideration because of one characteristic. Various characteristics and possible work settings exist for every occupation. For example, most accountants work alone, but some spend a great deal of time with clients. Most work in an office, but some travel.

System” in Section 2 of this chapter. In addition, the *OOH* further divides the 11 categories of occupations into 39 subcategories.

The **Guide for Occupational Exploration (GOE)** was developed originally by the U.S. Department of Labor. This occupational reference book divides occupations into 16 interest areas. For each interest area, work groups and subgroups are listed. Using these categories, you may select two or three interesting groups. You can then select occupations within each group, based on the amount of education or training you are willing to acquire.

Databases and Online Sources

Computerized career information systems are available in many educational institutions. These systems allow you to explore occupations and educational preferences on a large database that is periodically updated. They may serve a single school, school district, or an entire state. In addition to nationwide information, each state system usually delivers information specific to the state.

You can use the computer’s database to browse, explore, and clarify career and occupational information. A brief personal assessment or questionnaire is frequently included to match some of your personal characteristics to specific occupations or groups of occupations. Most systems contain information about

- ▶ Specific occupations
- ▶ Two- and four-year colleges and technical schools
- ▶ Scholarships and other forms of financial aid
- ▶ Military careers

The **Occupational Information Network (O*NET)** serves as an online library for career information. It provides a worldwide medium for exchanging information and data that is relevant to the U.S. job market. Using this database, you can acquire data about job characteristics and worker attributes for about 1,200 occupational titles. You can benefit by exploring career options and learning which skills employers seek for specific types of work. Employers benefit by increasing the efficiency of recruitment and training. To obtain more information online, simply type **O*NET** on your search engine, or go online at www.doleta.gov/programs/onet.

InfoNet is a U.S. Department of Labor Internet site containing occupational information that will assist in your employment search and increase your understanding of the job market. The Occupation Search option allows you to select information about employment outlook, earnings, and training for specific occupations. The Resources option accesses the Career Resource Library where you can explore your career interests, assess your skills, or explore other relevant career sites. Type **InfoNet** on your search engine, or go online at www.acinet.org/acinet.

CLUSTER LINK

Are you interested in designing, planning, managing, building, and maintaining physical structures including roads, bridges, and commercial or residential buildings? Whether you are operating heavy equipment, designing the project, or installing the heating and air conditioning system, you may find your future work in the Architecture and Construction career cluster. See the appendix for more information.

CAREER FACT

Don’t forget job opportunities in the U.S. Armed Forces when you conduct your occupational research. In 2007, more than 2.6 million people served in the U.S. Armed Forces. More than 1.4 million were on active duty. Another 1.2 million served in their Reserve components, and the Air and Army National Guard. In addition, another 40,000 served in the Coast Guard, which is now part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

To locate more information, you can use e-mail to join a discussion group, a Usenet news group, or a listserv in a particular area of career interest. Subscribing to a discussion group will enable you to join conversations about issues and trends in your area of career interest. In addition, most companies, professional societies, academic institutions, and government agencies maintain Internet sites that highlight the organizations' latest information and activities. (You can enter keywords in your favorite Internet search engine to find these sites.) Additionally, you can scan professional journals for information about online services concerning your questions.

Periodicals

Periodicals and magazines also are worthwhile sources of career information because of their timeliness. In addition, they frequently provide information about little-known career opportunities. Table 5.1 lists examples of magazines that publish articles focusing on specific career information.

Many daily newspapers carry special business or financial pages that feature stories about employment opportunities in new or expanding businesses. Classified newspaper advertisements give you a general idea of the kinds of jobs that are available in your area. Annual stockholder reports published by corporations are another good source of information about potential employers and their products or services.

The Encyclopedia of Associations, located in the reference section of most libraries, lists names of thousands of trade and professional associations that can be contacted for information about specific careers. Descriptions of each association, Web site information, officers' names, and relevant phone numbers are included.

Additional sources of information include pamphlets and trade and professional publications, which are frequently published by organizations and kept in school libraries. You can obtain them by writing to a specific trade or professional group. Keep in mind that these publications are frequently used to recruit workers and present a good image of the organization to the public. As a result, they may minimize unfavorable aspects of the work and the organization.

CAREER FACT

Of the nearly 151 million jobs in the U.S. economy in 2006, wage and salary workers accounted for 138 million and self-employed workers accounted for 12.2 million. *Moonlighting* (people holding a second job) accounted for about 7 million jobs. Self-employed workers held about one-third of secondary jobs; wage and salary workers held most of the remainder.

Table 5.1 Magazines That Focus on Career Information

Types of Career Articles	Magazines
Career information for women	<i>Working Mother</i>
Business opportunities	<i>Changing Times</i> and <i>Kiplinger</i>
Business trends	<i>Business Week</i> and <i>Forbes</i>
Personnel problems and developments	<i>Fortune</i>

Guidance Counselors

Guidance counselors receive special training in career planning and can help you understand the relationship between your personal characteristics and a particular occupation. Ask your guidance counselor to review your high school transcript with you. A **transcript** is a record of your academic credits earned, grades, attendance, standardized test scores, and extracurricular activities. In addition to relating your transcript information to occupations that you are considering, your counselor can guide you through an assessment of your goals, values, interests, and aptitudes. Armed with this information, you can begin to consider broad career areas and specific occupations within them.

Your school counselor is familiar with a wide range of resources to help you research occupational information. Ask him or her for information and resources concerning the job market, entry requirements for post-secondary education and training institutions, and financial aid.

In addition, contact counselors in the career planning and placement offices of colleges, private vocational or technical schools, vocational rehabilitation agencies, community service organizations, and the state *job service* (employment bureau).



Your guidance counselor is familiar with a wide range of resources that will help you relate information about yourself to occupations. Have you taken the SAT or ACT and discussed the results with your counselor?

People You Know and Members of the Community

Family members, neighbors, and friends usually enjoy talking about their work and sharing their opinions and suggestions as well. Listening to them may help you clarify your own thinking. Don't overlook these personal contacts when you are seeking career information. They may be able to answer your questions directly or put you in touch with someone who can. This type of networking might lead to an interview with a worker who is able to answer your questions about a specific occupation. It might also give you a chance to visit an organization's worksite and acquire inside information about specific career areas.

If your school invites speakers to address students on a Career Day, take advantage of the opportunity to ask questions and discuss careers with visiting workers from different occupations. Organizations such as the American Chemical Society, the American Nurses' Association, the chamber of commerce, various trade associations, labor unions, and business

CAREER FACT

In George Washington's time, more than 8 out of 10 Americans worked in agriculture. By the time of the Civil War, 5 out of 10 workers were in agriculture. By World War II, that number declined to 1 out of 8. In the United States today, less than 1 worker in 80 earns a living in agriculture.

firms can usually put you in touch with someone who will come to your school and speak about a particular career area.

Many schools have advisory committees composed of local organizations. They usually meet after school. See your counselor or principal to find out whether your school has an advisory committee. If so, ask whether the committee would be willing to provide career speakers.

Multimedia

Videos, DVDs, CDs, and audiotapes also are available in most school and public libraries. When you view a DVD or video or listen to a CD or tape, keep in mind that what you observe or hear is usually general in nature and has probably been glamorized.

America's Career InfoNet video library offers online occupational videos. The video library describes careers of every type, from child care to physical therapy to working for the merchant marines. The videos are available online at www.acinet.org.

Section 1: Get Involved

Answer the following on a separate sheet of paper, and be prepared to discuss your responses in class.

1. Write a career research report about an occupation you are now considering most seriously.
2. Write to an association or company to request information about a career that interests you.
3. Read the biography of a person who is or was successful in an occupation that you are considering. Write a brief report comparing your interests, potential skills, career goals, and life goals to those of that person.

Section 2: Classifying Occupational Information

Filtering the overwhelming amount of information available in books, the Internet, and various computerized occupational information systems through your personal values, interests, and abilities is important. Because remembering information about the 20,000 to 30,000 occupations in the world of work is impossible, **classification systems** (systematic divisions into groups) have been developed to simplify the relationship of occupations to one another. Each major occupational classification system has specific advantages for the audience it addresses.

The Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) System

Federal agencies that collect occupational employment data use the **Standard Occupational Classification (SOC)** system. This system separates occupations into the following 11 categories, according to the type of work performed:

TECHNOLOGY

To get an insider's view of a career or industry that interests you, subscribe to a related podcast or blog. Just type a job title and the word **podcast** or **blog** into a search engine, and you should receive many results from which to choose.

1. Management, business, and financial operations occupations
2. Professional and related occupations
3. Service occupations
4. Sales and related occupations
5. Office and administrative support occupations
6. Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations
7. Construction trades and related workers
8. Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations
9. Production occupations
10. Transportation and material-moving occupations
11. Job opportunities in the Armed Forces

Within the 11 SOC categories, occupations are labeled either as part of service-producing organizations or goods-producing organizations. Service-producing organizations fall into these categories:

- ▶ Education and health services
- ▶ Professional and business services
- ▶ Information
- ▶ Leisure and hospitality
- ▶ Trade, transportation, and utilities
- ▶ Financial activities
- ▶ Government
- ▶ Other services except government

Goods-producing organizations fall into these categories:

- ▶ Construction
- ▶ Manufacturing
- ▶ Agriculture, forestry, and fishing
- ▶ Mining

The United States Department of Education Career Clusters

The **U.S. Department of Education career clusters** comprise the following 16 career groups, each of which has hundreds of job categories:

1. Agriculture and natural resources
2. Architecture and construction

TAKE NOTE

The American College Testing (ACT) Program has developed an online World-of-Work Map. Type **ACT World-of-Work Map** on your search engine, or go online at www.act.org/wwm. ACT has organized jobs into the following six clusters and referenced the educational preparation needed by clusters:

- ▶ Administration and sales
- ▶ Business operations
- ▶ Technical
- ▶ Science and technology
- ▶ Arts
- ▶ Social service

CAREER FACT

Once upon a time, the United States was the steel-producing king of the entire world! Today, the largest steel plant in the United States, U.S. Steel Corporation, is the sixth largest in the world. The high costs of energy, raw materials, and labor are considered to be major factors in the decline of job opportunities in the steel industry.

3. Arts, audiovisual technology, and communications
4. Business and administration
5. Education and training
6. Finance
7. Government and public administration
8. Health science
9. Hospitality and tourism
10. Human services
11. Information technology
12. Law and public safety
13. Manufacturing
14. Retail/wholesale sales and service
15. Scientific research and engineering
16. Transportation, distribution, and logistics

The career clusters provide a way for schools to organize instruction and student experience around 16 broad categories that encompass virtually all occupations from entry through professional levels. Related occupations that require different levels of education are described in each cluster. The appendix has additional information about each career cluster.

KEY TO SUCCESS

Identifying certain occupations, occupational classifications, and career clusters that you dislike will help you narrow your occupational choices.

The North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS)

The **North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS)** was approved in 1997 by Canada, Mexico, and the United States and began operating in 2004.

NAICS seeks to standardize the classification systems of the three partners to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)—the United States, Canada, and Mexico. The new system makes it possible to compare economic statistics from the three NAFTA trading partners.

NAICS uses a six-digit classification system with 20 major sectors and 1,179 industries. Under the new system, industries are organized on the basis of their production activities alone.

NAICS recognizes new and emerging industries. It has an alphabetized list of more than 18,000 businesses and their corresponding NAICS codes. Being aware of the types of industries that are thriving and declining can help you to make wise career choices. For online information about NAICS, go to www.census.gov/epcd/www/naics.html.

Occupational Levels

Occupations require varying levels of worker skills, education and training requirements, and job responsibilities. The following list displays a range of occupational levels, from professional to unskilled. Which occupational level do you hope to attain in your future career?

- ▶ Professional
- ▶ Managerial
- ▶ Semiprofessional
- ▶ Skilled
- ▶ Semiskilled
- ▶ Unskilled

The occupational level workers attain is directly related to the education and training level they achieve. What education and training level will you need to achieve for the occupational level you hope to attain?

- ▶ High school dropout
- ▶ GED
- ▶ High school graduate
- ▶ Some postsecondary training
- ▶ Apprenticeship training
- ▶ Technical trade school
- ▶ Two-year associate degree
- ▶ Four-year bachelor's degree
- ▶ Five-year (or more) college degree
- ▶ Graduate school degree

Section 2: Get Involved

Answer the following on a separate sheet of paper, and be prepared to discuss your responses in class.

1. Write down the title of a specific occupation you are considering for your future career. For the occupation you are considering, determine the Standard Occupational Classification and the career cluster.
2. Does the occupational level of the occupation you chose match your personal career goals? Does the education and training level match your personal education and training goals?
3. Would you be satisfied with the type of organization and work setting that is customary for this occupation?
4. Does this occupation seem to be a good match with your personal career goals? Why or why not?

Section 3: Exploring Careers Through Experience

Your paid and nonpaid work experiences can be used as career rehearsals for the “real thing.” For example, being on the staff of your high school newspaper or yearbook provides experiences related to the occupations of reporter, editor, word processor, layout artist, and illustrator.

Some schools have career clubs for future teachers, farmers, and business leaders. Can you think of other high school career clubs and high school experiences that are related to the “real thing”?

Throughout the United States, employers and educators are working together to create educational programs that will prepare students for the world of work. Many high schools, postsecondary technical schools, and

TAKE NOTE

Learning where people in various occupations earn their living is as important as learning how they earn their living.

CAREER FACT

There were almost 8.8 million private business establishments in the United States in 2006. Although large establishments are fewer in number, they hire more workers. In addition, they offer greater occupational mobility and advancement potential. On the other hand, small establishments offer greater interpersonal contact between workers, and they are found in almost every locality.

two- and four-year colleges are cooperating with each other to prepare students with the skills needed to compete in a rapidly changing workplace.

Although the names of various high school programs and ways they are structured vary from one school district to another, the descriptions presented in this section will help you understand the basics of most career-exploring programs. Discuss the offerings at your high school with your teachers and guidance counselor.

Co-op and Internship Programs

Co-op and internship programs provide firsthand work experience in specific occupations. These experiences help students determine their suitability for an occupation.

Many technical and skilled-trades high school programs also require practical work experience. Tech-prep and two-plus-two programs are increasingly being offered to high school students. This approach offers students a foundation in many of the job skills and academic courses that are necessary for a technical education beyond high school. Employers determine which workers need career skills and academic competencies, and schools determine how they will teach those skills and competencies.

Occupational Work Experience (OWE) and co-op programs provide students with classroom instruction and on-the-job experience. In addition to the basic academic subjects of English, mathematics, science, and social studies, students receive classroom instruction in job-seeking and job-holding skills. Early release from school each day gives OWE and co-op students the time to acquire and participate in part-time, paid employment.

Part-time, Volunteer, and Temporary Work

Actual work experience is the most direct way to explore a career area on a daily basis. It provides an opportunity for you to observe a variety of occupations and job responsibilities, the types of people employed in a specific career area, and the work environment.

Obviously, a high school student can't acquire work experience as a nurse, physical therapist, physician, or other health-care professional. However, part-time employment or volunteer service in a hospital or nursing home will enable you to work in the same environment with these professionals, to observe them at work, and to ask questions. Can you think of other career areas where this is true?

Field Experience

Visiting job sites is another good way to obtain occupational information. For example, if you are interested in learning to be a computer programmer, visit an office or plant where one is employed. Site visits may range from a few hours to a day or two.

Field experiences (sometimes titled *career exploring* or *career shadowing*) can often be arranged by contacting the human resources office of an organization. People in that office have the authority to schedule an appointment to visit and observe workers in a specific occupation. A teacher, counselor, or a committee of students usually arranges field experiences for a group.

Your school counselor may be able to provide information about programs that offer career field experience. Service organizations, such as the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of America, frequently sponsor career field experiences for students.



Chris is gaining experience editing films and can later decide whether he is suited for an occupation in this field. What programs offer such experience at your school?

The Informational Interview

Interviewing a worker who is employed in the occupation you are considering is a good way to obtain realistic career information. However, researching the occupation before the interview is very important. The more information you have about the occupation before the interview, the more you will gain from the worker's answers to your questions.

An **informational interview** is a brief meeting between a person who wants to investigate a career and a person working in that career. The interviews usually last 20 to 30 minutes. Informational interviewing is a relatively new procedure for exploring specific career clusters and developing a network of established professionals for a future job search. Although much of the interviewing procedure is the same as job interviewing, the process and purpose are very different. Table 5.2 highlights a few of the similarities and differences.

Informational interviews are a very effective way to find out about specific jobs in the occupational cluster you are preparing to enter. This type of interview can help you obtain realistic career information and useful knowledge about specific occupations.

KEY TO SUCCESS

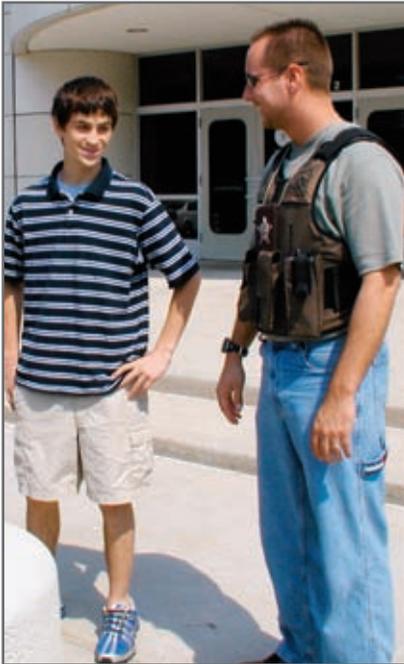
Learning to use occupational information and exploring career choices now will help you make new career decisions in the future. Your present career goals should include learning as much as possible about yourself and about occupations.

Table 5.2 Comparing an Informational Interview to a Job Interview

As an information seeker, you ...	As a job seeker, you ...
Request an interview with an established professional	Are requested to attend an interview with an established professional
Want to increase your knowledge about a specific career cluster and develop a contact for future networking	Want to fill an immediate or anticipated job opening in your specific area of career preparation
Prepare questions to ask the established professional	Prepare to answer questions you anticipate the established professional will ask

KEY TO SUCCESS

The contacts you develop through informational interviews provide immediate information about a specific career area and may be used later to network job leads and interviews.



Sergeant Williams tells Josh that he chose this line of work because he enjoys working with people and that he believes maintaining law and order serves the public.

Keep in mind that most successful professionals were once in your position. If you approach them in a positive manner, most of them are willing to share an insight, suggest a connection with another professional, or offer you some realistic advice. Be honest and sincere with your contacts; they likely receive many calls that are ploys to get unsolicited job interviews. Keep in mind that ethical behavior is an important part of career success, and people who play devious games usually lose.

The personal contacts you develop through this process can become a network of people who can provide you with current information about their specific careers and advice about your career direction. In addition, when you are ready to begin a job search, they may be able to inform you about possible job openings or provide you with contact information at other organizations.

Arranging the Informational Interview

Finding appropriate organizations and making contacts for an informational interview will take some time. For local contacts, refer to the yellow pages of your area telephone book. The telephone will be the method you use most often to make initial contacts with an organization. In fact, the receptionist who answers your phone call may be the best source to obtain the name, title, and office address of the person with authority to conduct an informational interview.

People in the human resources office can usually arrange an interview or put you in touch with the manager of the department you wish to contact. Ask to speak with the manager, and when he or she answers, be prepared to

- ▶ Identify yourself, address the contact by name, and state the purpose of your call with enthusiasm.
- ▶ Request an appointment to interview the contact in person, at his or her place of business, for a specific amount of time.
- ▶ Establish the exact location, date, and time of your interview. Write it down and repeat aloud what you have written.

If you are unable to make the necessary phone contact to schedule an informational interview, another approach is to write a letter to a prospective contact. In any communication, be certain you have the correct spelling of the contact's name and title and that you include your telephone number, return mailing address, and e-mail address. If you don't receive a response to your letter within a week, make a follow-up telephone call. The contact is probably very busy and on a tight schedule.

Conducting the Informational Interview

If you are anxious about what questions to ask during the interview and the best way to ask them, you may want to develop a specific list and find

a relative or friend to help you through a practice interview. Table 5.3 provides some examples.

If distance or traffic is a potential problem, arrive at the parking lot or building location a half hour early. Wait in your car before entering. Being too early or being late conveys the wrong image. The following tips will help you to learn and practice accepted business protocol:

- ▶ Arrive at the contact’s office or designated location between 5 and 10 minutes early.
- ▶ Dress as you would if you were a professional in this occupation.
- ▶ Address each employee you meet with respect and enthusiasm.
- ▶ Remember, a firm handshake and direct eye contact convey a sense of poise and confidence.
- ▶ Carry a notebook or binder with a list of your interview questions and space to write answers.
- ▶ Wear a watch, and don’t exceed the time your contact allotted for the interview.
- ▶ At the conclusion of the interview, thank your contact, and part with another handshake.

TAKE NOTE

The more information you gather about the occupation and the organization you are visiting before an informational interview, the more information you will acquire from the answers to your questions.

Table 5.3 Questions to Ask in an Informational Interview

Areas of Interest	Questions
The nature of the work	What skills are needed to perform your daily work tasks? What personal characteristics are needed to be successful in this career area?
The work environment	What are some characteristics of your coworkers? Where are some of the locations for employers in this career area?
Employment opportunities	What other organizations provide employment in this occupation? Is there a high demand for qualified workers in this career area?
Training, other qualifications, and advancement	What qualifications are employers seeking in entry-level and experienced employees? What additional training would I need to advance in this career area?
Financial rewards	What are the beginning earnings in this occupation? What future earnings and advancement opportunities should a successful worker anticipate?
Career mobility	What are the potential career paths in this career area?
Personal perspectives	Why did you choose this line of work? In what ways do you find your work satisfying? In what ways do you find your work unsatisfactory? What advice would you give a young person who is considering this line of work? Does this occupation affect your family life, leisure activities, or friendships? If so, how?

Following Up the Informational Interview

After you complete the informational interview, evaluate what you have learned from the experience. Within 24 hours, write down how your personality, interests, and education match (or don't match) this career.

Follow up your informational interview with a thank-you note to your contact. Don't hesitate to send another note in a few weeks or months describing any progress or accomplishments that you experience and thanking him or her again for influencing your career. Maintaining communication with your contacts is a matter of sound business practice.

Section 3: Get Involved

Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper, and be prepared to discuss your responses and experiences in class.

1. List two or more occupations that you are considering for your future career. Then ask your school counselor whether your high school offers any type of tech-prep, co-op, or internship programs in the area of your career interest. What did you discover?
2. List the part-time or volunteer jobs held by students in your class. Then list additional occupations they observed while they were working. How did the part-time and volunteer work experiences of your classmates affect their present career plans?
3. Using your local telephone book and personal contacts, make a list of three businesses to contact for informational interviews. Follow the steps given in this chapter to set up and conduct an interview at one of these businesses. (Remember to thank the person you interviewed.) What did you learn in the informational interview?

Chapter 5 Review

Enrich Your Vocabulary

On a separate sheet of paper, number from 1 to 14. Write the most appropriate term from the "Enrich Your Vocabulary" list at the beginning of the chapter next to the number of the phrase it matches on your paper.

1. A U.S. Department of Labor publication that provides detailed descriptions of about 270 occupations
2. A method for exploring occupations on an extensive database
3. A cooperative program that links high school technical education with two- and four-year college programs
4. A publication that focuses on 16 specific career interest areas
5. A classification system, comprising 16 groups of careers, that was developed by the federal government
6. A classification system that seeks to standardize the industrial classification of the three partners to the North American Free Trade Agreement

7. Future job trends
8. An orderly division of groups
9. A record of academic credits earned
10. To combine
11. An automated database system for collecting, classifying, and disseminating data on jobs
12. A U.S. Department of Labor Internet site containing occupational information that will assist in your employment search
13. A system used by federal agencies that collect occupational employment data; this system separates occupations into groups according to the type of work performed.
14. A brief meeting between a person who wants to investigate a career and a person working in that career

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Check Your Knowledge

On a separate sheet of paper, answer the following questions.

1. When you use the library to research careers, what is the best way to begin?
2. What occupational classification system organizes jobs according to the type of work people perform?
3. What industrial classification system organizes jobs according to where people work?
4. Who should you contact to schedule an informational interview?
5. How can you acquire occupational experience as a student?
6. What are the six levels of employment in the world of work?
7. If you already know what career you will have, why should you research occupational information?

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Develop SCANS Competencies

This activity will give you practice in developing the information and interpersonal skills that successful workers have. Form cooperative learning groups to research a specific occupation that your group decides on. As a group, develop an information sheet that includes the type of information each member will look for in his or her research. Assign each group member a different source of information to collect information from. Sources for research should include as many as are available from Section 1 of this chapter. After each member has completed his or her research, compare and contrast the information collected. Make a chart to display your information for the class.

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