

(B) Directories of Associations

Visit the public library, college or university career services, or state employment offices and ask where you can find the names and addresses of professional associations in your field of interest. These associations may be able to refer you to members who would be willing to speak to you about the occupation or you could phone them yourself. You could introduce yourself by saying something like:

"My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am trying to obtain information about working in the field of \_\_\_\_\_ and I wonder if you could suggest people who would be willing to talk with me?"

C) Telephone Book

Look in the yellow pages for companies and organizations, and in the blue pages of government listings for relevant departments that might employ people in the areas in which you are interested. A good opening is:

"My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am trying to obtain information about working in the field of \_\_\_\_\_. I thought you might be able to direct me to someone in your area who would know about that field". (Use the suggested questions on the next panel or develop your own list of questions before phoning).

4. USING WORK

This is your last and the most important resource. There is not a better way to gather information about an occupation than to get into the work setting. Whether you decide to become a Plumber or a Physicist, seeing what people do day in and day out will tell you if the job is right for you. Get into the work setting by asking one of the professionals you interviewed if you could visit and observe, work as a volunteer, or even work and get paid.

**SUMMARY**

If you follow the above steps you will gradually be able to narrow your list down to several occupations. You will know that these occupations are a very close match to you. It is a long process, but it will be worth it! You will spend many years working and being matched to the right occupation will mean years of satisfaction.

Source: University of Victoria Counseling Services Center, British Columbia, Canada. <http://www.coun.uvic.ca>

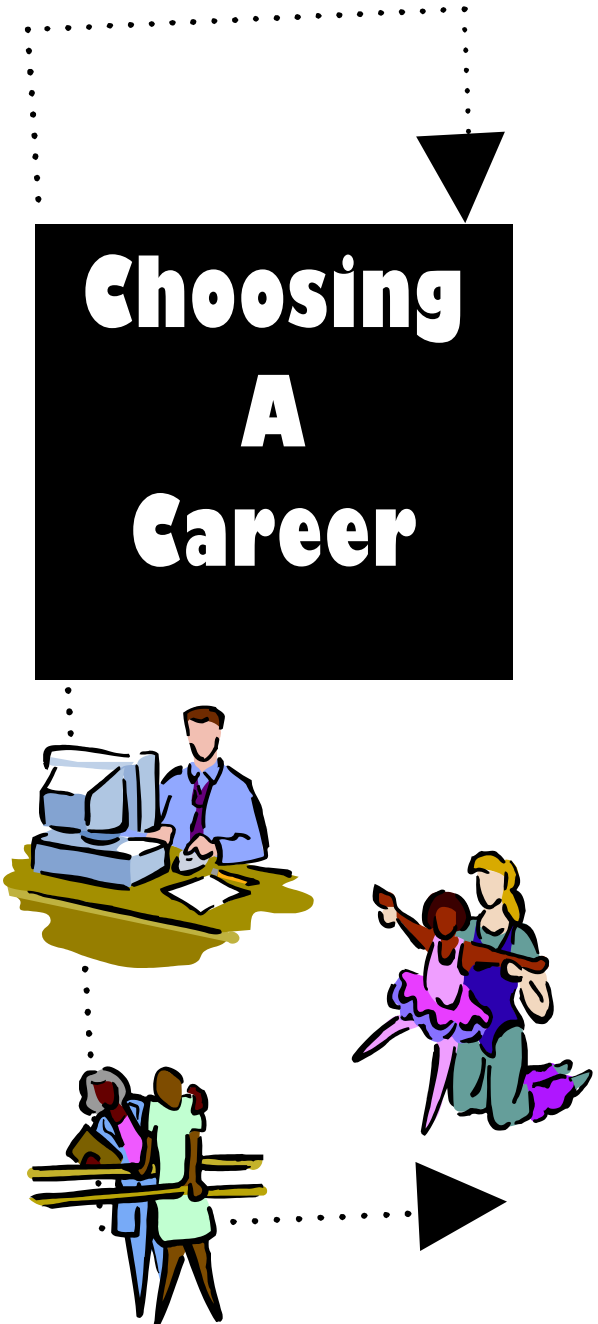
**QUESTIONS TO USE IN INFORMATION GATHERING INTERVIEWS**

The following questions should be used as a guide. If you have any of your own be sure to add them. You should not feel embarrassed about taking along a list to refer to. It shows you are serious.

- (1) I know \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ about your profession. Could you give me more details?
- (2) What do you find to be the best things about your profession? The worst?
- (3) How did you get into this occupation? Get started in this job?
- (4) How did you prepare yourself for this job? For this profession?
- (5) Which do you think are the best schools?
- (6) What classes or projects can I undertake to prepare myself for this career area?
- (7) What skills, aptitudes, interests and personal characteristics are necessary in this career?
- (8) What is the most relevant major, course of study or preparation?
- (9) What is the most valuable thing you learned during your training?
- (10) Are there specific courses you would recommend I take now?
- (11) How does the employment outlook seem here in \_\_\_\_\_. How about elsewhere?
- (12) Would you advise people to enter this occupation?
- (13) What are some of the growing concerns in this profession?
- (14) What is the typical salary range?
- (15) What are the specialties in this area?
- (16) What types of people do you work with?
- (17) Do you know other people or places where I could find people involved in this career whom I might talk to?
- (18) Knowing what you know now, would you choose the same occupation again? Why or why not?

At the end of your interview always say thank you. Later, phone and thank them again.

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In order to make a good career decision you need two "tools". The first is a clear picture of yourself. You need this to know if a given occupation really matches you well. Second, you need an efficient way to get more information about careers. The section, "Clarifying Your Characteristics" will help you with the first and "Getting Information About Careers" the second.

### **CLARIFYING YOUR CHARACTERISTICS**

#### **LISTING YOUR EXPERIENCE:**

The best and only predictor of the future is the past. By listing your past experience you will have concrete situations to use to generate your list of characteristics.

On a separate piece of paper list all the paid jobs you have had, any volunteer experience, courses you liked and did well in, your hobbies and any other activity that you did that could tell you more about yourself. For example, tutoring your kid sister in Math, helping your uncle build a canoe, helping a friend through a personal problem. Anything that stands out because you liked it or were good at it.

#### 1. ABILITIES

Take the first activity on your list and ask yourself, "What skills, abilities and aptitudes did I prove I had in that activity that I want to use in a future career?" For example, organizing, working with people, solving problems, using math, teaching, working with my hands.

Make a list of the skills abilities and aptitudes that you find. Repeat this question for each activity.

#### 2. INTERESTS

Again, take the first activity and this time ask, "When doing that, what parts really interested me and help my attention?" Examples might be, the business aspects, helping people, working with animals, making things, science. As before, make a list of these interests and then go on to the next activity and ask the same question.

#### 3. NEEDS

For each activity ask yourself, "When doing that what parts gave me a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment?" For example, being challenged, physical activity, working as part of a team, leading a team. List these needs that surfaced from reviewing each activity.

#### 4. VALUES

"When doing that activity, what made me feel good?" "Like I was doing something worthwhile?" Examples would be working with kids, being involved in education, environmental work, creating something. List the values that came to light.

### 5. PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

"From doing that activity and thinking about my reactions, what are the things that stand out about me?" "How would others describe me?" For example, outgoing, reserved, thorough, serious, energetic, artistic, independent. Add these to your list.

### 6. GOALS

This may be hard, but ask yourself, "What do I want to be doing in 10 years?" "What do I want a typical day to be like?" Examples would be, to be in business for myself, live in a small town, lead a team. Add these to your list.

#### **YOUR MASTER LIST:**

Go through your total list and put an "A" next to those characteristics that you know you MUST have in a career. You just would not be happy if you didn't have them as part of your day-to-day work. Put a "B" next to those that would certainly make an occupation more enjoyable, but are not absolutely essential. Put a "C" next to those that would be nice to have in your career

#### **FOUR IMPORTANT RESOURCES**

Now that you have a more complete picture of yourself it is time to start researching the occupations from your list. As you do so, keep going back to your list of characteristics and ask yourself: "Does this occupation match me well or should I drop it?"

#### 1. USING THE LITERATURE

Because new careers develop and older careers change, it is best to begin your research by reading career books and pamphlets. The nice thing is that you can go through these books and pamphlets quickly, they answer your basic questions, and they are convenient. The most popular ones are listed below. These resources should give you a very good start on deciding which occupations on your list you should investigate further and which you should drop from consideration. If you cannot find these materials at your school, try the public library, a state employment service, or a college or university counseling service.

##### A. JOB FUTURES (Volume I & II)

These two books contain both information about occupations and employment outlook statistics - predictions about how many jobs in each occupation will be available in the future. They are fairly new and very useful.

##### B. TEXT BOOKS

At college or university book stores you can find many textbooks that will give you a good idea about what you would be studying if you entered a given occupation. Try them.

#### 2. USING TEACHERS AND CATALOGS

Find out which schools, colleges, or universities have programs in the areas you are interested. Read their catalogs. Also, talk to the teachers at the schools. They can tell you what the courses will be like and what types of people succeed.

### 3. USING PROFESSIONALS

Professionals are those people who have been working in an occupation long enough to know it well. The following tells you why you should do "information gathering interviews" with them, how to find professionals to interview and what types of questions you should ask them.

*"Why do information gathering interviews?"*

- (1) To get up-to-date information about occupations.
- (2) To get a personal feel for occupations.
- (3) To get information specific to your part of the country.
- (4) To enlarge you circle of contacts to get information about occupations.
- (5) To gain self-confidence for future job interviews.
- (6) To establish contacts for later job interviews.

If you are hesitant, like many others are to do interviews, why not practice on family and friends first? Remember, this will be easier than you think. People love to talk about what is important to them. Many individuals will tell you that their occupation is very important to them, and they will welcome a chance to talk about it.

*How to find professionals.*

#### (A) Networking

(1) Write a list of all the people you know - your friends, classmates, family, family friends, your dentist, doctor, hairdresser, teachers, professors, co-workers, etc. You might try using your address book to start with.

(2) Ask these people if they know about the field you are investigating. If they do, interview them. If they don't, ask if they know someone who works in that occupation. If they do, ask if they would mind asking that person if you could talk with them about their occupation. Or, ask for that person's name and telephone number, and phone them yourself. A statement like the following might be a good opening;

"My name is \_\_\_\_\_. Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_ said you are a \_\_\_\_\_ and might be willing to talk to me about your profession. I'm sure you are busy, but I would appreciate it very much if we could meet sometime."