USING OCCUPATION SORT

LEARN ABOUT THE LABOR MARKET WHILE EXPLORING OCCUPATIONS

Occupation Sort is a sophisticated decision-making tool for career development. Its 28 factors describe requirements, work environments, tasks, and other features for the occupations described in CIS. Individuals select their preferences relative to these factors. As they do so, Occupation Sort eliminates occupations that do not conform to the preferences expressed.

Occupation Sort can be used in several ways:
- It helps individuals locate pertinent occupational information.
- It helps teach fundamental labor market concepts.
- It provides an opportunity to evaluate how preferences and choices influence occupational options.

OPTIMIZING THE USE OF OCCUPATION SORT

Occupation Sort is not a test nor an assessment. Occupation Sort is a sorting tool.

It provides a way to report preferences and see how these preferences relate to the labor market. Occupation Sort should be used with formal and informal assessment activities to clarify options and integrate them with interests, skills, and other career choice variables.

Occupation Sort works best with students or clients who know themselves.

Occupation Sort encourages people to use what they know about themselves to locate compatible career goals. Often, however, students and adults have not thought a lot about or do not recognize their preferences. They may not have considered what they like or they may not even understand that it is important that they like what they do. If users do not know themselves, they may give arbitrary responses when using Occupation Sort and be dissatisfied with their outcomes.

Begin the Occupation Sort process by listing occupations that are of interest.

Occupation Sort is a learning tool. Users learn about the realities of the labor market and their own preferences related to some important labor market characterstics (factors). Students and clients will learn the most if they have a list of occupations that they have considered before they start. Then when they complete the sorting process, they can see if these "dream" occupations are on their list or, if not, why not. They can change their responses if the characteristics that eliminated their "dream" occupations are not as important to them as they had originally thought.

Use several different strategies to enhance self-knowledge.

Consider using interest assessments such as IDEAS™ Assessment to help students and clients become familiar with their interests. The SKILLS Assessment can help them recognize and prioritize their preferred skills. Every self-awareness tool brings a different perspective to the process of career decision-making.

Encourage users to consider their capabilities and potential.

Students and clients should focus on their own experiences: what they have done and what it was about these experiences that they liked and did well. Users will benefit most from the Occupation Sort process when counselors or teachers explain the factors that relate to abilities and skills (for example, "math and science" or "design equipment and systems"). Occupation Sort asks users for their preferences related to these characteristics. It is **not** asking, "Are you, right now, able to perform as an expert in this area?" It is asking, "Do you think you want to develop it and use it on the job? How important would you like it to be in your career?"

Encourage users to reconsider their preferences.

Occupation Sort responses can be changed at any time. Students and clients should review their lists and identify occupations that interest them. They should defintely view what is off their list and what is almost on their list as well as what remains on their list. They may wish to investigate occupations that are not on their lists and use the **Why Not?** feature to learn why. Occupation Sort helps people become aware of new occupational options as well as identify factors involved in reaching an occupational goal. Users can reflect on their choices and then can investigate several possible occupations by using CIS Occupations and a variety of activities to explore the world of work.

Use analogy to explain Occupation Sort.

Use the real estate analogy that is included on the *Occupation Sort Worksheet* to help people understand how Occupation Sort works. Ask them to pretend they are going to look for and buy a house in an East Coast town. They can't go to search for it, so they give a realtor there a list of desired features. A list might include these preferred characteristics: two stories, a corner lot, three bedrooms, two bathrooms, a laundry room, a family room, a dining room, a fireplace, landscaped yard, and a two-car garage with a workshop area. The realtor returns with information: There are 100 two-story houses. Twenty-five are on corner lots, 75 have three bedrooms or more, 65 have two or more bathrooms, 35 have laundry rooms, 35 have both family and dining rooms, 16 have fireplaces, all have yards with various degrees of landscaping, 30 have two-car garages, and 10 have workshop areas. Can you be more specific about which preferences have priority?"

The realtor can only select houses based on the preferences and priorities of the buyer. By clearly stating what is needed and wanted, the buyer enables the agent to better choose possibilities; however, by being too specific the buyer may eliminate a wonderful house. Somewhere in the middle are some great houses to consider.

The buyer is not choosing yet. Once the list is narrowed down, the buyer needs to get a description of the properties, see photographs, do research about the community, and visit the houses before making a decision. No one can do that except the prospective buyer. Researching and selecting an occupation is much the same.