Lesson 5: Using Personal Factors to Identify Careers

Overview

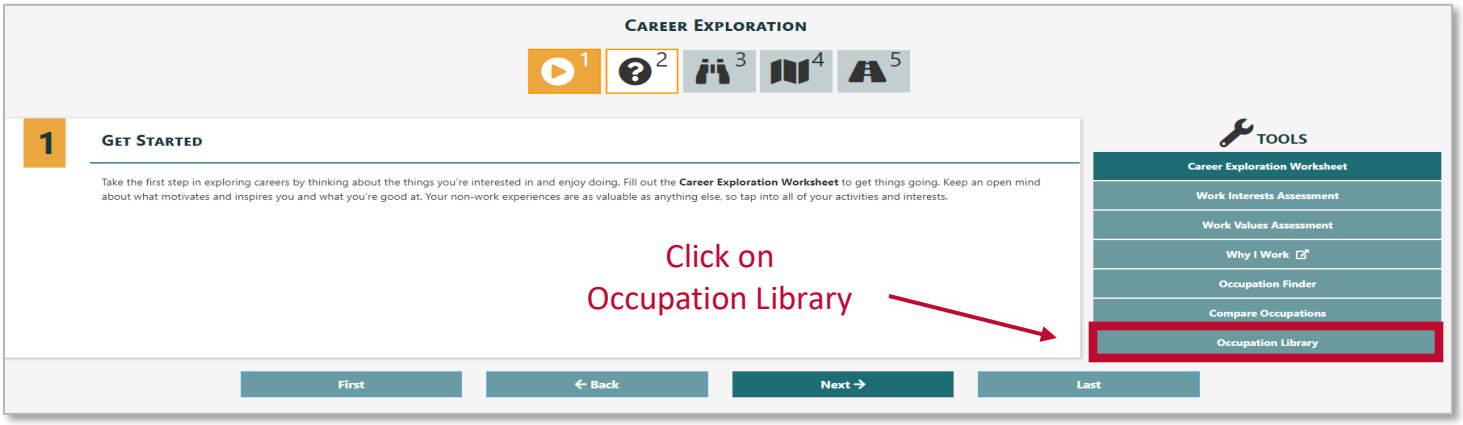
As students gain insight into various personal factors, the next challenge to arise is how to consolidate and find meaning in what they have learned. To maximize the knowledge gained from their self-discovery activities, they need strategies for organizing and applying this information to the career exploration process. This involves a review of where they have been and opportunities to see connections among their personal interests, values, and goals. Once they see the bigger picture, this can be used as a lens to evaluate career opportunities. Students will need practice comparing careers and evaluating them through their personal lens. Within the Career Solutions system, the two primary tools that can assist with career comparisons is the Occupation Library and the Compare Occupations feature.

This lesson contains….

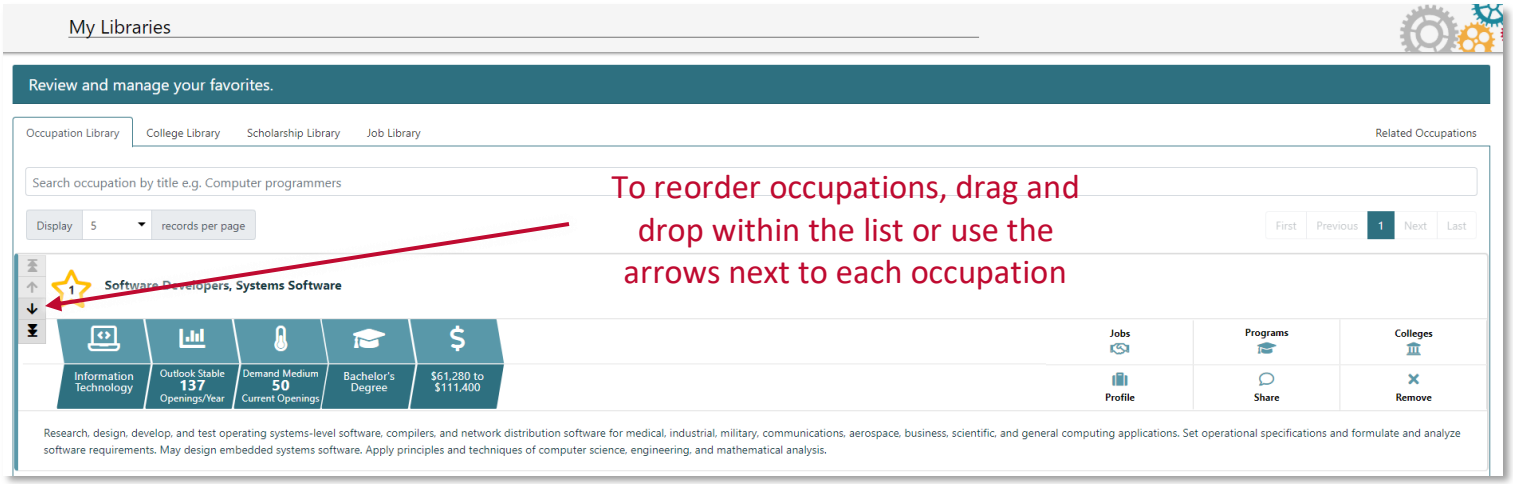
- A summary of how to use the Occupation Library and Compare Occupations features.
- Information to share with students on how to consolidate and review personal factors.
- Methods for using various types of personal factors to make career choices.
- Strategies for incorporating personal factors into career comparisons.
- Ideas for helping students make career decisions that align with personal needs.
- A review of next steps for students using insights gained from this lesson.

How to Use This Tool

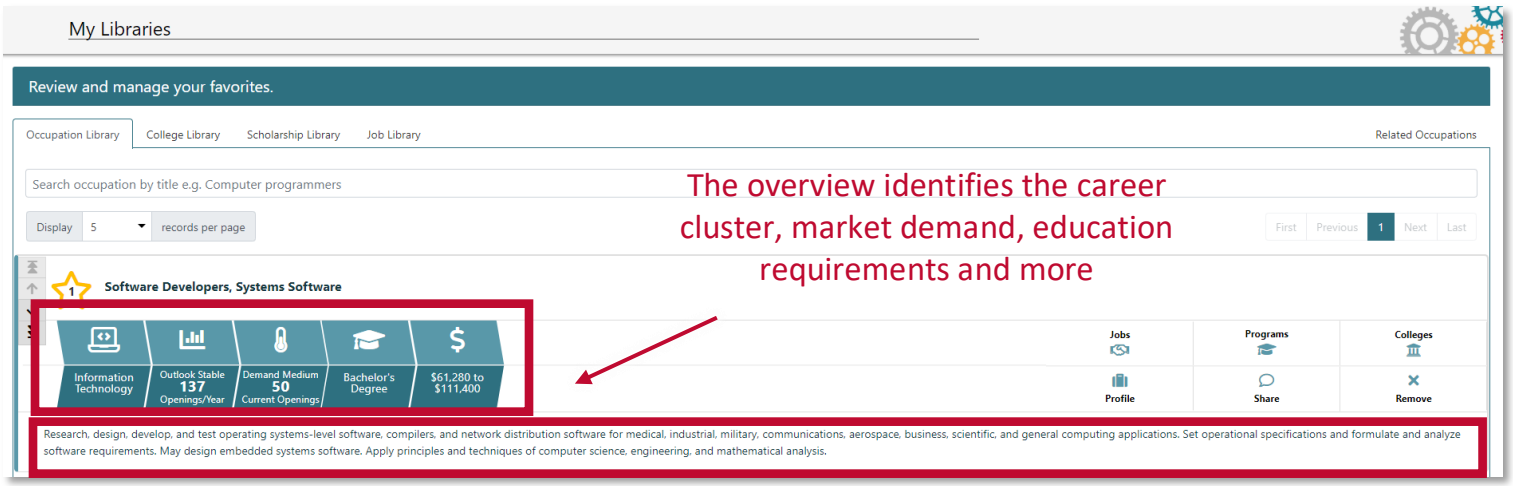
Before beginning, be sure to sign into the system. The Occupation Library is located within the Career Exploration section. Simply click the Occupation Library link in the list of tools to the right.



A page similar to the one below will appear. All occupations that were saved from previous activities are displayed on this list. Initially, they will appear in the order in which they were saved. To reorder occupations, simply drag and drop them within the list or use the arrows next to each occupation.

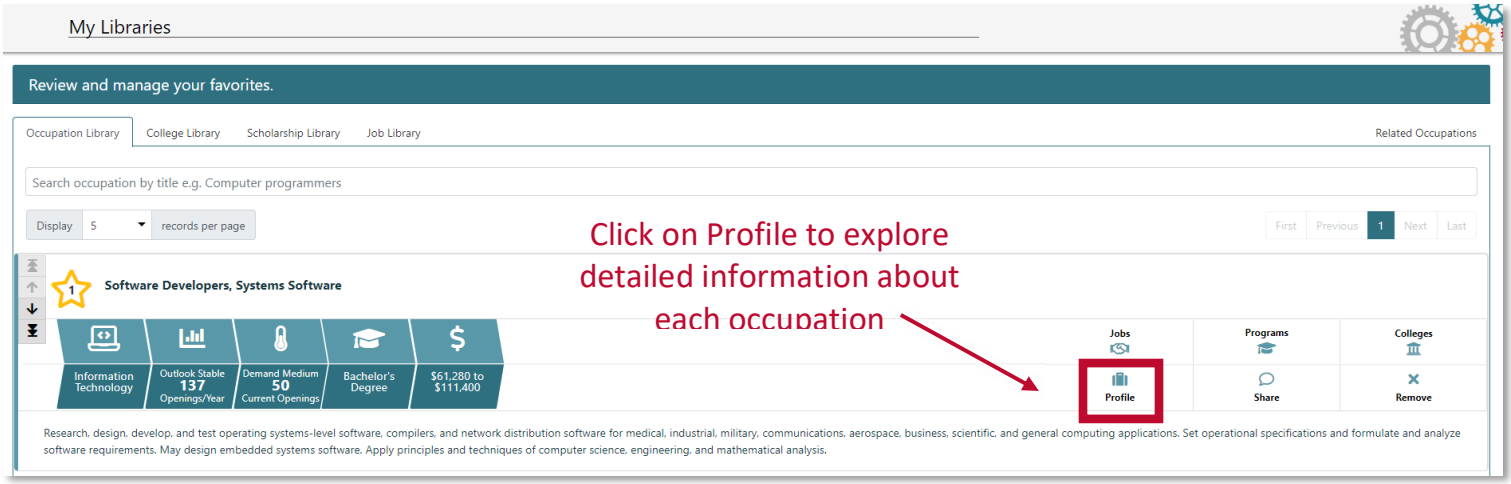


For each occupation a brief overview is presented that identifies the career cluster for the occupation, as well as market demand, education requirements, and other useful pieces of information. These summaries can provide a quick sense of opportunity within an occupation and job requirements.



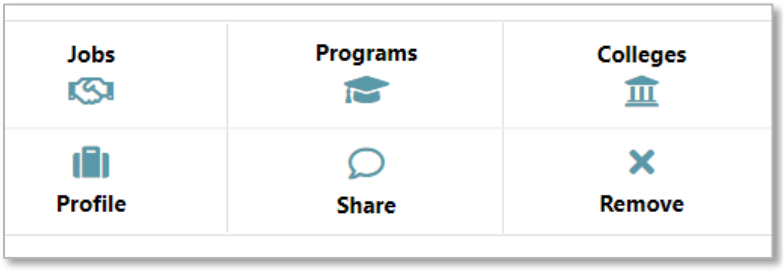
Several links are displayed with each occupation that provide a wealth of information about jobs, programs, colleges, and more. To simplify the exploration process at this stage, it is recommended that focus be directed primarily to the Profile section. This section helps familiarize students with basic job descriptions and requirements for each occupation.

Other sections, such as the Programs and Colleges sections, are useful, but should be explored at a later point to avoid confusion. It is best, for now, to place emphasis on gathering basic occupation information.

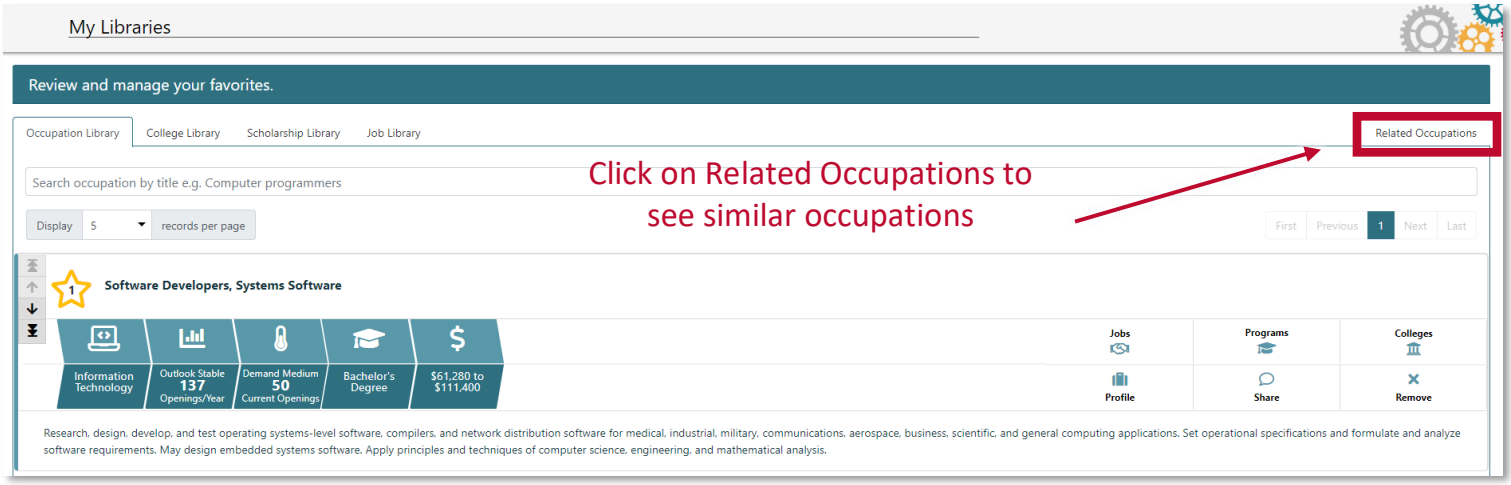


Students may venture into the Jobs section. If questions arise, here are a few tips that may help.

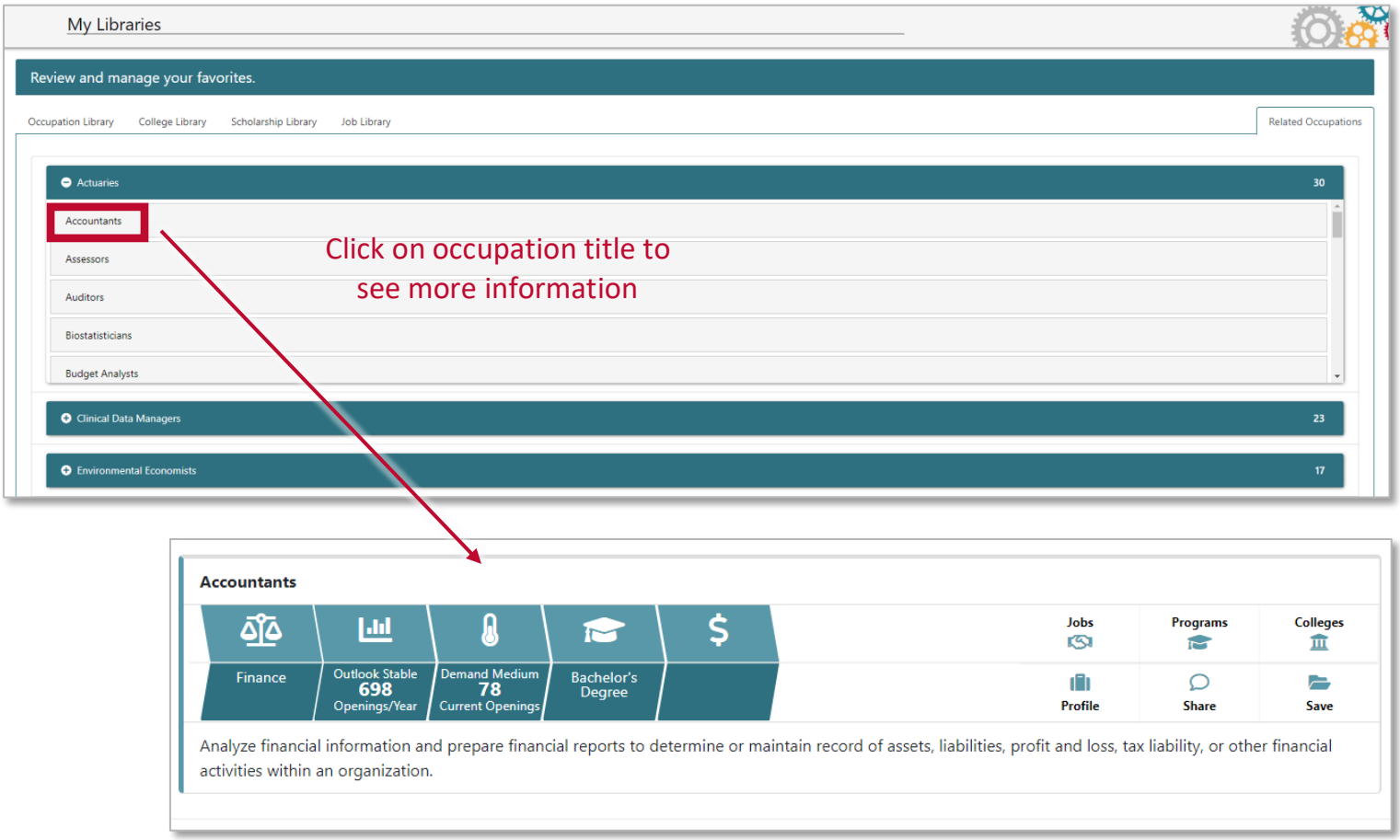
- The jobs listed on the page are for the entire state of New Mexico.
- The area can be limited by clicking "Change job search criteria" at the bottom of the page.
- Job information is not guaranteed (see disclaimer at bottom of the Jobs page in Career Solutions).
- There is no direct method for applying for jobs within the system.
- To gain more information about the jobs, students can visit the employer websites directly.
- The job listings are pulled from various sources. These are displayed at the bottom of the Jobs page.
- The Jobs section is best used to gain a sense of what employers are looking for in certain occupations.



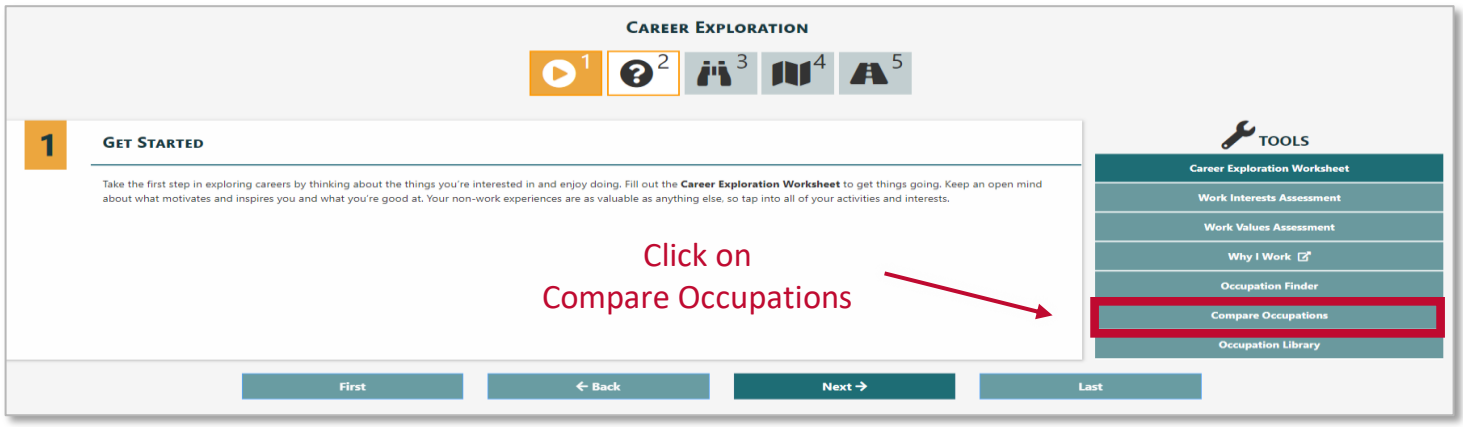
To explore occupations that are similar to those saved in the library, click on Related Occupations at the top right of the occupation list. For each occupation, five related occupations will be provided.



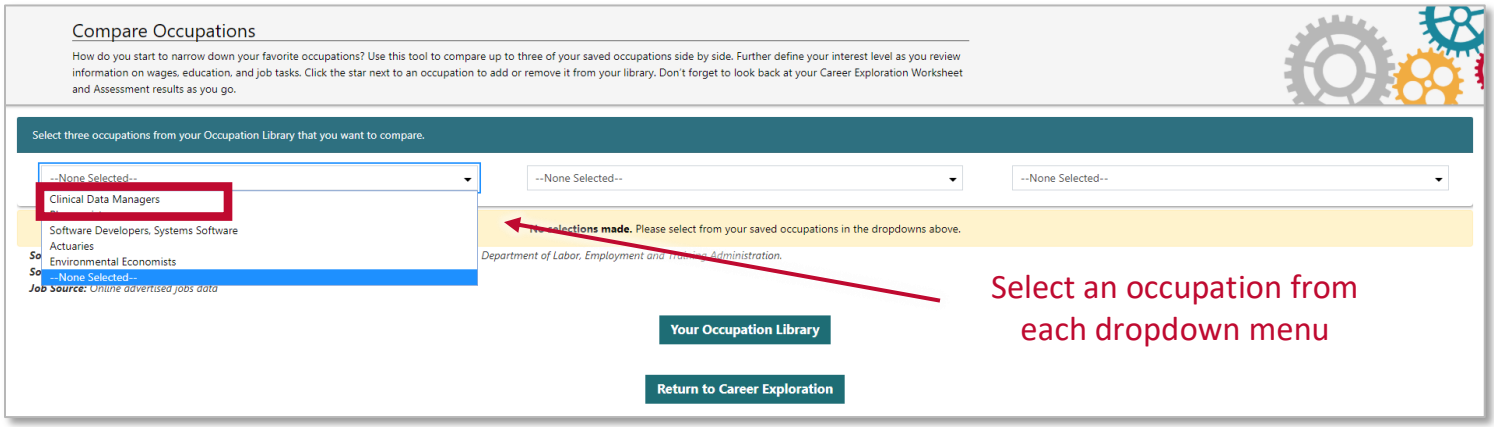
When exploring Related Occupations, a page similar to the one below will appear. Clicking on the occupation title will produce a box with additional information.



One of the most useful tools within the Career Solutions system is the Compare Occupations tool. This is located in the Career Exploration Section. Click on Compare Occupations in the list of tools to the right.

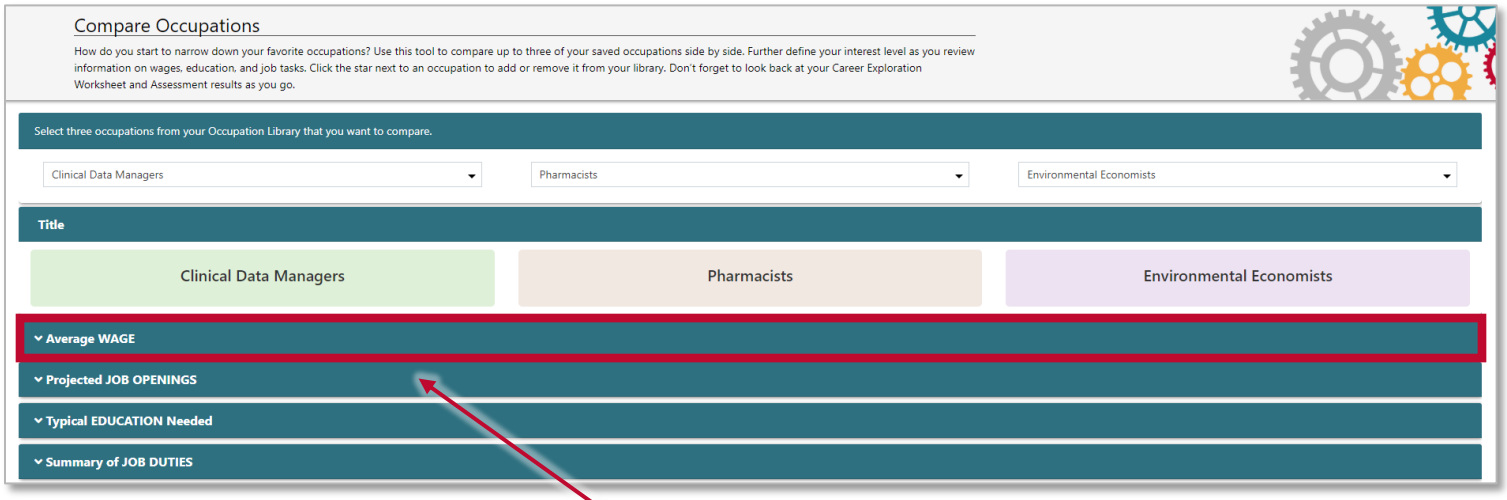


When this tool is selected, the page below will appear. Here, there is the option to compare up to three different occupations that are saved in the Occupation Library. Use each dropdown menu to select an occupation from the library.

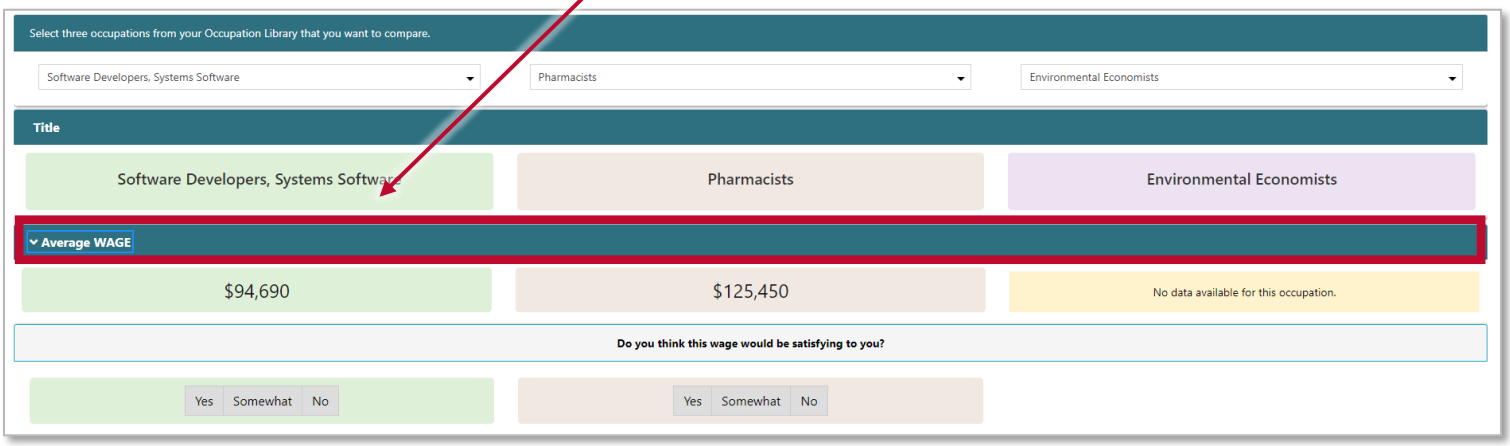


Helpful Tip: *It may take some time for the data to appear. So, if nothing appears at first, wait a few seconds. The information will appear below the dropdown menus.*

After three occupations have been selected, various comparison categories will appear. Clicking on each category will display relevant information for each occupation.

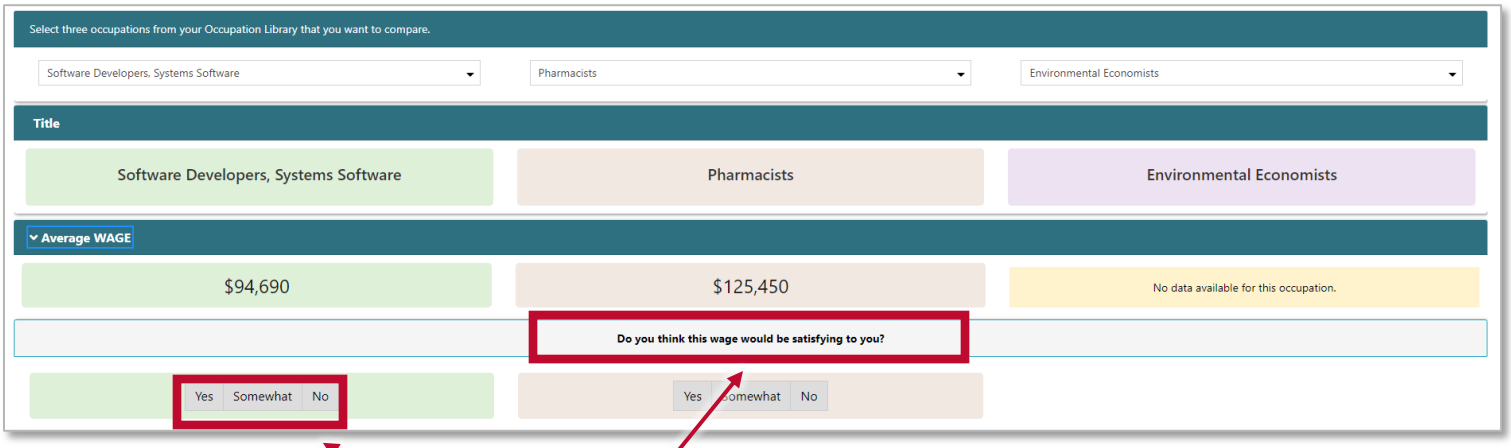


Click on categories to reveal data related to the category



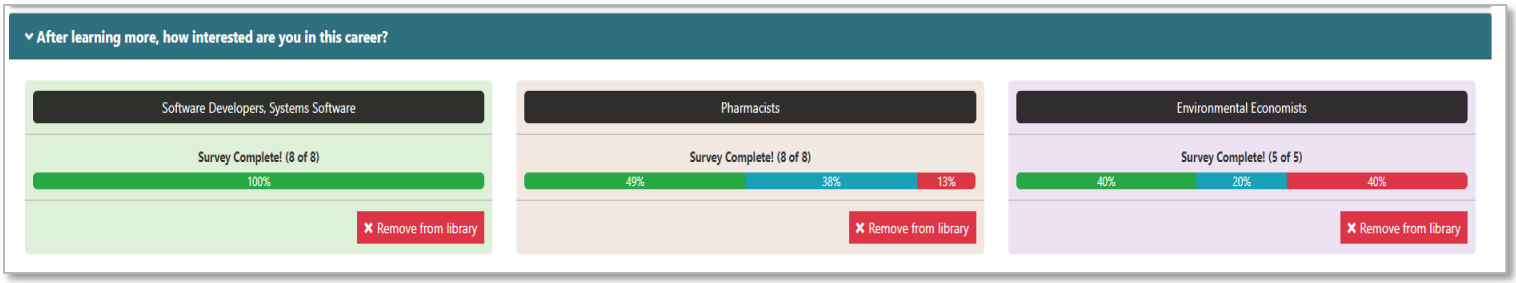
Helpful Tip: *For some occupations, data will be missing. This often means the data was suppressed by the government agency that collected the information. For occupations where only few individuals are employed, displaying certain types of information, such as annual income, could reveal personal information. Therefore, this data is suppressed at a local or state level to protect individuals' privacy. Students can go to onetonline.org to review national data and get a general sense of an occupation's wage, demand, or other statistics.*

As students review content for each of the occupations, they can answer questions about how they feel about the information. Question are presented and students can respond with either Yes, Somewhat, or No.



Read questions and choose a response

When all of the questions for all categories have been answered, the results will appear at the bottom of the screen. Three colors will be displayed – green for Yes responses, blue for Somewhat responses, and red for No responses. Occupations with the highest percentage of Yes responses can be considered a closer match than those with a lower percentage.



Connecting with Students

Learning Objectives

In this lesson, students will be given the opportunity to…

- Summarize their personal factors, including interests, values, and lifestyle goals.
- Identify how these personal factors can be combined to develop a more unified picture.
- Apply their various personal factors, in a unified approach, to the selection of potential careers.
- Compare various occupations based on goodness-of-fit and alignment with personal factors.
- Generate a list of occupations that are potential career opportunities.
- Determine next steps in exploring career opportunities and developing a career plan.

Classroom Discussions and Presentations

Introduction

At this stage in the career exploration process, students will need an opportunity to consolidate everything they have learned from the various self-discovery activities. Because each activity has been completed independent of the others, it can be difficult for students to see the connections and develop a unified picture of what it all means. Taking time to help them summarize and review this information can provide a more solid framework for them to use as they engage in career exploration. This unified picture of who they are and what they need can ensure they are making informed decisions that take everything they have learned into account. Skipping this step can leave students confused or hyperfocused on only one factor or another. The goal of this lesson is to build a global lens that can guide students toward the best career choices possible.

Talking Points

Below are some helpful comments to share with students.

- So far, we have engaged in several self-discovery activities that involved the Work Interests Assessment, the Work Values Assessment, and the Why I Work tool in Career Solutions.
- Each of these activities have produced results that give insight into different personal factors that can affect your satisfaction with various careers.
- At this point, we need to take a moment to review this information and understand what it means.
- Most importantly, we need to get a sense of how this information can be combined to understand the bigger picture of who you are and what you need from the work you do.
- Once we have this bigger picture, we can apply this to the selection of careers to ensure a more unified approach is used, as opposed to just focusing on just one factor or another.
- As a reminder, the results you received from your self-discovery activities are not perfect. They serve merely as hints or suggestions of what you may need or want from your career.

Discussion Questions

As a class or in small groups, have students reflect on the following questions. Help students talk about and work through their positive and negative feelings regarding career exploration.

- Of all the assessments and tools that you have used so far, which do you think is most helpful? Why?
- Which assessment or tool do you believe is least helpful? Why?
- Do you believe the information you gained from the assessments and tools in Career Solutions will help you make a better career choice? Why or why not?
- When looking at a specific career, how might you use the information you learned about yourself to decide if the career is a good fit for you? What specific information might you use to make a decision?
- Do you find it difficult to keep all of your personal factors in mind when looking at careers? How could you organize this information to make it easier to remember and use?
- Have you discovered any careers so far that you really like? What are they and why do you think these are good career choices for you?

Exploring the System

After discussing the advantages and disadvantages of career assessments and helping students work through their positive and negative perspectives on using personal factors in making career decisions, students can be introduced to the Occupation Library and Compare Occupation tools in Career Solutions.

The "How to Use this Tool" section above provides a summary of useful information to share with students.

It is recommended that teachers and instructors…

- Encourage students to sign into the site to ensure they can access saved data.
- Help students locate the Occupation Library and Compare Occupations tools.
- Review the basic features of these tools, including how to organize, explore and compare occupations.
- Assist students in identifying information that is most useful to explore at this stage.
- Discuss the results from the Compare Occupations tool and how to interpret this information.

Classroom Activity

Using Personal Factors to Identify Careers

Connecting with careers at a personal level can help students maintain a sense of personal identity in the career exploration process. Indeed, a career is an important source of personal fulfillment and students often seek employment that aligns with their personal needs. As they gain insight into the factors that can affect job satisfaction, students will need opportunities to consolidate and apply this information. When they have a more unified sense of who they are and what they need from work, they can make stronger career choices. Career comparisons become more focused on specific needs, as opposed to more general feelings about jobs they may or may not like.

To locate the Occupation Library and Compare Occupations, review the "How to Use this Tool" section above.

It is recommended that teachers and instructors…

- Discuss the need to review and organize personal factors explored in previous activities.
- Communicate the power of using personal factors in comparing careers and making decisions.
- Review the Occupation Library and Compare Occupations tools in Career Solutions.
- Identify the purpose of these tools as resources for storing and comparing occupations.
- Provide an opportunity for students to explore the tools in the classroom or at home.
- Encourage students to complete the Using Personal Factors to Identify Careers sheet (see below).
- Assist students in understanding the benefits and limitations of using personal factors to identify careers.

Exploring the Results

As students consolidate and organize their thoughts about their personal factors, they will start to develop a more solid sense of self that can guide the career selection process. After completing this activity, they will have a summary of the basic interests, values, and lifestyle goals that have the potential to affect their sense of fulfillment in their work. Students should be encouraged to keep this summary in a convenient location so it can be referenced frequently as they continue the career exploration process.

Ultimately, the goal of this activity is for students to practice making informed career decisions using their personal factors. The occupations that emerge from this activity are expected to be a stronger personal match, with the potential for increased job satisfaction. Students may want to consider exploring these occupations further, given the potential for these occupations to meet fundamental needs.

As always, a brief disclaimer should be added to help students keep results in perspective. Placing too much emphasis on the personal factors identified in this process can fail to recognize the unique and complex nature of each student. While the specific factors highlighted in these activities can be useful, they should never be used as the sole deciding factor in making career decisions. They are merely part of a larger picture and opportunities should be provided to acknowledge personal differences with students.

Using Personal Factors to Identify Careers

Instructions: Use the information and tools available in Career Solutions to answer the following questions.

1. Review your results from the assessments and tools that you have used in Career Solutions. Use these results to complete the table below.

Work Interests Assessment	Work Values Assessment	Why I Work
List your top two work interests and provide a brief definition of each.	List your top two work values and provide a brief definition of each.	Briefly describe your future lifestyle and list the annual income you will need to support your lifestyle.

2. Review each of these factors and sort them from most important to least important – 1 being most important and 5 being least important. For each factor, ask yourself, "**How important is it to me that my future occupation satisfies this need?**" Keep in mind that work interests and values can be separated and do not have to be listed consecutively. For the Why I Work section, you can simply list, "My Lifestyle Goals" and rate this anywhere form 1-5 in the list below.

1

2

3

4

5

3. Go to the Compare Occupations tool in Career Solutions and choose three occupations to compare. (Note: These occupations are pulled from your saved occupations in your Occupations Library.)
    - Write the occupation titles in the top row of the table below.
    - List your personal factors, in order of importance, in the first column.
    - Review each occupation in Career Solutions and mark an X in the table for each factor match that you find. For this activity, it is best to focus on the following categories in Career Solutions – (1) Interests, (2) Values, and (3) Wage (wage is related to lifestyle goals).
    - Add the number of X's for each occupation and write the total in the last row.
    - The occupation(s) with the most X's can be considered a better personal fit.
    - If a tie is found, the occupation with more X's at the top of the list is a better personal fit.

Personal Factor	Occupation 1	Occupation 2	Occupation 3
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
Personal Factor Match Total			

4. Which of the three occupations did you find to be the better fit? Would you consider pursuing this occupation? Why or why not? If no one occupation stood out, what other factors could you consider to help find the right fit for you?

5. Would you use a process similar to this again to help you make career decisions? Why or why not? How might you improve this process to make it more useful for you?

6. Go back to the Compare Occupations tool in Career Solutions and compare the same three occupations. This time, go through and answer the questions on the Compare Occupations page for each category and review the results at the bottom of the Compare Occupations page.

   Using this method, which occupation did you find to be the better match?

   Was it the same occupation that matched your personal factors above? If a different career emerged as a better fit, what factors do you think made the difference?

   Are there any of the comparison categories (wage, education, etc.) in this tool that you would consider excluding because they are not important to you? Why or why not?

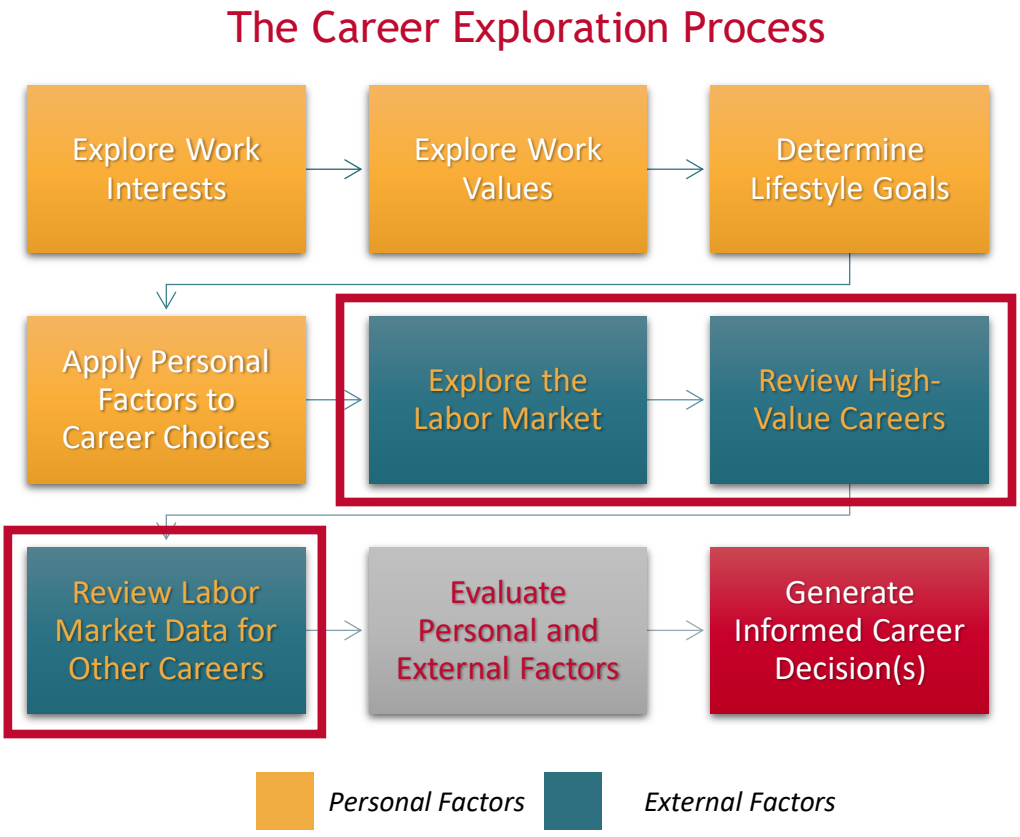
7. Go back to your Occupation Library and use some of the strategies outlined above to compare occupations. List at least 2-3 additional occupations that could be a good personal fit for you.

Next Steps

At the end of the lesson, take a moment to review and assess the learning objectives. Engage students in a brief discussion of the learning opportunities that were made available in the classroom.

In this lesson, students were provided the opportunity to…

- Summarize their personal factors, including interests, values, and lifestyle goals.
- Identify how these personal factors can be combined to develop a more unified picture.
- Apply their various personal factors, in a unified approach, to the selection of potential careers.
- Compare various occupations based on goodness-of-fit and alignment with personal factors.
- Generate a list of occupations that are potential career opportunities.

After providing a brief overview, encourage students to…

- Continue the self-reflection process.
- Think about their personal factors and the types of occupations that fit their personal needs.
- Determine how they might use this information in selecting a career.
- Prepare for future lessons that will introduce external factors.