

# ASK A CAREER COACH

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## FOR THE TEACHER:

### Introduction

In addition to familiarizing students with the features and information available in MIBrightFuture, the purpose of this activity is to:

- help students learn more about a career that interests them and build on that knowledge by connecting with a practitioner in the field
- allow students the opportunity to practice critical communication and networking skills
- highlight the message boards as a place to find mentors in the community

### Setting The Stage

Ask students a series of *Whom do you turn to for advice...* questions. (e.g. *Whom do you turn to for advice on dating? Whom do you turn to for advice on your math homework?*) Finish with *Whom do you turn to for career planning advice?* Answers will vary—and you can discuss the merits of seeking advice from the sources students suggest—but narrow in on the advantages of consulting an expert in the field that interests them as a source of insight into the career. Explain that in this activity, students will have the opportunity to get advice about an occupation that interests them from a career coach who performs that job.

**Note:** The Summary – Your Opinion section of the worksheet cannot be completed until after students have received a response to the question they have posted on the Career Coach Message Board. Students will have to return to this worksheet at a later date; however, it's an important step as it gives them a chance to reflect on the coach's answer to their question and re-evaluate their interest in the career.

### Extension Activity

In pairs, students can compose and deliver a mock interview between a student reporter and a professional in a career that interests them. They can develop questions as they did in the worksheet, and use the message boards, Career Cruising occupation profiles, and the sites in the Other Resources section to research answers. While the content of their interview, use of resources, and quality of delivery are important, students should also be creative!

### Starting The Program

Go to [www.careercruising.com](http://www.careercruising.com). Enter your username and password in the spaces provided, and click on Login.

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## Part A: What do I want to know about an occupation?

Click on the **MIBRIGHTFUTURE** button in the menu bar at the top of the page. Click on the **CAREER COACH MESSAGE BOARDS** link and then the **SEARCH BY CLUSTER** button. Choose a career cluster. (It can be one you've researched before, or one that interests but you don't know much about.)

Read through the list of careers in that cluster. Click on one that you'd like to learn more about.

**Occupation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**1. Click on the JOB DESCRIPTION button.** Read this section of the profile and answer the following questions:

What do people in this occupation do?

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What interests you most about the tasks people in this occupation do? (*e.g. working with state-of-the-art technical equipment, helping people, building things, etc.*)

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Write down three questions that you would like to ask someone in this career about the tasks he or she performs. (*e.g. What skills do you need to perform these tasks?*)

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**2. Read the WORKING CONDITIONS section.** Answer the following questions:

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What are the working conditions like for people in this career? (e.g. frequent travel, working in an office, facing dangerous situations)

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What working conditions would you enjoy if you were in this career? Which wouldn't you like?

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Write down two questions you would like to ask someone in this career about his or her working conditions. (e.g. How do you handle being away from home so much?)

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**3. Read the EDUCATION section.** Answer the following questions:

What are the education or training requirements for this career? (e.g. associate degree, formal apprenticeship, on-the job training)

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Would you be willing to complete the education and/or training needed to enter this career? Why or why not?

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Write down two questions you would like to ask someone in this career about the education or training requirements. (e.g. *What do you need to include in your application to law school? How did you find your apprenticeship?*)

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**4. Write down any other questions you would like to ask someone working in this occupation.**

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## **Part B: Post a question to the Career Coach Message Board**

Click on the **ASK A CAREER COACH** button in the menu on the left side of the page. Read through some of the questions that have been posted to the board. Review the questions that you developed in Part A of this activity and choose one you'd like to ask the career coach. (If your questions already appear, try to think of a new question or add to the related thread with a follow-up question.)

My Question: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Click on the gray **ASK A QUESTION** button and follow the instructions.

Note: Your question will not show up on the board right away. Once a career coach has responded to your message, both your question and the reply will appear.

## **Summary – Your Views (To be completed after your question has been answered by a career coach.)**

Summarize (put briefly into your own words) the career coach's response to your question:

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How did the career coach's response to your question influence your opinion of the career? (e.g. *The training requirements don't sound as difficult as I thought. People in this career work alone more often than I thought.*)

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Now that you've learned a little more about this occupation from someone who works in the field, are you interested in pursuing it? Why or why not?

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Why do you think it's a good idea to talk to somebody in an occupation you're considering before deciding whether or not it's right for you?

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**Post more questions!** If you want to learn more about his career, post the other questions that you developed for this activity to the Career Coach Message Board. You can also go back and search for a different career that interests you, and develop and post questions to that message board.

# RESEARCHING COMPANIES OF INTEREST

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## FOR THE TEACHER:

### Introduction

The purpose of this activity is to help students:

- identify and evaluate criteria that's important to them in potential employers
- learn more about local companies of interest

### Setting The Stage

Discuss with students why it is important to research potential employers. The more they know about a company's services or products, values, and mission, the better able they will be to connect their skills, knowledge, and experience to the organization's goals and needs. Moreover, researching companies of interest will help prepare them for informational/job interviews and networking opportunities.

Ask students to brainstorm (in groups or alone) a list of details they must know about a company before deciding whether or not they want to work there. (You can direct students to the Work Search section of Career Cruising's Employment Guide where they'll find lots of information about researching employers.) As a class, discuss the results of their brainstorming session. Students should keep in mind the criteria that are important to them as they explore a company profile, website, and message board in Part B of the activity.

**Note:** Remind students to select a company that has a message board associated with it as they will have the opportunity to learn more about the company by posting questions to the board. The Summary – Your Opinion section of the worksheet cannot be completed until after students have received a response to the question they have posted on the Company Message Board. Students will have to return to this worksheet at a later date; however, it's an important step as it gives them a chance to reflect on the company representative's answer to their question and evaluate their interest in the company.

### Extension Activity

Have students compose a general broadcast letter or a cover letter for one of the occupations listed in the Who We Hire section of the company profile. Review the basics of effective letter writing beforehand (you can use the information found in Career Cruising's Employment Guide). Students can click on the occupation links in the Who We Hire section to learn more about occupations, and research related job postings (either on the company website or an online job board) to find out what employers of people in that occupation look for when hiring. Remind them to include information that they have found about the company.

### Starting The Program

Go to [www.careercruising.com](http://www.careercruising.com). Enter your username and password in the spaces provided, and click on Login.

# WORKSHEET: RESEARCHING COMPANIES OF INTEREST

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## Part A. What should I know about a potential employer?

Brainstorm a list of things that you need to know about a company before you decide whether or not you would like to work there. (*e.g. products and services the company offers, company values, management style, number of employees, etc.*)

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## Part B. Search for a company

Sign in to Career Cruising and click on the **MIBRIGHTFUTURE LINK** button in the menu at the top of the page. Click on the Company Profiles link.

Search for companies by cluster. Select a company that you would like to investigate further. (Make sure the company profile has a Company Message Board associated with it by checking for a Company Message Board button on the profile.)

**Company Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

### 1. Read the Description & Details Section. Answer the following questions:

What does this company do?

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What did you learn about this company's background?

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What industry (or industries) does this company serve?

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What career clusters does this company hire people in?

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**2. Click on the Who We Hire button in the menu on the left side of the page.** This company employs people in what career areas? Which career areas interest you most?

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**3. Return to the Description & Details page of the company profile.** Click on the link to the company's website and explore the site. (If the company does not have a website, see if you can find the information elsewhere online, such as a local BIA website.)

What else did you find out about the company's background? (*Hint: Look for an About Us, History, FAQ, or similar section*)

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What else did you find out about the careers available at this company? (*Hint: Look for a Careers, Employment Opportunities, FAQ, or similar section.*)

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Consult the list that you developed in Part A of this worksheet, and try to find the information that you indicated you wanted to know about a potential employer. Record your findings here:

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# WORKSHEET: RESEARCHING COMPANIES OF INTEREST

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What else do you want to know about this company? Write down three questions you would like to ask a representative about the company:

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## Post your question to the Company Message Board!

Return to the company profile page, and click on the **COMPANY MESSAGE BOARD** button in the menu on the left side of the page. Read through some of the questions that have been posted to the board. Choose one of the questions you developed to ask the company representative. (If your questions already appear, try to think of a new question or add to the related thread with a follow-up question.)

Click on the gray **ASK A QUESTION** button and follow the instructions.

Note: Your question will not show up on the board right away. Once a company representative has responded to your message, both your question and the reply will appear.

## Summary – Your Views (To be completed after your question has been answered by a company representative.)

Summarize (put briefly into your own words) the company representative's response to your question:

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How did the answer(s) provided by the company representative influence your opinion of the company?

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# WORKSHEET: RESEARCHING COMPANIES OF INTEREST

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What do you like about this company?

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What do you dislike about this company?

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Based on what you know about this company, would you like to work there? Why or why not?

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# WORK-BASED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

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## FOR THE TEACHER:

### Introduction

The purpose of this activity is to help students:

- understand the benefits of participating in Work-based Learning Activities (WLAs)
- investigate various WLAs in their community
- learn to develop and set goals to prepare them for potential WLAs

### Setting The Stage

Ask students to suggest ways to find out if a career that they're interested in is right for them. Identify Work-based Learning suggestions (e.g. job shadowing, internships, etc.) as they're given, and encourage students to come up with more examples of WLAs. Ask students to develop, as a class or individually, a list of other benefits to participating in WLAs. Answers may include: making valuable work connections (networking), finding community mentors, seeing firsthand how subjects they're learning in school translate to the workplace, developing workplace and interpersonal skills, earning academic credit, earning money for college, learning more about job requirements and training, and developing self-esteem and confidence in their contributions as workers.

You can help prepare students for participating in Work-based Learning Activities by encouraging them to assess their own interests, skills, learning styles, and abilities using Career Cruising's assessment tools. Emphasize how knowing their interests will help them identify and choose a WLA that reflects their personal likes; how knowing their strengths and weaknesses will help them set goals for the skills and abilities they want to either use or improve during the WLA; and how knowing their learning style can help them understand the relationship between how they learn and success during the WLA.

### Extension Activity

Students who request and complete a WLA can maintain a reflective journal that outlines the goals they hope to accomplish by participating in the WLA and chronicles their experiences, learning, successes, and problems throughout the WLA. You can use the My Journal feature of Career Cruising, a class blog, or any other journaling format that appeals to you and your students.

### Starting The Program

Go to [www.careercruising.com](http://www.careercruising.com). Enter your username and password in the spaces provided, and click on Login.

# WORKSHEET: WORK-BASED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

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Click on the **MIBRIGHTFUTURE** button in the menu bar at the top of the page and select **WORK-BASED LEARNING ACTIVITIES** link. Click on **SEARCH BY TYPE OF ACTIVITY** and select an opportunity type that interests you.

1. Read through the list of Work-based Learning Activities (WLAs) available at companies in your area. Click on one provided by a company that interests you and answer the following questions:

What is the name and/or type of the Work-based Learning Activities?

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What is the name of the company that provides the WLA?

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In what city (or cities) is the WLA available?

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**2. Learn more about the company offering the Work-based Learning Activities.** Click on the name of the company providing the WLA that interests you. Explore the company profile, including the Who We Hire section, and answer the following questions:

What does this company do?

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What career clusters does this company hire people in?

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What careers does this company hire people in?

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# WORKSHEET: WORK-BASED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

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If you were to participate in this WLA, which career offered at this company would you like to learn more about and what would you like to learn about that career? (*e.g. mechanical engineer – Do mechanical engineers at this company need special training in robotics?*)

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**3. Learn more about the Work-based Learning Activities offered at this company.** Click on the Work-based Learning Activities button in the menu on the left side of the page.

What other WLAs are available at this company?

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What other WLAs interest you? Why?

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**4. Click on the WLA that you wrote down in Question # 1.**

Describe this type of WLA. What's it about?

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What interests you about this WLA?

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# WORKSHEET: WORK-BASED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

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What skills or abilities would you like to learn more about, acquire, or use during this WLA? (e.g. *budgeting skills, communication skills, teamwork*)

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What school subjects or other knowledge would you be able to use during this WLA? (e.g. *science, Spanish, knowledge of bicycle maintenance*)

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What workplace behavior or personal characteristics would you like to acquire, practice, or improve during this WLA? (e.g. *time management, adaptability, stress management*)

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What else would you like to learn or accomplish by participating in this WLA?

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## Summary – Your Views

What else would you like to know about this WLA before deciding whether or not to apply?

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# WORKSHEET: WORK-BASED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

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How can you find out the answers to your questions?

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Are you interested in applying for this WLA? Why or why not?

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If you are interested in this Work-based Learning Activities, click on the MAKE A REQUEST button to send a request to the WLA administrator at your school. Your school administrator will follow up with you about your request, and, if it is approved, he or she will contact the company and make the necessary arrangements on your behalf