

About This Book

The “best” job for you is a personal decision. But objective criteria can be used to identify jobs that are, for example, better paying than other jobs with similar duties. This book provides that type of information. We have sorted through the data for *all* major jobs and selected only those that meet one of the following parameters:

- ▲ Have average annual earnings of \$40,000 or more
- ▲ Are expected to increase the number of people employed in that occupation by 10 percent or more by 2006
- ▲ Are large enough occupations to create 100,000 or more job openings each year

There were 686 jobs that met this criteria, and descriptions for all of them appear in Section 2. We are not suggesting that all of these jobs are good ones for you to consider—they are not. But we present such a wide range of jobs that you are likely to find one or more that will stand out. These are the jobs you should consider most in your future career planning.

The jobs are arranged into a variety of useful lists in Section 1. For example, you can find lists for the best-paying jobs at various levels of education or training, which is very useful if you are considering additional training or education. You can use these same lists to find jobs that pay you more without requiring additional education. We have also arranged the jobs in groupings based on interests and in other ways that are useful for career planning.

We hope you find this book as interesting as we did while putting it together. We have tried to make it easy to use and as interesting as occupational information can be.

We wish you well in your career and in your life.



Introduction

The beginning of a new millennium comes around only once in a thousand years, and it motivates many of us to think about the future. This book uses employment projections through 2006 to help you identify jobs with the best possibilities for fast growth, high pay, and the most openings. We hope that you find our approach interesting and that the book encourages you to uncover possibilities that you may not have considered.

This introduction is designed to help you better understand and use the rest of the book. We've kept it short and nontechnical in hopes that you will read it.

How Occupations Were Selected

We gave some information on how occupations were selected in the "About This Book" statement earlier. Here are a few more details about the occupations selected for this book:

1. We started with the jobs included in the new O*NET database. The O*NET is a new database of occupational information first released by the U.S. Department of Labor shortly before the release of this book. It includes information on about 1,200 occupations and is now the primary source of detailed information on occupations, replacing the earlier *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* database. We used the O*NET as a basis for this book because it is the newest and most reliable occupational information available from any source.
2. Because we wanted to include pay data that was not included in the O*NET, we cross-referenced information on earnings developed by the U.S. Census Bureau. This information is the most reliable information we could obtain, but the census uses a different system of job titles than the O*NET. We were able to link the two systems and tie census earnings information to many of the O*NET job titles.
3. We then went through the resulting list of occupations and included those that met one or more of the following criteria:
 - ▲ Have earnings of \$40,000 or more a year (the average earnings for all workers is about \$26,500 a year)

SECTION 1

Lists of the Best Jobs for the 21st Century

We've tried to make the lists in this section both fun to use and informative. Use the table of contents to find the lists that most interest you, or simply browse the lists that follow. Most, such as the list of jobs with the highest pay, are very easy to understand and require little explanation. We provide comments as needed on the lists to inform you of the selection criteria we used or other details we think you may want to know.

As you review the lists, one or more of the occupations may appeal to you enough to seek additional information. As this happens, mark that occupation (or, if someone else will be using this book, write it on a separate sheet of paper) so that you can look up its description in Section 2.

All lists emphasize occupations with high pay, high growth, or large numbers of openings because many people consider one of these factors important in selecting a desirable job. These measures are also easily quantified and are, therefore, often presented in lists of best jobs you read about in the newspapers and other media.

While earnings, growth, and openings are important, there are other factors to consider. For example, location, liking the people you work with, having an opportunity to serve others, and enjoying your work are a few of many factors that may define the ideal job for you. These measures are difficult or impossible to quantify based on the data we have available and so are not used in this book. You will need to consider the importance of these issues yourself. We suggest that you refer to the bibliography for additional resources to help in your career planning.

Having said this, the lists do include measures that are easily quantified, can be easily sorted, and can be put into list form. All data used in this book comes from government sources including the U.S. Department of Labor and the Census Bureau.

The earnings figures are based on the average annual pay received by full-time workers. Since some occupations have high percentages of part-time workers, those workers would receive, of course, relatively less pay on a weekly or annual basis. The earnings also represent the national averages and actual pay rates can vary greatly by location, amount of previous work experience, and other factors.