



Sort It Out!

by Troy McMillan

Sorting out what you want in life can be a daunting task! Answers to questions about your job options, your educational goals, and how you plan to pay for school or training can seem difficult to obtain.

Luckily the Career Information System (CIS) portal of the IDES website can help! CIS has three sorting tools (occupations, schools, financial aid) that are designed to help you identify and categorize information about these important topics. You can use CIS to gather pertinent information as you explore the world of work, your

educational options, and available financial aid awards such as scholarships and grants that can help you pay for school. Let's take an in-depth look at each "sort."

Occupation Sort

Occupation Sort is a decision-making tool used for career development that can help you understand occupational information using fundamental labor market concepts. You will learn about the realities of the labor market and how your own preferences relate to important labor market characteristics. Those

Words in blue are defined in the glossary on page two.

characteristics are also referred to as factors and considered important in the career decision-making process. These 28 factors describe job requirements, work environments, tasks, and other important job-related information such as wages and **job outlook**. Keep in mind that Occupation Sort is not a test nor is it an assessment; it is a learning and self-awareness resource that brings a unique perspective to your career planning process. It also gives you the opportunity to evaluate what you know about yourself as it relates to compatible career goals.

As you begin using Occupation Sort, you'll be asked to select factors that are important to you in an occupation. You may find that some factors are relevant to you because you want them as part of your daily job duties; other factors are relevant because you don't want them. Occupation Sort is designed to

help organize your likes and dislikes and create a list of occupations that match your preferences. It doesn't tell you what you should do; rather, it gives you facts to consider when selecting an occupation or exploring career options, and helps you find **congruence** between you and an occupation.

Use Occupation Sort to help you find occupations that match factors you consider important, and to learn more about those occupations you have chosen to explore further.

School Sort

Now let's take a look at School Sort, an exploratory tool that lets you research schools that offer two-year associate and four-year bachelor's degree full-time programs for the occupations selected in Occupation Sort. Later, you can search for graduate schools and **first**

Occupation Sort is designed to let you say what you know about yourself.

professional degree schools if you plan to obtain advanced degrees and certifications.

School Sort helps you identify colleges and universities that interest you by generating a list of schools based on your preferences such as cost, student population, and whether you want a school in an urban or rural location. Learn how to refine your choices to create your best options. You can even compare three schools at a time. And,

Glossary

- **Job Outlook** – the expected rate of growth in a specific occupation.
- **Congruence** – a good fit or match.
- **First Professional Degree** - academic degrees that are earned based on the development of practical skills related to a specific profession such as Dentistry, Law, Medicine (including surgery), Optometry, Pharmacy, and Veterinary Medicine.
- **Scholarship** - financial aid award for an accomplishment.
- **Grant** - financial aid award offer based on financial need.
- **Attribute** - a quality or feature regarded as a personal characteristic or inherent part of someone or something such as being left-handed or of an ethnic or national background.

best of all, School Sort can be used over and over again as you discover and rediscover information that is important to you.

Although CIS has listings for over 644 Illinois schools, including vocational trade schools, career schools, allied health/hospital schools, business/commercial schools, cosmetology/barber schools and flight schools, the School Sort feature “sorts” exclusively on two- and four-year schools and graduate and first professional degree schools. But don’t worry, you can still obtain information about specific schools using the “Illinois Schools by Name” option. Interested in a school outside of Illinois? No problem! CIS lets you search for schools in all 50 states, Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

Use School Sort to identify colleges and universities that interest you, offer your program of study, and match your desired school preferences.

Financial Aid Sort

Similar to School Sort, Financial Aid Sort is also an exploratory tool that guides you through a focused search for **scholarship** and **grant** opportunities. These financial aid awards are based on a plethora of criteria including, but not limited to, financial need and academic grades. Financial Aid Sort helps you match your educational plans, abilities, interests, and **attributes** to available awards. Through the “build your list” option, Financial Aid Sort adds award possibilities to your list that match your inputted criteria such as: personal characteristics, programs of study, hobbies and interests, and much more.

It also lets you sort on specifics such as your extracurricular activities (clubs, sports, etc.) and your postsecondary plans.

Financial Aid Sort does a lot of the work for you as it searches for local, regional, state, and national data - all you have to do is build your list which you can refine over and over again. Or you can simply sort on award requirements. Getting a late start or running out of time to apply for financial aid? Use the award deadline option to zero in on awards with submission dates far enough in the future that you have enough time to apply. If you are looking for information on specific scholarships, use the Clusters Index, Title Index, or Search tabs located on the CIS website in the top toolbar. And finally, you can

optimize your search by using the filter function to generate a targeted list of options designed specifically for you!

Use Financial Aid Sort to help you identify scholarships and other awards that will reduce the amount of out-of-pocket money you will need to pay for school.

Remember to “Sort It Out” and find the occupations you want to explore as possible careers; colleges and universities you might want to attend; and financial awards that can help you pay for school, training, or both.

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The screenshot displays the 'SORT FINANCIAL AID' interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with tabs for Assessments, Occupations, Education (selected), Employment, Site Tools & Admin, and My CIS Portfolio. A search bar is located on the right. Below the navigation bar, the main content area is divided into two columns. The left column, titled 'Build Your List', contains a vertical menu with options: Personal Characteristics, Academics, Postsecondary Plans, Programs of Study, Financial Need, 'More About You' (highlighted in red), Refine Your List, Award Requirements, and Deadline. Below this menu is a 'Search Criteria' section with a refresh icon and a status '0 awards (2,877 off list)'. The right column, titled 'More About You', contains several filter sections: 'Leadership' with a checked box for 'Do not include awards based on leadership'; 'Affiliation with Club, Civic Association, or Union (student or parent)' with a checked box for 'Do not include awards based on affiliation with club, civic association, or union'; 'Affiliation with a Business (student or parent)' with a checked box for 'Do not include awards based on affiliation with a business'; and 'Hobbies, Talents, and Interests' with a checked box for 'Do not include awards based on hobbies, talents, and interests'. Below these sections is a list of checkboxes for various interests, including Amateur radio, Animal/agricultural competition, Art, Asian language, Athletics/sports, Automotive, Aviation, Jewish culture, Latin language, LGBT issues, Museum/preservation work, Music, Music/singing, and Numismatics. At the top right of the main content area, there are buttons for 'Help & Tutorials', 'Start Over', 'Continue', and 'Get My Results'.

A sample of the questions in the Financial Aid Sort. Find more information on the Illinois Department of Employment Security’s website: www.ides.illinois.gov/CareerInfo.