INVESTIGATING A CAREER IN FORENSIC SCIENCE

Much interest in this field has been generated recently because of the television show CSI. What exactly is forensic science? Any science that is used for the purpose of upholding the law and determining the truth is a forensic science. If you are interested in forensic science, there are actually 10 disciplines within forensic science you may wish to investigate: criminalistics, engineering sciences, general forensic science, jurisprudence, odontology, pathology/biology, physical anthropology, psychiatry and behavioral science, questioned documents, and toxicology.

All areas of forensic science require a minimum of a bachelor’s degree in a physical science such as chemistry, biology, or physics. According to the Occupational Outlook Handbook, forensic science technicians earn about $36,000. Of course this can vary greatly depending on your degree, location, and your specific job. Some forensic scientists work in laboratories and others work in the field. Lab workers may analyze drugs, blood, poisons, firearms, toolmarks, documents, fingerprints, or trace evidence. Workers in the field may search crime scenes for suspicious items and collect evidence.

The employment outlook is good for forensic scientists for the foreseeable future. Most forensic scientists work for federal, state, or local governments. Forensic scientists may advance to become managers or laboratory directors. Some crime lab analysts start private consulting businesses. For more information on careers in forensic science and for schools offering degree programs check the website: www.aafs.org.

Sources: Chronicle Guidance Publications (Brief 275), and www.jobweb.com

8 STEPS TO FINDING A JOB

1. Understand the reality of job hunting. Job hunting is all about promoting yourself and your talent. It is important to know how your talent can benefit employers. Finding a job is a job - it takes time. You should follow a plan, but be flexible.

2. Assess yourself. Identify and write down your interests, skills,
values, needs, and work habits. If you know your personality, you can more easily determine the right work and which employer is right for you.

3. **Determine your objectives.**
What type of position do you want? What job activities would you enjoy? What kind of employer is right for you? Do you have geographical preferences? Know what you want before you look; it will help you zero in on the best targets.

4. **Create a career portfolio.**
Prepare sample cover letters, letters of inquiry or application, and follow-up acceptance and rejection letters. Write your resume. Gather documents such as letters of recommendation, school or college transcripts, certifications, awards and citations.

5. **Target potential employers.**
Research potential employers and identify those you think might be a good fit. Find employers who need your talent, and then get the names of individuals at each company who are responsible for the position you want.

6. **Apply.** Prepare all necessary cover letters, resumes, and supporting documentation to apply for your target jobs. Make sure all documents look professional and are mistake-free. Mail to the person who has the power to hire you.

7. **Interview.** Research the company before you interview. Know what the company does and how you can contribute to its goals. Dress appropriately.

Follow up each interview with a thank-you letter stressing how you can benefit each employer.

8. **Evaluate the process.** If you don’t land the job, ask yourself these questions: Have I done everything necessary? How well did I accomplish each step? Where can I improve? If you are still at a loss, a trained career counselor can help identify the cause of your problem and get you back on the road to success!

**SIX BOOMING CAREER FIELDS TO CONSIDER**
No career counselor would ever suggest choosing a career field just because it is hot. If the fit isn’t good, nothing (not even lots of money and benefits) could make it a positive experience. However, if you are looking around for a career destination, here are six industries that have good job potential you may want to consider.

1. **Healthcare:** Exploding biotechnology and baby boomers’ health needs have combined to ensure that this industry can only grow.

2. **Insurance:** Both current world uncertainty and shifting demographics account for the gearing-up happening in this industry.

3. **Security.** This hot new industry needs people at all levels.

4. **Construction:** Low interest rates are the fuel in this industry’s tank.

5. **Government:** Within the next three years, nearly half of government executives are slated to retire. That will leave room for talent and experience in a wide
THE FASTEST GROWING OCCUPATIONS,
2000-2010

Here are some fields of work the Bureau of Labor Statistics expects will offer the most opportunities in the next decade.

**College Teachers** – Retirements will create 315,000 jobs but competition for newcomers will remain stiff.

**Computer Software Engineers** – Expect 660,000 new jobs for those with at least a bachelor’s degree in the field.

**Computer Support Specialists** – As the field becomes more complex, 663,000 new workers will be needed.

**Computer and Systems Information Managers** – Competition for sales mandates more attention to consumers.

**Dental Hygienists** – Good opportunities, especially for part-time workers.

**Dental and Medical Assistants** – Growing volume of health services will create demand.

**Desktop Publishers** – New techniques will help expand the field.

**Medical Records Technicians** – More patients and other data sources will increase work.

**Nursing and Home Health Aides** – More long-term health care will be offered in homes.

**Occupational and Physical Therapists** – Aging population increases demand for services.

**Physician Assistants** – Cost-cutting approaches to health services will help field grow.

**Public Relations Specialists** – Companies are aware they need to improve their public image.

**Receptionists and Information Clerks** – Offices still require skilled contact support workers.

**Security Guards** – Firms will offer more services to protect property and people.

**Speech, Language Specialists** – Services required by more people.

**Systems Analysts** – About 500,000 new jobs will develop as field expands.

**Teacher Assistants** – More special needs students will require assistance.

Source: *Career Opportunity News*, September 2002
range of agencies and organizations.

6. **Education:** In the next six years, nearly 2 million teachers are expected to retire.

Source: *The Forum, Autumn 2002*

**CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY JOBS**

Construction analysts report that there is a national shortage of 250,000 skilled trade workers and that by the year 2010 there will be as many as 2.4 million unfilled jobs.

This is an industry that has changed dramatically with apprenticeship programs emphasizing technological innovations that have been recently introduced. Laser scanners are being used to position steel beams and electronic and radar devices are being used to check on underground piping. Computer-Aided Design technology has replace blueprints and pen and pencil drawings.

Those interested in these new construction technologies will find the financial rewards are high. The minimum earnings for skilled workers is about $45,000 and in certain areas of the country can be about $90,000. Project managers and supervisors can earn salaries of $100,000.

Source: *The Career Choices Newsletter, September 2002*

**NURSING SHORTAGE CONTINUES**

The nursing shortage remains a serious problem in many areas of the country. According to the American Hospital Association, 126,000 nursing jobs are unfilled. If you are interested in a career in nursing, you may want to explore various nursing specialties and different types of training available. Check out: [www.discovernursing.com](http://www.discovernursing.com)

Source: *The Career Choices Newsletter*

**BITS AND PIECES**

*According to *Business Week Online*, companies are expected to offer raises in base salaries of 3.9 percent. Since the consumer price index is only increasing at a 1.5 percent rate workers would receive, in essence, a 2.3 percent raise.*

*According to the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, applications to graduate schools have increased 18 percent this year. In the past year, 20,000 people took the GMAT, which is required to enter most MBA programs.*

*The American Veterinary Association reported that in the year 2005 women will outnumber men in this profession.*

*Undergraduate and graduate students searching for internships and research opportunities in science and engineering can access options with over 200 companies and federal agencies on the Web at [www.tech-interns.com](http://www.tech-interns.com)*

*Personal chefs cook for families and serve groups at special events. Many who work in this career enjoy flexible work schedules and high earnings of $25 to $60 an hour. Source: *Career Opportunities News* *

*Among workers who were cut during recent downsizing, approximately 40 percent have had to change occupations to find work. Source: *Business Week* *

*Not only did the number of job offers for information sciences graduates decline in 2002, the average offer dropped 8.5 percent to $41,375. Source: *NACE, Fall 2002 Salary Survey***