

Informational Interviews

What is an Informational Interview?

An informational Interview is a brief meeting between a person (you) who wants to investigate a career and a person working in that career. It is a meeting that you initiate, and it usually lasts 20-60 minutes. Your goal is to gather information about a particular career or field and determine whether it is a fit for you. This is not a job interview.

How an Informational Interview can help you

- Learn more about the realities of working in a particular career
- Discover what skills or experience are required for certain jobs so that you know what you need to develop or gain
- Develop, narrow or broaden your focus
- Discover careers that you never knew existed
- Build your network of contacts

How to arrange an Informational Interview

- Make a list of people that you already know: family, friends, professors, alumni, past co-workers. Use LinkedIn and other social media.
- Professional Associations or organizations can be a helpful place to make connections.
- Contact them and arrange a time and place to meet, either face to face or using technology.
- When contacting a person (by phone, email, or social media), introduce yourself, tell them a little bit about why you are contacting them and ask to meet briefly to so that you can learn more about the career or field.

Prepare for the Interview

- Decide what information you would like to obtain about the career or field.
- Write out the questions that you will ask. Don't ask questions that you can learn the answers to from their web site. (Samples questions are on the next page.)
- Plan appropriate dress for in person or online meeting.

Conduct the Interview

- Arrive on time (5-10 minutes early)
- Treat this as you would a job interview. Smile and make good eye contact.
- Ask your prepared questions.
- Thank the person at the end.

After the Interview

- Send a thank you note within 24 hours.
- Stay in contact with the person, build the relationship.

Informational Interview – Sample Questions to Ask

- How did you choose this career/field or job?
- Can you tell me about your career path?
- What does a typical day in your job look like?
- What do you like the most/least about your job?
- What does an entry level job look like in this field?
- What skills or experience are important for this job?
- What credentials, degrees, licenses are required for entry into this field?
- What do you find rewarding about this job?
- What aspects of this job are a challenge for you?
- Is there anything that you would have done differently in college based on what you know about the career/field now?
- What tips or strategies would you recommend for breaking into the field?
- Do you belong to any professional organizations?
- What opportunities are there with your organization for professional development and advancement?
- If you hired someone today, what factors would be most important in your hiring decision and why? Education? Experience? Skills? Personality?
- Based in our conversation, what other people do you believe that I should talk to?
- Can you suggest 2 or 3 other people that I might contact for more information? May I use your name when contacting them?