

Informational Interviews

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

An **Informational Interview** is a method of career exploration and networking. It provides an opportunity (usually 30 minutes) to spend time with professionals in a career field of interest. During an Informational Interview YOU ask the questions! The main benefit of the Informational Interview is that it allows you to acquire knowledge and establish connections for networking purposes. Additionally, you can enhance your interviewing skills through the process of meeting with and interviewing a “stranger,” and it provides you with opportunities for future internship, part-time or volunteer experience.

How to Set-up the Informational Interview

1) Identify a professional to contact in a career field that is of interest to you.

People to ask:

Fellow students
Professors and administrators
Family
Hometown neighbors
Former supervisors/coworkers

Places to look:

Yellow pages
Professional associations
Company web sites
Periodicals

2) Do background homework before contacting the employer.

- Identify specific things of interest that this person can provide to you.
- Compile a list of 15 questions to ask during the interview.

3) Contact a professional via phone, e-mail or by mail (if done well in advance).

- Speak directly to the person, if at all possible, or ask what the best procedure would be to contact him or her.
- Have written telephone “script” ready (see example) to explain why you are calling and what you hope to gain from a meeting with this person.
- Identify a convenient time for you to meet at his or her worksite.

4) Prepare for the day of the informational interview.

- Call to confirm the appointment the day before the actual interview.
- Identify an outfit to wear to the interview. Dress professionally to make a great impression.
- Take copies of your resume, your 15 questions, and a nice portfolio for materials and notes.

5) During the actual interview:

- Arrive at the office 15 minutes early. Be courteous to everyone you meet.
- Shake hands and introduce yourself.
- **Do not** write down answers to your questions during the interview; wait until after the interview.
- Be conscious of time: a 30-minute interview is fine, unless the professional initiates extra time.
- At the end of the interview, thank the person for his or her time and shake hands as you leave.

6) Immediately after the interview:

- Write down all of the answers to the questions that you asked.
- Jot down information about follow-up activities discussed or names of other persons to contact.
- Within two days, send a typewritten thank-you letter to the professional.





POSSIBLE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

How did you get started in this field?

What was your educational background?

What are your major responsibilities?

What do you find to be the most rewarding aspect of your job?

What do you like least about your job?

What is a "typical" day like for you?

What are some lifestyle considerations for this career field?

What are some common entry-level positions in this field?

What kind of salary range and benefits could an entry-level employee expect to receive?

What kind of an individual (skills and personality) would be best suited for these entry-level positions?

What are the most important factors used when hiring?

What do you think is the best educational preparation for a career in this field?

Which classes would you recommend that I take to gain more skills?

What types of experiences do you think would be helpful to obtain while still in college for this field?

What have you found to be a major weakness of new hires in this field?

How do people usually find out about full-time openings in this field?

Is it effective to simply send in a resume when seeking employment? Why/why not?

What are other careers related to yours that I might investigate?

What is the future outlook for this career field?

What are the areas of potential growth and decline in this field in the future?

Can you recommend other types of organizations in this field that I might contact for information if I consider pursuing this career?

Can you recommend any specific person to contact?

TELEPHONE SCRIPT IDEAS

- 1.) Provide a brief introduction of yourself for the professional. State that you are a student who is seeking advice and information on this person's career or industry.
- 2.) Tell them how you found out about this person (through your roommate, through a neighbor, from the Yellow Pages, from a professor, etc.).
- 3.) Identify what you hope to get out of a meeting with this person (Information on the person's current job? Information on the person's career? Information about the general career field?)
- 4.) Once the interview date has been set, verify the specific address, location, date and time before you hang up.



SAMPLE TELEPHONE SCRIPT

- Hello, my name is _____. I was given your name (or found out about your name) by _____.
- I am a (class year) at JSU and I am interested in arranging an informational interview.
- I am interested in learning more about the field of _____ (or your position as _____).
- Is this a good time for me to set up a meeting with you or someone on your staff?
- (If not), when would be a good time for me to call you back?
- I would like to meet with you for about 30 minutes at your convenience. When would you be available to speak to me (during the week of _____)?
- Thank you! I look forward to meeting with you on the (date) at (time).



*When your number is given to an employer, remember that he or she may call you any time including nights and weekends. **Be aware of how you or your roommates answer the phone,** the noise level when you answer the phone, and the message the employer may receive if no one answers.*