

Informational Interviews

- Purpose:** To gather valuable information concerning a specific kind of occupation or work environment for your personal career planning and to answer the question, “Do I want to become involved in this kind of work and life style?”
- Advantages:** You can acquire career information while you are still making career decisions and without being under the pressure that often accompanies formal job interviewing. This activity provides an opportunity to increase self confidence in interviewing.
- Hint #1:** Take the initiative to set up information seeking interviews. Most employers and/or career professionals will be willing to talk to you if you are honest and sincere in stating the purpose of the interview.
- Hint #2:** Be aware of the employer’s time. Twenty to thirty minutes is usually sufficient unless the employer suggests a longer time.

Possible Questions to Ask During the Interview:

1. What aspects of your job are most satisfying? Least satisfying?
2. What personal qualities are needed to succeed in your field?
3. What special skills, education or certification is necessary?
4. How much social contact is there with others—employees or clients?
5. What is the normal pattern of advancement in your job? What is the normal salary progression?
6. How much physical activity is required?
7. What activities do you perform during a typical day?
8. What geographical restrictions exist with this type of job?
9. What is the long-term employment outlook in your field?
10. What part of your job do you find to be the most difficult?
11. Is travel usually involved in this type of work?
12. Is relocation commonplace with this company?
13. How much overtime do you work and when does it occur?
14. If you were to hire a _____, what experience, skills and personal characteristics would you consider most important?
15. Could you recommend other people for me to contact for further information?

Informational Interviews (continued)

What is informational interviewing?

It is an activity that allows you to clarify your thoughts about career plans, learn more about different professions, and to get inside organizations and talk directly to people who could hire you or have hiring influence (networking).

Why should I do it?

If it is done well, informational interviewing yields a nonthreatening dialogue between you and potential employers in which you can obtain useful information that will help you in selecting a career and the type of organization in which you want to work.

I'm not interested in talking...I want a job!

Although this activity may seem off-track, it is usually the best approach for eventually securing employment. The informational interview should not be used, however, as a job interview. It is not fair to an employer to ask for an information interview and then to put them on the spot by asking for a job.

Will managers take time to talk with me?

If surveyed, they would probably indicate that they do not have time for such an activity; in practice, however, they usually enjoy discussing themselves, their profession and the organization. You have nothing to lose and a great deal to gain by asking!

How do I arrange a meeting?

Call the head of the department or the manager in the area of a company which offers jobs in your field of interest. Be considerate of busy schedules when requesting time for the purpose of learning more about the industry, profession or particular company or department. Ask for no more than 20 to 25 minutes, preferably, a face-to-face meeting.

What do I talk about?

Prepare questions about the industry and the specific company. You might ask about projected growth, competition, market development or distribution methods. Also, try to get information about necessary qualifications for the type of position/career you are investigating, the positive and negative aspects of the job and names of other contacts.

Do I ever bring up the subject of employment?

Probably not. Explain that you are gathering information to assist you in a career decision. Display interest and enthusiasm. Learn as much as possible about the company. If you have made a favorable impression, an employer may suggest that you consider his-her company or refer you to another company with similar job possibilities. This is networking in action!

What do I do after the interview?

Send a thank you letter (business format, please), thanking the person for the interview and for the information received. You may include a resume and request that the employer keep you in mind for any job openings in your area.