

# INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

## What is an informational interview?

An informational interview is a brief meeting between you - a person who wants to investigate a career - and a person working in that career. It is similar to a face-to-face job interview except *YOU* are the interviewer, gathering information about an occupation by asking questions.

## What is an informational interview NOT?

It is *NOT* the time to ask for a job.

## How long do they last?

An informational interview should last from 20-30 minutes. It is important to respect the time of those you are interviewing; they are busy and they are doing you a favor.

## What are the potential benefits of conducting informational interviews?

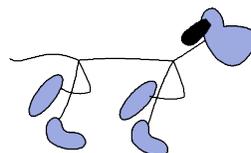
- ➔ You will learn more about the realities of different jobs from people actually doing those jobs.
- ➔ You will be better equipped to focus your career goals.
- ➔ You will build your network with people in your potential field.
- ➔ You will learn more about yourself – your strengths, weaknesses, and interests.
- ➔ You will be exposed to different working environments.
- ➔ You might find that an occupation you thought would be perfect, is not so perfect after all.
- ➔ You might learn about jobs you have never heard of before.
- ➔ You might learn some inside information about a company that you want to work for in the future.
- ➔ You might inadvertently learn about hidden, unadvertised jobs.
- ➔ You will improve your own interviewing skills by conducting interviews.

## Who should you interview?

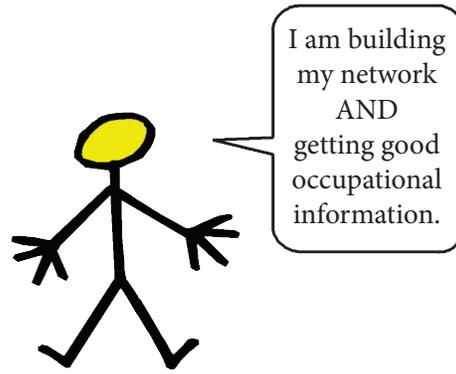
- ➔ Interview multiple employees who are doing the jobs that you have identified as possible good matches.
- ➔ Interview employees who have the same level of responsibility you would have when you begin working.

## How do you find people to interview?

- ➔ Ask friends, family, teachers, and others in your network.
- ➔ Go to your high school career center to see if they have a list of graduates who have agreed to help.
- ➔ Check professional association membership directories. Administrators of these groups may know who is eager to talk with students.
- ➔ Talk to human resource professionals in companies that hire for the occupation that interests you.



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### How do you make contact and set up an interview?

- ➔ Contact each person you hope to meet.
  - 👋 Personal introduction: Ask your friend or family member to introduce you to the person.
  - ✉ Write a letter: Explain who you are, why you want to meet, and how much of his/her time you need.
  - ☎ Make a phone call: Introduce yourself and ask if it is a good time to speak.
- ➔ Regardless of the method, make it clear that you are seeking information, NOT a job.
- ➔ Try not to be daunted by this task. Most people are happy to talk about their work, and anxious to help someone who is interested in the same career. The worst he or she can say is, "No" or "I'm too busy." Don't take it personally; ask the person if he or she knows anyone else in the field who you might contact, or just move on to the next person on your list.

### How should you prepare for the interview?

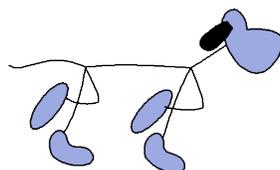
- ➔ Thoroughly research the occupation and the company.
- ➔ Develop your questions. There are suggested questions below, but only you know what is most important to you.
- ➔ Bring paper and pen; be ready to hear and record everything your expert is sharing with you.
- ➔ Consider the clothes you will wear; dress as if you were going to a job interview.

### What guidelines should you follow during the interview?

- ➔ Behave as if you were at a job interview; be professional.
- ➔ Be focused and organized.
- ➔ Stick to your schedule. Do not go over the allotted time.
- ➔ Ask for a business card.
- ➔ Ask if he/she knows of anyone else you might contact for an interview. Ask if you might mention his/her name when you speak to them.
- ➔ Thank the person sincerely with a firm handshake and good eye contact.

### How should you follow up after the interview?

- ➔ Write a thank you note, the sooner the better.
- ➔ If you were referred by family or friends, let them know how the interview went and thank them again for the introduction.
- ➔ Reflect on the interview by answering the questions on the next page.



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# Sample Interview Questions

*There will not be enough time to ask all of these questions. Prioritize the ones that are most important to you and/or create your own. Remember to stay within your agreed-upon time limit.*

## Background

- What is your background? How did you get into this kind of work?
- What training/education/other preparation do you need for this job?
- Do you have any advice on how one should best prepare for this field?
- What was your process for getting this particular job? Networking? Advertisement?
- What classes are you glad you took in high school?
- Is there anything you would have done differently if you had known at a younger age that this would be your profession?

## The Job

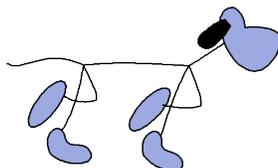
- What's a typical day like for you?
- What tools and/or technology do you use? How did you learn to use it?
- What is it about your personality that is well-suited to this line of work?
- What is most satisfying about your job? What is most frustrating about your job?
- How is your job important to the goals of the company?
- Are there opportunities for you to advance in this profession?
- Is this career changing? How?

## Working Conditions

- What is it about this work environment that you like the most? least?
- Are you allowed to make decisions that pertain to your work?
- Does this job require you to work independently? As a team? Face-to-face with customers?
- What is your work schedule? Do you know if this is typical for this occupation?
- Does your job require travel?
- Are there any health hazards to be considered in this job?

## Similar Jobs

- I know that some people in this occupation specialize in \_\_\_\_\_. Do you know of other specialties?
- I think this might be a good occupation for me, but do you know of a similar occupation that doesn't require \_\_\_\_\_?



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# Review Your Interview

Person Interviewed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Company: \_\_\_\_\_

What did you like about the job?

What didn't you like?

Did you uncover any concerns?

What advice did you receive? Should you change anything about your preparation for this job?

Did you discover another occupation that you want to explore?

What did you like about the work environment? What didn't you like?

Do you think your personality is a good match for this job? Why or why not?

Would you be happy doing this work? Could you see yourself doing this job everyday? Why?

*How did the interview process go? Use the back of this paper to jot down any thoughts about the informational interview process. What did you do well? What could you do next time to make the interview more beneficial for you?*