

## Exploring your Career Interests through Informational Interviewing

### What is an informational Interview?

An informational interview is not a job interview. Instead it is a stress free way to gather information on an interested career by connecting with professionals in the field and gaining insight from those conversations. Informational interviews are a great way to build and expand your professional network, learn more about your chosen field, and clarify your career goals.

### Finding People to Informational Interview

You may be wondering, “Who can I informationally interview?” First consider people you may already know; family, friends, classmates, former or current coworkers. If you don’t know anyone in the field be creative.

*Here are additional ideas when searching for contacts:*

(Remember the worst they can say is no, so don’t be afraid to ask.)

- Faculty members- who may know potential contacts for you to meet with
- Professional organizations- many of which have student members
- Companies/Organizations in your community- send an email, call, stop by and see if someone would be willing to meet with you

### Contacting the Person for an Informational Interview

You can do so either by email or phone. Keep in mind most people are busy so you want to keep your email/phone brief and to the point.

*You will want to:*

- Explain who you are
- Why you are contacting them
- How you found their name
- Give brief description of your work/education history
- Why you’re interested in speaking with him/her
- Request a 20-30 minute meeting to get information and advice
- Make sure your correspondence is error free

### Preparing for Your Meeting

It’s important that you arrive prepared and professional. Below are some tips to help get you ready.

- Research the individual – you can do so through LinkedIn or their organizations website.
- Prepare written list of questions in advance
- Keep in mind your goals for the meeting are to get to information and advice you can’t find online. Being well-informed about the person and his/her field shows respect. You don’t want to waste either of your time.

## **Questions for your Informational Interview**

### *Job Content*

- Could you describe a typical work day or week?
- What part of your job do you find most satisfying/challenging?
- What abilities or personal qualities do you believe contribute most to success in this job?

### *Career Path*

- What is the typical career path for this field?
- What steps did you take to get your job?
- Can you tell me about entry level opportunities in this field?

### *Preparation*

- What advice would you give to someone who's interested in starting out in this field?
- Do you have any special words of warning or encouragement as a result of your experience?
- Are there any professional associations I should join?
- Are there any job hunting strategies that you would suggest to enter this field?

### *Next Steps*

- Is there anyone else you can recommend I speak with for additional information?
- Would you mind if I sent you my resume to review?

### *The Meeting*

- Restate your objective and give a brief overview of yourself (education and work)
- Dress for success- you always want to look and act professional. You never know if they could be a potential employer or refer you for a position.
- Arrive on time
- Show interest and enthusiasm
- Bring a resume, but present only if asked
- Keep track of the time
- Take notes
- Before leaving ask for a business card and ask if they can refer you to anyone else for you to speak with.

## **Steps after the Interview**

- Write a thank you note/email within 24 hours – express your appreciation for the information you received and mention one or two points that you learned
- Try to stay in touch with your contacts every few months by sending a friendly email. Remember these contacts could help you with employment.