



CENTER FOR CAREER & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Informational Interviews

What is an Informational Interview?

In an informational interview, *you* conduct the interview, asking a career contact questions about his/her career field, experience, and/or specific employing organization. Informational interviews are *not* job interviews; you should not ask your contact for a job. Instead, informational interviews can help you explore careers, make meaning of your academic experience, shape your professional identity, and give you valuable insight into how best to market yourself to a specific industry or employer. Your contacts can tell you what they like about their work, what they do on a daily basis, what background they have that prepared them for the career, etc.

Who Should I Talk to?

Tell everyone you know and everyone you meet about what kind of work interests you. You never know who has a contact working in your area of interest. The Center for Career & Professional Development (CCPD) has many resources to help you identify professionals with whom you may want to talk and can help you connect with alumni and parents who are willing to answer questions about their careers. Lastly, be creative: contact and join professional organizations, read professional journals and newspapers, and contact Chambers of Commerce for information on employers in specific geographic areas.

How Do I Set Up Informational Interviews?

Use your 21st century career-readiness communication skills. Reach out to contacts by phone or email and request 30 minutes of their time for an informational interview, either in person or over the phone. See CCPD's Networking Scripts handout for ideas on how to initiate this first contact.

How Long Do Informational Interviews Last?

Remember to keep your interview to approximately 30 minutes. Some people enjoy talking on and on, but you do not want to keep your contact from important work or other obligations because your brief visit turned into a two-hour chat. A quick lunch or coffee break may be a convenient time to meet.

Do I Offer a Resume?

You may take a resume to give to your contact during the interview; it can help facilitate conversation. They may ask to see it and/or you may ask for feedback on your resume.

Words of Wisdom

- Don't have a hidden agenda when you conduct informational interviews. An "I don't want information; I just want a job" attitude is inappropriate. Don't ask for a job when you said you wanted information.
- ALWAYS send a thank-you letter after the interview. It's a common courtesy, and you want contacts to remember you in a positive light.
- Follow up on any leads or contact names someone gives you, especially because your initial contact may check with the lead to see if you have done so. Your interviewing efforts will be useless if you do not capitalize on the information and advice you receive.
- Keep record of all correspondence between you and your contact. You may want to circle back to a contact again.
- Dress appropriately. Think of an informational interview as you would an actual job interview and dress accordingly.

Sample Informational Interview Questions

1. How did you get into this field?
2. What is your background and training?
3. How much of your background relates to your present job?
4. What are your main duties and responsibilities?
5. What do you do on a typical day?
6. What do you like most about your job? Least?
7. What characteristics and skills are needed to do your job?
8. What kinds of pressures/problems do you face in this career?
9. What is a typical entry-level position?
10. What qualifications are needed for entry into the field?
11. What related fields are available for people with backgrounds such as yours?
12. What is the future of the field in terms of new and expanding opportunities?
13. What professional organizations should I join?
14. If you were hiring a new, entry-level person, what would that candidate look like?
15. What would you do if searching for a job in this field?
16. What kinds of advancement opportunities are available with your position?
17. What are the salary ranges for entry-level and experienced positions?
18. What other contacts can you introduce me to who might be helpful to me?