

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

An information interview allows you to obtain the information you need to make a career or job decision, or to obtain specialized data about a job, company, or an industry before you are a job applicant. Since you are initiating the action for this interview, you are in control of how it goes.

It is NOT to be confused with a job interview.

Purpose

- To find out more about the work that interests you.
- To find out more about organizations in your field of interest
- To discover how well your skills and values match up with a particular profession, industry, company, or job.
- To make contacts with professionals who may be able to steer you towards opportunities in the future.

Locate people

Begin by selecting one or two career fields you find interesting. Then find names of people working at any level in any company in those professions or industries. Talk to career counselors, professors, friends, family members, and professional organizations to get these referrals.

Initial Contact (usually by phone)

- Introduce yourself and tell how you got the referral.
- Explain that you are exploring options for the next step in your career. You're talking to knowledgeable people to learn more about this kind of work and the organizations which do it.
- State that you would like very much to meet with them for just 20 to 30 minutes. It is best to visit them at the job site, but if that is not possible, interviews can be conducted over the telephone or by email.

The Interview

Decide ahead of time what kinds of questions you want to ask. Common topics often include job titles, work responsibilities, skills required, industry problems, salary ranges, career ladders, work environments, and recruiting processes.

- What is involved in a typical day on your job?
- How did you get into this position/field?
- What important developments are occurring in this field?
- What advice would you give to someone who wants to do this kind of work?
- What are job titles for entry-level positions? Salary ranges?
- Could you refer me to someone else knowledgeable in the field?

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Keep In Mind

Be on time. Dress as if you worked in that setting. Stay on topic and try to end within the agreed time limit. Remember to ask for referrals to other people in the field – you are creating your professional network.

Follow-up

Write a personal thank-you note to everyone you talk to. This is a good opportunity to thank them for their time, to restate briefly what was most helpful to you and state that you would like to keep in touch. Also, if requested, you can attach a copy of your resume or other requested information.

Keep your network of contacts informed of your progress. Write or email them briefly to tell them that you've contacted the people they recommended, that you have learned something new, that you have changed your direction or job target, etc and let them know if you got a job or internship!

Notes

