

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

WHAT IS AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW?

Informational interviews provide the chance to talk with people who are currently working in your field of interest and allow you to gather valuable information to help you decide if a particular career is right for you. They are a chance to learn more about a specific career without making a long-term commitment. You can discover the responsibilities, rewards, and problem areas inherent in a specific career by asking questions of people already established in that field.

WHY DO INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS?

- Explore careers and clarify your career goal
- Obtain information about your career field and the skills needed to do that job effectively
- Discover employment opportunities that are not otherwise advertised
- Broaden your professional network
- Build confidence for your job interviews
- Identify your professional strengths and weaknesses

An informational interview is an interview that YOU initiate - you ask the questions. The purpose is to obtain information, not to get a job.

ARRANGING THE INTERVIEW

Contact the person to set up an interview by email, phone, or by having someone who knows the person, a mutual connection, make the appointment for you. Appropriate length of the interview is 30 minutes to 1 hour.

TYPICAL FORMAT FOR THE CALL

"Hi, my name is (your full name). I am a student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign wanting to learn more information about (profession). (The person who referred you) suggested that I call you because of your experience in the field of (profession).

[If you do not have a reference, explain how you heard of this individual.]

I am interested in this field of work and would like to learn more about what a typical day is like for a (occupation title) and the necessary education for a position in this field. I would like to meet with you at your convenience to ask you some questions. Could we arrange a time?"

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

Do research about the occupation and company in order to ask relevant questions. Design questions that fit your personal situation. Try to read directly from your list of questions but remember the interview should be a conversation. Preparing a list of questions ahead of time will ensure that your interview maintains focus. Questions you might ask include:

- Can you describe your typical work day?
- What training or education is required for this type of work? Certification? Degrees?
- What educational institutions would you suggest?
- What jobs and experiences led you to your present employment?
- If you could do things over, would you choose the same path? What would you change?
- What part of your job is most satisfying? Most challenging?
- What is the demand like for people in this occupation?
- Which professional journals or organizations would help me to learn more about this field?
- What is currently changing in this field? Company? Where do you see the greatest needs?
- What advice would you give someone entering this field?

THE DAY OF THE INTERVIEW

- The day before the interview, confirm your appointment and clarify directions
- Plan to arrive 10-15 minutes early
- Dress appropriately for the interview
- Be prepared to take notes
- Show enthusiasm and interest
- Be prepared to answer questions they might ask you, including:
 - Why are you interested in this type of work?
 - What interests you in this company/field of work?
 - What positions/jobs/education have you had that have already given you experience in this field?

ALWAYS SEND A THANK YOU NOTE

Be sure to send a thank you email, card, or letter to the person you interviewed. This is a good way to keep in touch and to be remembered by people. Thank them for their time. Let them know how beneficial the information was that they provided. Request that they keep you in mind if they come across any information that may be useful to you in your career research. Include your address, phone number, and email so that they may get in contact with you.