

What is an Informational Interview?

A brief meeting with a personal or professional contact aimed at exploring potential occupations and organizations. These interviews can help you:

- Learn about the realities of working in a particular occupation
- Decide among different occupations
- Focus your career goals
- Discover careers you never knew existed
- Uncover professional strengths and weaknesses
- Find ways to prepare for a particular career
- Network with professionals & build your contacts
- Uncover hidden job opportunities
- Improve your interviewing skills

Remember the purpose of the informational interview is to obtain information, NOT to ask for a job. In the job interview, you are trying to sell yourself. In an informational interview, you only want to learn about a field and make decisions as to whether it is a viable career for you.

Preparing for an Informational Interview

1. Identify Goals

Determine what you want to learn from the interview and how this conversation can help you. Begin by identifying occupations and job titles that you want to explore. Research these areas as thoroughly as you can before you begin scheduling interviews.

2. Prepare your questions

Based upon your goals for the interview and the results of your research in the area, prepare specific, open-ended questions for the interview.

3. Find people who are knowledgeable about your topic

Begin to identify contacts through Career Services, family, friends, colleagues, etc. Professional organizations, LinkedIn and other social networking sites are also great places to discover potential contacts. Be sure you make it clear that you're **NOT** looking for a job at this time, but that you are just trying to obtain information.

“Hi, Ms. Smith, my name is _____, and I’m a Ashford University student. I’m very interested in the marketing field and I’m trying to find out as much as I can about it. I have read a lot about the area, but really feel it might help to talk to someone who works in the field. I would appreciate meeting with you to discuss this occupation, if you have the time. The interview would only take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. My schedule is flexible and I can meet with you at your convenience.”

Conducting an Informational Interview

The interview can be conducted in person, over the phone, via email, or with video-conferencing software such as Skype or Face Time. Be sure to respect the interviewee's requests in regards to location, time, and duration.

Build rapport

- Introduce yourself and thank the person for meeting with you.
- Make mention of who you know in common to provide context.
- Practice your elevator pitch by summarizing your background and sharing what information you're looking for.

Get the information you need

- Start with open-ended questions to encourage the person share their own experience.
- Listen with curiosity and jot down key points.
- Ask specific questions to get the exact information you're looking for.

Thank the person and ask for additional contacts

- Thank the person for their time.
- Ask if they know other individuals that would be helpful for you to talk to.
- Request an introduction or see if they will contact the person in advance.

After the Informational Interview

- ✓ End the meeting on time
- ✓ Ask to stay in contact and connect on LinkedIn
- ✓ Reach out to referrals that are suggested during an informational interview
- ✓ Send a thank you note

Sample Interview Questions

1. In your current position, what do you do in a typical day?
2. What are the most interesting aspects of your job?
3. What part of your work do you consider dull or repetitious?
4. What entry level positions did you hold prior to this position?



5. How long does it usually take to move from one level to the next in this career path?
6. What is the position above the current position you hold?
7. What is the top position you can expect to have in this career field?
8. Are there other areas in this field to which people may be transferred? What are they?
9. What are the prerequisites for your position?
10. Are there any specific courses a student might take that would be particularly beneficial in this field?
11. What types of training do companies give to a person entering this field?
12. What is the salary range for the various levels in the field?
13. What aspects of a career in this field do you consider particularly good or bad?
14. Is there a demand for people in this field?
15. Do you view this field as a growing one?
16. How do you see the jobs in this field changing over the next two years? How can I prepare for these changes?
17. Do you have information on job specifications and descriptions that I can reference?
18. What special advice would you give someone entering this field?
19. Are there any clubs or organizations affiliated with this field that you would recommend joining?

For additional information, visit: http://www.quintcareers.com/information_interview.html