

Informational Interview Guide

What it is-

The informational interview is an opportunity to discuss potential careers with someone who is working in the industry. This is an appropriate activity for someone looking for guidance in choosing a career or major as well as gaining information about what the employment outlook is like for that industry. An opportunity to expand your knowledge of the job market in the field that you want to explore and to learn about how to make yourself a more qualified candidate.

What it isn't-

This is not a job interview and one shouldn't expect an offer nor ask for a position during an informational interview.

Who should I interview?

Look for someone in the field you are interested in or someone who may hold the same position or a similar type of position that you are seeking. Start looking for contacts through friends, family members, advisors or other people you know that may have a connection to the industry you are looking to learn more about. Consider researching larger companies that may have the position you're interested in within their company.

How to I ask someone?

This isn't as hard as it might seem. Most people like to share what they know and are happy to discuss their jobs. Phone calls or in person requests have historically been the traditional method of making requests, however, as technology changes consider email and LinkedIn as a source for creating contacts. If you are uncomfortable writing a request, go online and search for sample letters. Be sure to customize any samples you find to fit your situation. A form letter is usually easy to identify and may not be as well received as something more personal. Consider stating: 1- your intent to learn about their position, 2- how they attained the position they are in, 3- that you want just a small amount of their time.

During the Interview-

Be considerate of the person's time. Have your questions prepared in advance but also watch the clock and if you can't get through your questions, it is OK. Check-in with the interviewee during the session to make sure you are within their schedule. For ideas on questions, go online and search "informational interview questions". This will provide hundreds of potential questions. Choose those that are appropriate and again, customize those for your particular situation.

Use the Information You Obtain-

It is important to keep in mind that you are investigating a career and trying to establish a network at the same time. Therefore, all the protocol of a professional job search, as well as the curiosity of a diligent job seeker, should be followed.

1. Ask for the names of others you can contact for further information.

2. Keep the door open for further contact by asking if you could call again if you have any questions.
3. Take notes during the interview if this will help you later in your evaluation of the career.

Follow Up-

Be sure to send a thank you note or email letting the interviewee know that you appreciated their time. Again, do not seek employment through this process.

Links to videos about informational interviews:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JE1tqZyeWKM&NR=1&feature=fvwp>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vMCdxfBnA3w>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pyZ7wsF9ujc>

Additional guides:

<http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/cdc/networking/informational-int>

<http://jobsearch.about.com/od/infointerviews/a/infointervquest.htm>

<https://career.berkeley.edu/Info/InfoInterview.stm>

http://careercenter.nd.edu/assets/488/informational_interviewing_guide_8.16.pdf - *includes samples*

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