

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS



What is an Informational Interview and what value does it have for me?

- One of the best ways to gain knowledge about an area of work is to talk to people doing that work. Use your network (and any network you can plug into) to find someone doing what you are interested in doing.
- You will gather first-hand, current information and gain an understanding of the field beyond what you can get from printed information.
- Besides getting insights that will help you decide if this is the type of work you would like to do, you will gain self-confidence because information interviewing is relatively low-stress; you ask the questions you want answered and you are in-control of the interview.
- A bonus is that this background information may make you a more impressive job candidate; also, you increase your own network of contacts which may later help you get that job you want.

What to do I need to know before beginning?

- Be aware of your own skills, interests and values, so that you can ask questions to find out if this job in this organization would be a good one for you; think about the goals, purposes, and values you want the organization to be trying to achieve.
- Know the geographic area (what part of the country, state or city) you would like to live in.
- Know the type of setting you prefer (city or rural)
- Know what kinds of people you would like to work with or be surrounded by.
- Think about what sort of working conditions will enhance your contributions.
- Think about the level of responsibility and salary in which you wish to work.

What to ask?

- How did you get into this work? or How did you get interested in this occupation?
- What entry-level jobs are best for earning as much as possible in skills, knowledge and dollars?
- What do you do on a daily basis?
- What do you like about what you do?
- Which of the skills you use do you most enjoy using?
- What do you like least about your job?
- What things would you like to change about your job?
- What is a typical career path for advancement based on?
- If you could start all over again in launching your career, what steps would you take?
- What salary range can one expect at the entry level?
- Who are two or three people doing this kind of work?
- May I use your name when I contact them?

Ask your self these questions:

1. Would this work be satisfying to me?
2. Would it tap my best talents?
3. Could I do this kind of work well?
4. Does it suit my personality?
5. Would I like the life-style that tends to go along with this kind of work?
6. Will this kind of work fit into my long-range goals and plans?
7. Does it fit in with my motivations for work?
8. Does this offer me opportunities to move up or move into related fields?
9. Am I willing and able to invest the time & money to get the training & education needed?
10. What do I like most about this occupation?
11. What do I like least?
12. What do I still need to find out?
13. What plan of action can I make given this new knowledge?
14. Additional Comments/Summary

Record Keeping

Be sure to record the name, Title, organization address, and phone number of each person with whom you talk. A card system or a notebook would work well for this purpose.

Thank You Notes

Be sure to write a thank you note to each person with whom you speak, at any length. Just a few lines expressing appreciation for their time. This is a basic courtesy and keeps the doors open for the contact.

Additional Suggestions



If you ask for 30 minutes of a person's time, stick to that limit. Respect and value their time. Avoid forming an impression about an area of work based on the likeability of the person you interviewed.

DO NOT Ask for a position or if they have any openings. You are simply gathering information at this point.

Ask what you want to know, but don't control the interview totally. Let the person talk-it may lead into productive but unanticipated areas of information.