

Informational Interviews

One of the best ways to gather information on a career is by talking with professionals that are already working in the field. Conducting an informational interview is learning about a job and seeing if it fits your interests, skills, and personality. An informational interview is not asking for a job, rather it is gaining information about a career.

1 FIND PROFESSIONALS TO INTERVIEW

How do you find people to interview? The easiest way to start is to ask people you already know.

Family members, friends, neighbors, teachers, or past coworkers may work in the occupation you want to explore, or they may know people who do. Career centers, alumni offices, professional associations, and religious organizations are other places to find potential people to interview. Utilize social media sites, such as LinkedIn, to identify individuals who are working in your field of interest.

2 CONNECT WITH CONTACTS

After finding people to consult, you are ready to arrange interviews. Contact the people you hope to meet by email, making it clear that you want information and not a job. Start with an email contact first and follow up with a phone call. This gives the professional advanced notice of your intentions before you put them on the spot during your phone call. You should also mention how you found the person's name and if someone suggested you contact them.

3 PREPARE TO INTERVIEW

Now that you have an appointment, the next step is to get ready for the interview by researching the occupation and the organization, creating a resume, and developing questions.

RESEARCH

Knowing something about the occupation and the company will help you develop specific questions, show your enthusiasm for the job, and help you look more professional.

RESUME

Bring a copy of your resume to demonstrate seriousness and professionalism. You can also ask the people you interview to give you feedback on your resume; this may help you gain relevant advice to be more competitive for a certain field.

DEVELOP QUESTIONS

The most critical part of preparing for an informational interview is to decide which questions will help you evaluate whether the career is a fit for you. You want to gain information to help you imagine yourself in the job and to see whether you would enjoy it. See the following page for some suggested questions.



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SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

1. How did you get into this field?
2. What do you like most / least about your job?
3. What is a typical day like?
4. What are your job responsibilities?
5. Are these duties the same for everyone with this job title?
6. What kind of individual (in terms of talent and personality) would be best suited to this position?
7. What are the prospects for someone entering your field today?
8. What advice would you give someone entering your field today?
9. What advice would you give on applying for and finding a job in this field?
10. Are there any other sources of information you might suggest to learn more about this field?
11. What function or services does your office provide?
12. Are there any other jobs that are similar to yours but with different job titles?
13. Do you have any contacts I might benefit talking with?

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CONDUCT THE INTERVIEW

Informational interviews are more casual than job interviews, but you should still make a positive and professional first impression. On the day of the interview, you should dress like you are going to an interview. Arrive early and be polite to everyone you meet. You are leading the interview so start by thanking the professional for his or her time. You should also monitor the time and end the interview within the specified time. Thank them for spending time with you and for the information they provided. After the interview, show your gratitude by writing a thank you note within 24 hours.

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EVALUATE THE CAREER INFORMATION

Hopefully, you'll leave every informational interview with new insights about the career you want. Take a moment to reflect on the following: What did you like? Did you uncover any new concerns about or advantages to the occupation? Did you discover another occupation you might want to learn about? Do you think you would be happy in this type of job or in this type of organization? It is important not to base decisions on the opinions of one individual or company environment. Try to conduct a few interviews in an occupation and confirm the information you learn through other sources. You can further test an occupation through a job shadowing experience or an internship to gain more knowledge before you choose a career.