

Information Interviews

Want to know more about what it's like to be a _____? Having trouble making a career decision? Information interviews with people who work in your career of interest can bring the job alive. These meetings give you a realistic sense of a job and its requirements and help you judge how well it fits you. As a result, you'll feel more confident making career decisions.

How will information interviews help you?

- Hear personal points of view on a job, revealing aspects you would never discover elsewhere.
- Learn about the realities of the field in your particular community or region.
- Benefit from the advice of those who have established themselves in the field.
- Discover new career options and job roles.
- Open doors to opportunities like internships, volunteer positions, work experience and more.
- Gain experience and confidence in low-pressure interview situations.
- Build a network of contacts in your area(s) of interest.

1. How do I find people to interview?

- Ask your network of family, friends and acquaintances if they know someone in your field of interest.
- Change your status on Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn to "[Your name] would like to talk to someone who ..."
- If you're a post-secondary student or graduate, contact your current or former school to see if they have a program in which alumni agree to be interviewed.
- Use the Yellow Pages, Chamber of Commerce and search engines to identify organizations to contact. (Avoid personnel offices unless you are interested in the personnel field.)
- Contact business, professional or industry associations to see if someone will speak to you or if you can attend any of their events.
- Read your local newspaper for articles and profiles on companies, entrepreneurs, working people and job-related events.

2. How do I ask for an information interview?

Many people are open to sharing information about their work because it helps others make effective career decisions and avoid wrong moves. Once you've identified someone, begin by telephoning or emailing them.

- Briefly introduce yourself, including your name, your background and career interests or goals.
- Explain how you found them and their contact information.
- Be clear that you're looking for information as you investigate their field. YOU ARE NOT LOOKING FOR A JOB, and you have already done some [background research](#).
- Tell them how much time you'll need (e.g., 20 to 30 minutes in person or 10 to 20 minutes by phone). Unless you've met the person before, don't include your questions in the email.
- If the person is unable to speak with you, ask them to recommend other people to talk to.

3. How should I handle the interview?

- Make the interview as productive as possible by doing some advance research on:
 - the person you're interviewing
 - the organization they work for
 - the work they do
- Express clearly that you only want information, not a job. It may be relevant to discuss your skills and experience, but don't fish for opportunities. Ask questions and listen.
- Bring a resume, simply for helpful background on your skills and experience, if needed.
- Take notes sparingly, filling out your notes immediately following the discussion.
- Manage your time and theirs. Arrive on time and finish promptly, but be flexible if the interviewee wants to talk a little longer.

4. What questions should I ask?

You'll likely find that you have time for only a few questions. Choose the most important ones and put them in priority order. Here are some sample questions.

- What do you do in a typical day?
- What do you like most about your work? What is most satisfying about it?
- What do you like least about your work? What are the biggest frustrations?
- What made you decide on this career? Is it what you expected?
- How did you get started? What courses, training, and experience have been most helpful to you? What is the best preparation for this kind of work?
- What type of person is suited to this type of work?
- What skills are needed in this job/field/industry?
- How well suited would my background be for this type of work?
- What would entry-level work involve? How does one advance in the field? What is a typical career path?
- What advice would you give to a person entering this field with my educational/work background?
- What kind of demand is there for people in this field? Do you view the field as growing? What are the employment prospects in this region?
- What major issues or changes do you anticipate in your field/industry in the next five years?
- Can you recommend others I should contact regarding this type of work? May I use your name when contacting them?
- Are there any resources such as websites, industry associations or other organizations I should consult?

5. What should I do to follow up?

- Send a thank you note or card as soon as possible. You want to leave a positive impression, since opportunities can sometimes come up as a result of your information interviews.
- Create a record of the questions you asked and responses you received. Also keep a list of the people you talk to, with their job title, employer's name, address and phone number.
- Move forward with the ideas from each interview by following up with the people, volunteer opportunities and websites suggested.