

Informational Interviewing

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One of the best sources for gathering information about what's happening in an occupation or an industry is to talk to people working in the field. This process is called informational interviewing. An informational interview is an interview that you initiate - you ask the questions. The purpose is to obtain information, expand your personal network, and build relationships; not to get a job.

Following are some good reasons to conduct an informational interview:

- To explore careers and clarify your career goal.
- To expand your professional network.
- To discover employment opportunities not advertised.
- To build confidence for your job interviews.
- To access the most up-to-date career information.
- To identify your professional strengths and weaknesses.

Listed below are steps to follow to conduct informational interviews:

1. Prepare for the Interview

Read all you can about the field prior to the interview. Decide what information you would like to obtain about the occupation/industry. Prepare a list of questions that you would like to have answered.

2. Identify People to Interview

Start with lists of people you already know - friends, relatives, fellow students, present or former co-workers, supervisors, neighbors, etc... Professional organizations, the yellow pages, organizational directories and public speakers are also good resources. You may also call an organization and ask for the name of the person by job title.

3. Arrange the Interview by contact the individual:

- a. by telephone,
- b. by a letter followed by a telephone call, or
- c. by having someone who knows the person make the appointment for you.

4. Prepare for the meeting. Make a list of questions you would like answered (**see below*).

5. Dress appropriately, arrive on time, and be polite and professional.

6. Conduct the Interview.

Refer to your list of prepared questions; stay on track, but allow for spontaneous discussion. Before leaving, ask your contact to suggest names of others who might be helpful to you and ask permission to use your contact's name when contacting these new contacts.

7. Immediately following the interview, record the information gathered.

8. Follow Up with any contacts you were given or requests made by the person you are interviewing.

9. Be sure to send a thank-you note to your contact within one week of the interview.

NOTE: Always analyze the information you've gathered. Adjust your job search, résumé, and career objective if necessary.

*For a list of suggested Informational Interview questions, please visit www.GatewayToCareers.com.

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