

# INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

## WHAT IS INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING ?

In contrast to a job interview, informational interviewing is an effective, creative, and interesting way to talk with people who work at a job or in a profession that may be of interest to you. It's also a great way to gather information about a specific career or company.

## HOW CAN INTERVIEWING FOR INFORMATION BE HELPFUL ?

There are two basic ways to research a career - reading career literature and talking with someone who works in your career interest area. While books and articles are limited in the information they can give you, people working in a career can tell you what they like about the work and what they do on a daily basis, what background they have which prepared them for the career, and much more. By interviewing someone you can ask the questions important to you, gain valuable interviewing experience, and learn about the kinds of positions available in the career field as well as how to look for those positions.

## WHO DO YOU INTERVIEW ?

Focus on the types of careers in which you may be interested. As a liberal arts major, the variety of career for which you are qualified is extensive. Talk to everyone you know and tell them what kind of work interests you. These individuals may have an acquaintance who works in your career area of interest. Career Services has several current resources listings, job titles, employers, and salary schedules that may be applicable to the jobs you are researching. Lastly, be creative: contact and join professional organizations, read professional journals and newspapers, contact the Chamber of Commerce for listings of employers in specific geographic areas, do research at the A. Frank Smith, Jr. Library Center.

## HOW DO YOU ARRANGE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS ?

After you find out the name and title of a person you would like to see, you can send that person a letter introducing yourself and requesting 30 minutes of their time for an interview.

## HOW LONG DOES THE INTERVIEW LAST ?

Remember to keep your interview to approximately 30 minutes. Some people enjoy talking on and on, but you do not want your contact people to be concerned after you leave because your brief interview turned into a two-hour chat which kept them from important work.

## WHAT DO YOU DO WITH YOUR RÉSUMÉ ?

You may take one along to give to the contact person(s) during the interview. They may ask to see your résumé, and it can help facilitate the conversation.

## **SOME FINAL WORDS OF WISDOM**

### **Do not have hidden agendas when you go for an interview**

An "I don't want information, I really want a job" attitude is inappropriate. Do not take advantage of your contact people or put them on the defensive by asking for a job when you said you wanted information.

### **ALWAYS send a thank you letter after the interview**

It is a common courtesy, and you want a contact person to remember you in a positive light.

### **Follow up on any leads or contact names that someone gives you.**

Contacts will be useless if you do not follow through on leads.

### **Record keeping is very important**

Keep copies of all letters or correspondence that you send. An easy way to keep organized records is to catalogue all information on note cards, or keep a journal.

### **Dress appropriately**

Think of an informational interview as you would an actual job interview.

## **SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW**

1. How did you get into this area of work ?
2. What is your background and training ?
3. How much of your background relates to your present job?
4. What are your main duties and responsibilities ?
5. What do you do on a typical day ?
6. What do you like most about your job ? Least ?
7. What characteristics and skills are needed to effectively do your job ?
8. What kind of pressures and problems do you face in this career ?
9. What is a typical entry-level position ?
10. What qualifications are needed for entrance into the field ?
11. Are there alternative methods to gain entrance into the field ?
12. What related fields are available for people with backgrounds such as yours ?
13. What is the future of the field in terms of new and expanding opportunities ?
14. With what other organizations or people in this field do you suggest I talk ?
15. If you were hiring a new entry-level person, what would that candidate be like ?
16. What would you do if you were searching for a job in this field ?
17. What kind of advancement possibilities are available with your position ?
18. Does your career field offer job security ?
19. What are the salary ranges for entry level and experienced people ?
20. Do you know of other contacts who might be helpful to me ?

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