

# Informational Interviews

Informational interviewing involves meeting directly with people working in areas of interest to you in order to obtain concrete career information. The benefits include:

- opportunities to ask questions, gather current and first hand information, learn what people do on a day-to-day basis, and view their work environments.
- practice talking with professionals and establishing helpful contacts for future networking.
- learning about part-time, volunteer, internship, and full-time professional job opportunities.

Informational interviewing is NOT a job interview. It involves asking only for information and advice about a career field, not a job. If people you are interviewing ask if you are looking for a job, be honest, but also make sure they understand the purpose is for information only.

Step to take:

1. Make a list of occupations, career areas, hobbies, anything you want to know more about.
2. Next, find people to interview. Think of all the people you know and whom they know. Ask them for an interview or a referral. For additional business contacts, check phone books, the Chamber of Commerce, the Better Business Bureau, and other business directories as well as trade journals and college alumni associations.
3. Call or send a letter to arrange a 10-20 minute interview. Use a personal referral if you have one and demonstrate an honest interest in that person's activity. When making your contact remember: (a) speak with confidence, (b) even if your request is denied, ask for referrals to others, (c) if you can't get through to the person you want to contact, ask the secretary for suggestions.

Whether calling or writing, note why you are making the contact and what you hope to accomplish in your time with them. A suggested approach would be, "Would you have time to talk to me in an informational interview about your work? In this interview, I would like to ask you some questions about the field of \_\_\_\_\_, and perhaps you might

have some advice on the best way to prepare for this type of work."

Keep the following in mind about the informational interview.

- Don't over extend your stay.
- Offer to leave in ten minutes.
- Plan to ask 4-5 questions (prepare 6-8)
- Make the questions answerable and open-ended.
- And don't be afraid to ask impromptu questions.
- Before leaving ask "Is there anyone else you think I should talk to?"

Suggested questions to ask:

1. How did you get into this line of work?
2. What do you like best about your job?
3. What do you like least?
4. How long have you been doing this kind of work?
5. What kind of education or experience qualifies one for this type of work?
6. What is the entry level position and appropriate qualifications for this field?
7. Do you have advice for me to take into account about this career field?
8. What challenges or problems do you deal with?
9. What are some of your job duties?
10. Describe your typical workday.
11. Are there courses outside my academic major that would be helpful?
12. What would you change about your job?
13. What skills are critical for this position?
14. How are job openings advertised?
15. Who else do you know that I can talk to?

After the interview, send a thank you note. Also summarize what you learned. Ask yourself what impressed you the most. Did the conversation change your opinion about the job? Did you get the answers you needed? Once finished, act on that information, see who to interview next and continue.