

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

What is an Information Interview?

- An information interview is a 15 – 30 minute interview with a person that is working in the field or in a position that you are interested in.
- It is a great way to learn more about a particular career pathway from someone currently on that road!

Benefits of an informational interview?

- Information on a career, job, or industry that will assist you in making an informed career decision.
- Discover what someone in the field does on a daily basis.
- Relate your individual skills and personal qualities to the job duties performed.
- Make contacts for future reference.
- Become well informed of trends in the field.
- Develop self-confidence and help to make an informed decision on your career path.

***Informational interviews are NOT job interviews and you are NOT asking for a job!**

When scheduling an information interview you should be very clear that you are ***asking for information only***. Therefore, let the employer know that you are interested in ***gathering information to research an industry or explore career options***.

Getting Started

Brainstorming

Take some time to “brainstorm” people you already know on campus, in the community, faculty, friends, co-workers, teachers, counselors, family members and their connections. Consider speakers you have heard, and/or people and companies you follow on social media.

Notes

Keep a notebook or document of the names of people, places and organizations you have contacted for informational interviews. List the phone numbers, addresses, emails, and other important details for future contact and networking purposes.

Contacting the person

Contact the person you want to interview directly, and clearly explain your purpose of gathering information. If you received the contact name from someone you know, it is a good idea to ask this person to introduce you to the contact or let the contact know you will be calling. Remember you are only asking for 15 – 30 minutes of their time, and you will need to work around their schedule.

What to say:

Hello my name is _____. I'm a student at LA City College, majoring in _____. I am in the process of researching and exploring the _____ field. At this point in my research, I am interested in speaking with someone currently employed in the field. Would it be possible to meet with you to ask you some questions about the _____ field? Or, is there someone else that you recommend I talk to?

Preparation Prepare a list of questions to ask the person you will be interviewing (See examples). Be thorough, including questions about a typical day on the job, background on education and experience needed for this position, likes and dislikes about the job, and personal observations.

The Interview Do not go over the time you have agreed on for this interview! A good way to end the interview is asking if they can recommend anyone else in the field that may be helpful to talk to. They may have contacts or know of organizations that may be helpful in your search for information and networking.

Follow Up!

At the end of the interview, thank the interviewee for their willingness to talk with you and for the valuable information provided. Send your interviewee a thank-you card immediately after you interview them. Next, if the interviewee has agreed to continue contact, keep in touch with this person by calling periodically at agreed-upon dates/times. This will take some effort on your part, but it will definitely pay off. This process transforms your interviewee into a networking contact, and networking will be one of your most valuable tools in career development.

Sample Informational Interview Questions

Be on time! Take Notes!

What is a typical day like on the job?

How did you get started in this field?

What attracted you to this field?

What is your background and experience?

What preparation and/or level of education are necessary for entry-level work in this field?

What skills are necessary to succeed in this field of work?

What is the job outlook for this career in the next 10 years?

What types of changes/trends are occurring in this field?

What do you like best/least about your job?

How would you best describe your work environment?

How many hours a week do you usually work?

What are the greatest rewards of your job?

What other occupations are closely related to this one?

What general advice would you have for someone interested in this field of work?

Are there other people you can suggest I talk to?

Ask for their business card and/or the best way to contact them.

After the Interview

Use the person's business card and/or email address to send a brief "Thank You" letter/email to them. They are now part of your network. It is important to acknowledge their part in helping you to make an informed decision.