

Information Interviews

An information interview is an appointment that you schedule with a particular individual for the purpose of gaining current and sometimes regional information about a job or company from an “insider” point of view. Unlike job interviews, information interviews do not require you to sell yourself to an employer. Information interviews are arranged with those likely to provide information directly or with those who can refer you to persons with information.

Information interviews may help you if you are in the following situations:

- If you are in the process of choosing an academic major
- If you are making career planning decisions
- If you are changing careers
- If you are beginning a job hunt

Why Do Information Interviews?

- To get valuable information during your job search or career planning process – it is a good way to “reality check” what you have heard or read
- To obtain first hand and current information that allows you to learn what happens in the job beyond the understanding provided through course work or outside research
- It gives perspective of the work that goes beyond the limitations of job titles, allowing one to see what skills are required for the job and how you might fit into that work setting
- It provides an opportunity to meet with potential employers before the more stressful job interview
- You can learn about an organization, how you might fit in, what type of education and/or experience you may need to land a position at that company (or one like it)
- To gain experience and self-confidence in interviewing with professionals through discussing yourself and your career interests
- It allows you to make a network of contacts that may be helpful in the future

Who to Contact?

Identifying who to talk to is often the block that people don’t get beyond. Look for those who meet one of the following:

- Share a common academic major or interest, enthusiasm or involvement in some activity or lifestyle that appeals to you
- Work in a setting you like (i.e. a hospital, a college, an airline, etc.)
- Work in career areas you are interested in (i.e. Psychologist, Market Researcher, Public Relations Representative, etc.)
- Work in specific jobs in a specific organization (i.e. Customer Education Representative at Utility Company, Market Research at RIM, etc.)

Where Do I Find These People?

- Ask friends, family, neighbours, co-workers, former employers
- Contact faculty, Career Centre personnel, other University offices/departments
- Call community service agencies, trade and professional organizations
- Scan business and community directories, Yellow Pages, articles in newspapers, magazines, and journals, search the internet
- Attend meetings (local, regional, national) for professional associations in your career field(s) of interest

How to Prepare?

Remember, people are generally interested in talking about what they do and how they do it. But, don't waste their time and your time – be prepared!

Know your interests, skills, values, and how they relate to the career field represented by the person you are interviewing. Read about the career area and organization in which the person you will be interviewing is engaged. Know exactly what kinds of information you are looking for and have a list of prepared questions ready. Don't ask questions that could readily be answered by doing your own research or that put the individual on the spot (i.e. asking for a job/job interview, since this is not the intent of an information interview)

How to Arrange the Interview?

- Phone or email to explain your request and obtain an appointment
- Introduce yourself using a personal referral if possible (i.e. a mutual acquaintance)
- Explain your request to schedule an appointment for gathering information about their career. Indicate clearly that you are not seeking employment from them, but merely trying to gain insight into potential career options for yourself
- Schedule a 20-30 minute appointment in person or by phone/video conference at their convenience

Tips for the Information Interview

- Do not exceed your requested time, but be prepared to stay longer in case the contact indicates a willingness to talk longer
- Dress as if it were an actual job interview. First impressions are always important
- Get to your appointment a few minutes early and be courteous to **everyone** that you meet
- Take the initiative in conducting the interview – the ball is in your court
- Ask open-ended questions that promote a discussion
- Record the information you receive – names, comments, referrals, etc.
- Follow up with your contact – thank them for taking the time to meet with you