

Informational Interviewing Guide

What is it?

Information interviewing is a strategy that provides you with a direct means of collecting information on your prospective career field from individuals who are currently employed within that category. It's a form of reality testing – finding out what it's really like not just what you think it's like

Remember...your purpose is to gather information from someone who is working in a career area that interests you. **You aren't asking for a job!** You are seeking information that will help you understand the realities of a particular field and occupation.

Why do all this?

- It will sharpen your perception of the career or job you're been thinking about.
- By talking with professional people and becoming familiar with their work, you will develop greater self-confidence.
- If perhaps get a chance to observe people at their jobs you will get to see their work interactions, work sites and general life style that surrounds their careers.
- Your individual contacts, may lead to other contacts, which may someday lead to internships, summer jobs, or permanent positions. Who knows?

Some considerations

- Most interviews of this type should last approximately 30 minutes. You are responsible to end the session on time!
- Determine your questions beforehand, it is acceptable to have them written out-just don't read them. Know what you are looking for!
- When arranging for the interview, clarify who you are, how you were referred (if you were), and why you are interested in meeting with this individual.
- Before the interview, research the career field and try to become familiar with the individual's specific job and company.
- Always be a little early for your appointments! You may have to park and find the office which always takes longer than you think!
- Always follow up after the interview with a note of thanks.

Processing of Informational Interview

Once you've completed your informational interview complete this summary sheet.

- Who was the person that you interviewed and what is their occupation? How did you make this contact (family friend, acquaintance, professor...?).
- From your discussion what seemed to appeal to you about the occupation? What didn't you like?
- What was different than you anticipated?
- Could you see yourself enjoying this occupation? Why or why not?
- What did you learn from this interview that might help you in planning for your career?
- What was the most difficult part of this assignment for you?
- Did you send a thank you note?

Sample Informational Interview Questions

Personal Views

1. How did you, personally, get interested in this area of work? How did you decide upon this occupation?
2. What do you like best about the work you do? Biggest rewards? What do you like least? Biggest job frustrations?
3. What was your undergraduate major field of study? Have you always been interested in this area of study?
4. Did you have any practical experience of training, other than college, prior to your current job?
5. What training and skills are necessary for a career in this area?
6. How did you get your current job?
7. Would you relate any incidents you've experienced which would give me a better "feel" for the job? Could you describe a typical day at work?
8. How much autonomy do you have in your job?
9. What type of lifestyle can one expect of entering this field?

Outlook

1. What are the opportunities for advancement in this field?
2. What is the current demand for people in this occupation?
3. Do you foresee any changes in this demand in the future? If so, what or how?
4. How is this field likely to be affected by technological changes?

Advice

1. If you were in charge of hiring someone to assist you in your line of work, what criteria would you use to make your selection?
2. Are there any professional groups I, as an undergraduate, can join which would be beneficial to me? Which ones?
3. Do you know where I can write for further information about this occupation such as books or pamphlets?
4. Do you know of any other people in this field who might be willing to talk with me about their experience?
5. Do you know of any summer employment opportunities or internships that would benefit me?