

## Informational Interviewing

### WHAT IS AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW?

Informational Interviewing is talking with another person in an informal way about his or her career. IT IS NOT A JOB INTERVIEW.

Through Informational Interviewing you can gain:

- 1) Information about an area of work or career path
- 2) Information about an industry or employer
- 3) Information about specific jobs

### HOW DO I BENEFIT?

Informational Interviewing is an effective tool in your approach to career and life planning. It can be one of your most important resources as you plan your career and lifestyle. It provides you with the opportunity to discover much of what you need to know in order to make an informed and satisfying decision. Be sure to make the interview a benefit for you.

Through Informational Interviewing, you will:

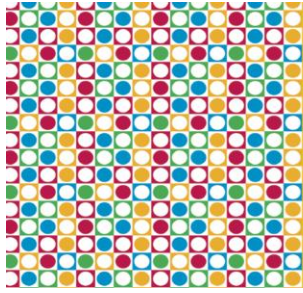
- Gain information that is first hand and current.
- Learn about a variety of career paths.
- Find out the good and bad aspects of a career field, job, or employer.
- Learn what actually happens in a job day-to-day.
- Expand your knowledge of the wide variety of careers available.
- Go beyond job titles to learn which skills are necessary.
- Gain some idea of the future prospects of a career field, job, or employer.
- Make contact with people who are potential employers or mentors.
- Expand your professional network.

### HOW DO I FIND PEOPLE TO TALK WITH?

Find someone to interview by:

- Asking your friends, relatives, and acquaintances.
- Contacting professionals in your community.
- Talking with the staff at your local Chamber of Commerce.
- Contacting professional associations and attending conferences.
- Using your alumni publications, club, or network.
- Asking your local reference librarian.
- Researching organizations online and through social media.





### **HOW DO I ARRANGE FOR AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW?**

Depending on the method with which you are most comfortable, you can:

- Call directly using a prepared statement of your intent
- Send an email stating your intent and make a follow-up phone call

Always give information about yourself to the interviewee (“I’m a college student doing career research”). Tell the interviewee that you are only asking for information, and that you will need 20 to 30 minutes of his/her time at the convenience of the interviewee.

### **WHAT KIND OF QUESTIONS DO I ASK THE INTERVIEWEE?**

Your questions will vary according to the type of Informational Interview you are conducting. Some general questions are:

- How did you get into this job/career?
  - What do you like best about your career/job/employer? Least?
  - What is a typical workday like for you?
  - If you were a college student, what would you do to get into the career field?
- See page 3 for more sample questions.

### **HOW DO I EVALUATE THE INFORMATION?**

Immediately after the interview, “debrief” yourself by taking notes. Answer the following questions:

- What positive and negative information did I learn?
- How does this information fit my skills, values, and career goals?
- What else do I need to know? Who else do I need to speak to?
- What is my next step or plan of action?

### **WHAT DO I DO TO FOLLOW UP?**

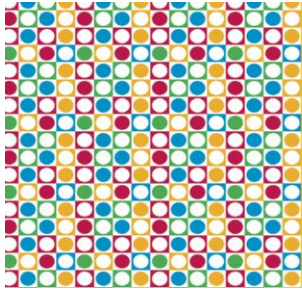
Once you have evaluated the information, you need to:

- Organize notes and business cards.
- Send a thank you note within 48 hours to your interviewee with a few lines expressing your appreciation.
- Set up your next Informational Interview, if needed.

### **DO'S AND DON'T'S CHECKLIST**

- Do respect your interviewee by sticking to his/her time limit.
- Do take all information given with a grain of salt.
- Do interview more than one person about the same career field.
- Do be objective, but pay attention to your personal feelings.
- Do ask your interviewee to suggest reading materials and resources.
- Do ask for the names of other people to contact.





- Do prepare a list of questions to ask before the interview.
- Do send a thank you note! This simple gesture will impress your interviewee more than you can imagine and will ensure you will be remembered.
- **Don't** send your resume beforehand – if you wish to take it to the interview for advice regarding its content or format, bring it out a few minutes before the end of the session.
- **Don't** keep your interviewee waiting.

References: *What Color is Your Parachute?* Richard Bolles. Ten Speed Press.  
*Informational Interviewing.* Martha Stoodley. Garrett Park Press.

### **SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING**

Following are questions that you may want to include in your Informational Interviews. Some may not be appropriate for the career that you are researching. You may also have some questions that are not on this list. Before the interview, have your questions ready with clear objectives in mind.

1. What do you like about your career?
2. What do you do in a typical day?
3. How did you enter this job/career?
4. What would you have done differently in your career?
5. What are the job prospects in this field?
6. What are the emerging jobs in this career field?
7. How would you recommend someone break into this career?
8. What educational background and training are required?
9. What kind of experience would help in this career?
10. What are the future trends in this field?
11. What are the disadvantages and advantages to this career?
12. What type of people work in this career?
13. How does one get training?
14. What types of skills and strengths are required?
15. What type of internship would you recommend for students?

