

Informational Interviews

An informational interview can help you explore and research occupations and organizations. It involves talking to people who are in an occupation you are considering to learn more about it, network or to research a potential employer. Benefits include the following:

1. Discover “first hand” information about an occupation. Reference books can provide facts about an occupation, such as salary and demand, but informational interviews provide a personalized perspective of an occupation. It can be very useful in deciding whether or not a particular career is a good fit for you.
2. Access to the “hidden” job market. Only 20% of all job openings are advertised! Direct contact and networking is essential to finding out about unadvertised job openings. Informational interviewing is not a job interview, but it can be a helpful first step in eliciting information about a prospective employer.
3. Improvement of self-confidence and interviewing skills.

How Do I Conduct an Informational Interview?

Identify professionals who work in areas that you are interested in or that you may want to explore further. To identify professionals you can ask family members, friends, instructors, employer directories, telephone directories, professional association directories, and the Career Services Mentor database in KnightLink at www.career.ucf.edu as well as the Community section of www.myplan.com. Also, consider joining LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com) and create your professional profile page and then connect to individuals online. Twitter can also be a potential source for connecting to professionals.

Schedule Interview - You can either send an email or call to arrange an appointment with the individual; however, direct telephone calls are usually more effective. Once you have contacted the individual, state your purpose. You might begin your conversation like this:

Student: “Hi, Ms. Smith, my name is _____, and I’m a current student at the University of Central Florida. I’m a _____ major and am considering a career in the _____ field. I have researched about this industry but feel I that I could benefit even more by talking to professionals who are in the field. I found your contact information on/from _____ and think that you would be able to help me immensely due to your experience in the _____ industry. Would it be possible for me to conduct an informational interview with you? The interview would only take between 15-30 minutes. My schedule is flexible and I can meet with you at your convenience.”



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Conduct the Interview / Post Interview- Dress in business casual attire but if you really want to impress, dress in business attire. Arrive early for the interview. When you meet your interview contact, you should shake hands and exchange greetings. Take notes during the interview. At the end of the interview, shake hands again, and express your appreciation for the opportunity to meet with him or her. You should send a thank you note to the person the following day.



Sample Informational Interview Questions:

1. Would you describe what you like most about your job and about this employer? What do you dislike, or least enjoy?
2. What does a typical day look like for you?
3. What are typical majors, classes, certificates etc. that are critical to work in this type of field?
4. What do you see as possible career paths leading to this job?
5. Are there particular values or personality characteristics that you think individuals in this job environment share?
6. What skills do you think one needs to do well in this job?
7. What is the salary range for someone entering the field? (It is inappropriate to ask for a specific salary figure, so be sure to always ask for range)
8. What are the typical working conditions of this job? (workload, expectations, dress code, degree of independence, relationships, pressures, etc)
9. If you were going to hire a new entry level employee, what would a highly qualified candidate be like?
10. Is there something you would recommend I do to test whether this type of work is a good fit for me? (internships, co-op, or job shadowing opportunities).

Tip: If you have any questions about conducting an informational interview or are unsure what major/career to research further, contact us at 407-823-2361. You may want to set up an appointment with a career counselor to help clarify your career goals!



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