

Informational Interviewing

What is an informational interview?

- An information-gathering conversation between you and someone employed in the career field in which you are interested.
- An opportunity to find out what the job is like directly from someone doing it.
- A carefully planned interview, in terms of what questions to ask that will help you obtain the information desired without taking too much of a person's time.
- An opportunity to network with someone in your field of interest and to make a good and lasting impression.

Why do I need to do an informational interview?

- To confirm information you have already learned about the career field, while also doing a reality check about what you've heard, read, and believed.
- To get an honest and personal evaluation of the career
- To make contact and a favorable impression on someone in the field, who may eventually hire you or be able to recommend other employers to you.
- To experience an interview situation, even though in this case, you will be asking the questions.

Who do I contact for an informational interview?

- Professionals who are recommended by faculty members or the Career Services staff.
- People you meet at school, work, church, meetings, etc., that work in a career field that interests you or that know someone in that field.
- Family members, friends, neighbors, co-workers—anyone you know—can be sources of information

What do I prepare for an informational interview?

- Know what kind of information you want, which requires researching the career.
- Determine what questions you have about how this person chose their career, the preparation they recommend, the advantages and disadvantages of the field, etc.
- Set up the interview by phoning in advance and requesting 30 minutes of the person's time—and then stick to that!
- If someone has referred you, give the person's name and indicate why you are calling and that you are not asking for a job, but to get information about the type of work they do and how they got into that field.
- Be on time for the interview, dress neatly, and take notes.
- Send a thank you after the informational interview and consider enclosing a resume.

Examples of how to make the contact:

If someone you know has given you the name of someone to contact for an informational interview, use their name when making your phone call:

“Hello, my name is Kari Smith. John Green is a friend of mine and he suggested I call you. I am a student at Fort Hays State University and I’m considering going into the field of environmental science. I’m not looking for a job at this point, just more information and any advice that you might be willing to share with me about the field. Could we set up a time where I could meet with you for about 30 minutes to talk about this?”

If you don’t have a personal reference, but have gotten the name in some other way, mention that in your phone conversation:

“Hello, my name is Kari Smith. I am a student at Fort Hays State University and I’m considering going to law school. I saw your name in the local newspaper recently in an article about the United Way funding of Prairie State Legal Services. I’m very interested in combining my interests in social work and the legal field. I was wondering if you could share information with me about how you got interested in this type of work. It would be helpful to get your personal perspective about your job. I would not take more than 30 minutes of your time. Could we arrange an appointment for next week?”

Sample Questions:

Being prepared is the key to a successful interview, whether it is an informational interview or an actual job interview. After researching the career field, select six to eight questions that will help you get the most out of a 30 minute information-gathering interview. The following is a list of possible questions from which to choose:

1. What interested you most about getting into this type of work?
2. How did you prepared yourself for this career and what classes or activities would you suggest to me?
3. Knowing what you know now, would you go into this career? Why or why not?
4. What do you like most and least about your job? What is most rewarding?
5. What skills or personal qualities are necessary in this career?
6. What do you do in a typical day and what type of people do you encounter?
7. How stressful is your job? What are the frustrations associated with your work?
8. What are the advantages and disadvantages of working in your field?
9. Would you advise people to enter this career area today? Why or why not?
10. What, in your opinion, is the job outlook in the career area?
11. How much variety is connected with your work?
12. Can you recommend the names of other people or employers I can consult to find out more about your field? May I use your name to introduce myself?