

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

How to collect information about a job, career field, or industry

PURPOSE

Explore the reality of a career path, learn tips for preparation in a career field, and clarify career goals. Create a setting to develop future professional relationships, and present a chance for referrals. Establish a possible opportunity for future employment through networking.

1. RESEARCH

- Career field or companies
 - Study the industry
 - Study the history/background of company
 - Know jargon/vocabulary used in field

2. CONTACT

- Contact multiple people to get several perspectives about a career field
 - **Personal:** family, friends, advisors, professors, supervisors
 - **Cold Contacts:** referrals, other university professionals, recruiters, guest speakers, professional associations
 - **Social Network:** Handshake, LinkedIn, college alumni network, social networks
- Initiate Contact:
 - Message through Handshake, email or phone; introduce yourself (elevator pitch)
 - Inform the contact of the purpose of the interview and let them know that you won't take more than 15-20 minutes of their time
 - Set up time and place to conduct the interview (in person, over the phone, at their job)
 - If the person you ask says "no" to an interview, then ask them if they know of someone else who might be open to an interview

3. PREPARE

- Have an objective or goal for the interview
 - What do you want to get out of it?
- Set an agenda
- Write open ended questions (see reverse)
- Practice interviewing
 - Don't go in cold
- Be prepared to answer questions about what you are looking for

4. CONDUCT INTERVIEW

- In person: arrive early (10 minutes before), dress professionally (make a good impression)
- Keep interview short (15-20 minutes)
 - Keep track of the time. If the interview goes longer than expected, stop and acknowledge the time, be willing to stop the interview
- Ask prepared questions
- Take notes (have pen and paper)
- Ask them of other people to meet with (referrals)
- Ask if you could meet with them again, if needed
- End interview with follow-up actions
- Thank them for their time

5. FOLLOW UP

- Send a thank you note
- Connect with them online, keep in contact (networking)

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

- What do you like most/least about the profession?
- What does a typical day, month, and year look like at your job?
- In what ways do you maintain your work/life balance?
- How did you prepare to enter this field?
- What do you wish you would have known before entering this field?
- What things would you change or do differently?

TIPS

- Turn off your cell phone - use a watch to track time
- Bring a copy of your resume
- Show enthusiasm and interest
- Keep the conversation about them, not you
- Don't be afraid to ask direct questions
- You don't need to ask every question on the list
- Read their nonverbals - move on if it is a heavy subject
- Interview multiple people in the field for multiple perspectives
- Keep records: research completed, names, meeting dates, notes, contact information

POTENTIAL QUESTION CATEGORIES

Job Environment

- Culture
- Organizational structure
- Interaction with other workers
- Growth opportunities: promotions/career ladder/advancement
- Turnover

Benefits & Challenges

- Favorite aspects of their job
- Things they like least about their job
- Work/life balance
- Job stress
- Overall job satisfaction
- Job challenges

Industry/Field

- Field expanding, opportunities, future trends
- Problems in field
- Related industry fields/occupations
- Products
- Setting for occupation (educational institutions, businesses, non-profits)
- Best way to find jobs in field
- Entry level job positions
- Other companies in the field
- Contacts with other organizations
- Volunteer and professional development opportunities

Position Description

- Salary
- Roles, tasks, responsibilities
- Routine: typical day, month, year
- Schedule: flexible/rigid
- Hours worked per week
- Technology used
- Up-to-date knowledge

Seeking Advice

- Advice/suggestions - wish you would have known, change, do differently
- Referrals

Entrance Requirements/Preparation/Experience

- Steps into the field
- Prerequisites
- Preparation (internship, volunteer work)
- Training, skills, background
- Degrees, education, courses
- Personal qualities - characteristics that fit the industry
- Resume - what stands out/is impressive

