WHAT IS AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

An informational interview is a meeting or conversation with a person working in a career or company that interests you.

WHY INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

- Increase your knowledge of careers, occupational fields, work environments, and organizations
- Learn about internships, volunteering, and jobs
- Expand your professional network
- Make informed decisions about your future

HOW TO INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

Step 1: Identify Contacts
Get leads from family, friends, professors, advisors, LinkedIn, and websites with staff directories.

Step 2: Schedule the Interview
Contact the individual to introduce yourself, explain your purpose, and ask if they would be willing to meet. If you were referred to your contact, mention the referral’s name.

Example: “Hello, my name Jane and I’m a sophomore at UWM. I’m considering a career in marketing and am trying to learn more about career options by speaking with professionals. Would you be willing to meet with me or speak with me over the phone for 20 minutes, at time that is convenient for you, so I may ask you some questions about your career?”

Step 3: Prepare for the Interview
Develop a firm grasp of your interests, values, and skills; research the career/company; and prepare a list of questions. Ask questions that help you assess your compatibility with the career/work environment and build off of what you have already researched about the career.

Step 4: Conduct the Interview
Dress appropriately, arrive on time, and be professional. Refer to your list of questions – it’s ok to take notes, but be sure to maintain eye contact. End the meeting on the agreed upon time. Ideally you want to conduct the interview in person, however, if this is not an option you can do it over the phone.

Step 5: Follow Up
Send a thank you letter and connect with the person via LinkedIn, if appropriate.

WHAT TO ASK IN AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

Find suggested Informational Interviewing Questions on the Back of this Page
INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Nature of the Work
1. What are the specific duties and responsibilities?
2. Describe a typical day/week?
3. What are the toughest problems you deal with?
4. What part of this work do you find most rewarding?

Work Qualifications
1. What kind of training, education, or course work is required?
2. What skills or talents are most essential in this career?
3. What personal qualities are important?
4. What kinds of prior experiences are absolutely essential?
5. How did you prepare yourself for this work?

Working Conditions
1. What type of setting, hours, atmosphere, etc. can be expected?
2. What obligations does this type of work place upon you outside of the ordinary workweek?
3. How much flexibility do you have in terms of hours of work, dress, vacation, etc.?

Internships / Work Entry
1. What types of internships/part-time jobs would you suggest before entering this field?
2. Where would I look for related experiences in this career, such as internships, part-time jobs, or volunteer positions? (try to get specific names of places and people)
3. What types of employers hire people in this field? Where are they located?

Work Advancement
1. What additional training or qualifications are necessary for advancement?
2. What are some of the job possibilities for experienced workers in this field?
3. Is turnover high in this field?
4. Do people normally move to another organization or do they move up in this organization?

Employment Outlook
1. How rapidly is the present career field growing?
2. If the work you do was suddenly eliminated, what other kinds of work do you feel you could do?
3. How would you describe or estimate future prospects?

Salary Questions – Do not Ask for Their Salary
1. What is the average starting salary?
2. What are the salaries for experienced workers?
3. How much do salaries vary in this career according to the employer, region, or industry?

Referral – Always Ask These
1. Based on our conversation today, what other people do you believe I should talk to?
2. Can you name a few people who might be willing to see me? May I have permission to use your name when I call or contact them?
3. What are the professional associations in this field?