

## Informational Interviews

learning about your potential career

Informational interviews provide valuable information to help you decide if a particular career is right for you. It is a chance to talk with people who are currently working in your field of interest and a chance to learn more about a specific career without making a long-term commitment of your time and money. You can find out about the responsibilities, rewards, and problem areas inherent in a specific career by asking questions of people already established in that field.

### Why do Informational Interviews?

- Explore careers and clarify your career goals
- Obtain information about your field and the skills needed to do that job effectively
- Discover employment opportunities that are not advertised
- Broaden your professional network
- Build confidence for your job interviews
- Identify your professional strengths and weaknesses

An informational Interview is an interview that YOU initiate – you lead the discussion and ask the questions. The purpose is to obtain information, not to get a job.

### Identifying People to Interview

Brainstorm people you already know – family, friends, fellow students, present or former supervisors, neighbors... etc. Also search alumni of the university, an organization or Greek chapter of which you are a member, professional organizations and LinkedIn.

### Arranging the Interview

Contact the person to set up an interview by email, phone, or by having someone who knows the person make the appointment or initial introduction for you.

### Typical Format for “The Phone Call”

Hi, my name is (your full name). I am a student at the University of Illinois wanting to learn more information about (profession). (The person who referred you) suggested that I call you because of your experience in the field of (profession). [If you do not have a reference, explain how you heard of this individual.]

I am interested in this field of work and would like to learn more about what a typical day is like for a (occupation title) and the necessary education, experience or skills for a position in this field. I would like to meet with you at your convenience to ask you some questions. Could we arrange a time?

\*Appropriate length of the interview is 20 - 30 minutes.

### Follow Up to the Initial Contact

You must follow up this phone call with an email confirming your appointment and indicating how much you are looking forward to meeting with them. If your initial contact is via email, you will still follow the same general steps.

## Preparing for the Interview

Do research about the occupation and company in order to ask intelligent questions. The following are examples of questions you might ask. Design questions that fit your personal situation. Do not read your list of questions; the interview should be a conversation. Preparing a list of questions ahead of time will ensure that your interview maintains focus.

1. Can you describe your typical day?
2. What education is required for this type of work? Certification? Skills? Experience?
3. What jobs and experiences led you to your present employment?
4. If you could do things over, would you choose the same path? What would you change?
5. What part of your job is most satisfying? Most challenging?
6. What is the demand for people in this occupation?
7. Which professional journals and organizations would help me to learn more about this field?
8. What is developing/changing in this field? Company? Where do you see the greatest needs?
9. What advice would you give someone entering this field?
10. What is one thing you wish you knew starting out in this field that you know now?

Brainstorm concise and informative answers to the following questions and others they might ask:

1. Why are you interested in this type of work?
2. What interests you in this company? Field of work?
3. What positions/jobs/education have you had that have already given you experience in this field?

## The Day of the Interview

- The day before the interview, call to confirm your appointment and clarify directions.
- Plan to arrive 10-15 minutes early.
- Dress appropriately for the interview.
- Be prepared to take notes.
- Show enthusiasm and interest.
- Be prepared for questions they might ask you.

## Always Send a 'Thank You' Note

Be sure to send a thank you email, card or letter to the person you interviewed. This is a good way to keep in touch and to be remembered by people. Thank them for their time. Let them know how beneficial the information was that they provided and ask if there is anyone with whom they think you should connect. Request that they keep you in mind if they come across any information that may be useful to you in your career research. Include your address, phone number and email so that they may get in contact with you.

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## available assistance

**One-on-One Advising** is available to discuss your job and internship search with a professional career advisor during a 30-minute appointment. Schedule through Handshake @ Illinois.

**Drop-in Advising** is available at Media Career Services. Stop by to get help while preparing for your job or internship search. Check the website for hours.

**Our Website** has even more information on jobs, internships and ways to search for them.

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