

# Informational Interviews

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**Informational Interviewing** is a career planning and networking technique that involves talking to someone who is presently in a job, career field or organization that interests you for the purpose of obtaining information. The information is gathered for the purpose of helping you make a more informed decision about an employment or career goal. Informational interviews are most beneficial after you have a general understanding of a particular career or potential employer and are interested in obtaining more in-depth information on the field or employer. It also helps you build a network of contacts that can help you now and in the future.

## Why conduct an informational interview?

- Obtain data about a particular career and what it takes to do well in the field.
- Obtain feedback on, and hopefully support for, your potential to succeed in the career field.
- Get “market based” information on what job opportunities exist in a given field, industry or market.
- Have your resume evaluated for its “selling value” to prospective employers.
- Practice describing your skills and goals in a non-threatening situation.

## Who do I contact?

- Friends and relatives
- Former and current employers
- Faculty and administration
- Fellow or former students
- Alumni
- Community and civic leaders
- Government representatives
- Professional association members
- People you read about in newspapers and magazines
- People listed in directories of companies and associations
- Professionals working in a field or in an organization of interest to you
- Anyone you meet in a professional context

## How do I prepare?

- Conduct a thorough self-evaluation. Know who you are, what you feel you can do, and why you believe in your potential to succeed in the field.
- Demonstrate your interest by doing some preliminary research on the career field and market you’d like to know more about.
- Have a specific agenda in mind. Your contact is giving you valuable time, don’t waste it.
- Develop questions to fit your particular situation and experience level. Some suggestions are:
  - What do you do in a typical work day?
  - What kinds of problems do you deal with?

- What kinds of decisions do you make?
- Describe how your job fits into the organization or department?
- How long have you been in this position?
- What are your major responsibilities?
- How did you enter this field?
- How did you reach your current position in the organization?
- What skills, education and experience are required to succeed in this field?
- What are typical entry level jobs in your field?
- What courses or work experience would you recommend to qualify?
- What do you find most satisfying about your job? Most frustrating?
- What are the toughest problems you face in your organization?
- What social or other obligations outside normal work hours go along with your job?
- How many hours do you work during an average week?
- What sorts of changes are occurring in your field?
- Is there a definite career path in your field/organization? Can you describe it?
- What sort of professional publications or associations do you recommend?
- If I decide to pursue this type of work, what suggestions do you have for how to conduct my job search?
- What is the job market like in your field?
- What trends do you foresee in this field over the next 5 or 10 years?
- What kind of growth or job outlook do you anticipate during the next 5 years?
- **Can you recommend anyone else for me to talk with for additional information?**

#### Helpful hints...

- **You are not asking for a job.** You are gathering information on which to base some decisions. Make sure your contact understands this so they don't misconstrue your motives.
- **Always make an appointment.** This puts your conversation on a businesslike basis and helps eliminate interruptions.
- **Be prepared to take the lead in the conversation.** Remember, you are doing the interview.
- **Do your homework.** Learn everything you can about the person, the organization, and the field.
- **Respect your contact's time.** Do not be apologetic, but do plan a manageable agenda. Do not wear out your welcome.
- **Recognize that everyone has his/her own attitudes, biases and feelings** that must be evaluated. Talk to a number of people within your field of interest.
- **Keep your eyes and ears open** for other clues about the organization and its environment.
- **Be sure to send a thank you note** following the informational interview.
- **Keep your contacts informed** of job interviews and offers, especially if you believe they have taken an interest in your career.
- **Ask your contacts for a business card and keep a record of people you have met.** Maintaining such contact is an ongoing process that will help you throughout your career.
- **Perform an Information Interview as a school assignment.** Most people are very willing to help a student.

**Please Note:** This document was created by Career and Employment Services (CES) at Gateway Technical College. It is intended to be a guide and may not be all-inclusive to meet your specific needs. Check out the CES website at [www.gtc.edu/ces](http://www.gtc.edu/ces) for additional resources or to make an appointment please call (800) 247-7122.