What is an Informational Interview?

An Informational Interview is where you interview someone working in a career field that you would like to learn more about in order to make a more informed career decision. Informational interviews are also effective networking opportunities for a future internship, job, or career opportunity. An Informational Interview is NOT a job interview.

How would an Informational Interview help me with exploring a career?

Informational interviews give you the opportunity to:
• Observe what the day-to-day workings of someone in your career field looks like.
• Learn the “real world” issues, trends, hot topics, challenges and rewards from an expert in your career field.
• Gain advice on experiences, knowledge, skills, and abilities you need to gain to be marketable and successful in that particular career field.
• Begin developing professional networking connections.

Where do I start?

• Identify someone you would like to talk to within a career field, occupation, or industry you want to explore. Start with who you know – family, friends, neighbors, faculty, work contacts. Ask those you know (or the Career Center) for a contact name of someone in the career field you are exploring.
• Phone your contact. Example: “Hello, Ms. Jones, I am Jane Smith and I am a sophomore Economics major at The University of Akron. Dr. ____, my professor, recommended you as a knowledgeable person in the field of _____. I am exploring careers, and I would like to talk to you about your career. Would you have 30 minutes for us to meet in the next few weeks?”

Before the Interview

• Do your research. Learn about the career field. The Occupational Outlook Handbook on-line is an excellent resource (http://www.bls.gov/ooh/). A Career Center adviser can also assist you.
• Learn about that organization through their web site, annual reports, glassdoor.com, and/or Google search.
• Be aware of your contact’s achievements through a Google search or organization web site.
• Prepare a list of open-ended questions (see attached).
• Call the day before the interview to confirm your appointment.

The Day of the Interview

• Dress professionally (business suit) or at least “business casual” (collared shirt, khakis or skirt, no jeans) and arrive 15 minutes before your scheduled interview time.
• Give a brief introduction and handshake to start the interview: “Hello Ms. Jones, I am Jane Smith. Thank you for agreeing to meet with me. I’d like to take our 30 minutes together to ask you questions about your career. This is for my own career exploration.”
• Ask your key questions. Take detailed notes. Be polite and professional. Stay to your time limit and to your topic; make the most of the time you have together.
• Do NOT ask for an internship or job!
• Always end your informational interview with this question; “Would you know someone else who would be a good person for me to talk with about a career in ____?”
• Thank your interviewee, and ask for a business card.

After the Interview

• Send a hand-written or typed thank you note (U.S. Mail or E-mail) within 24-48 hours.
• Review information you received; call the new informational interview contact you received from your interviewee and start the process over again!
Suggested Questions to Ask in an Informational Interview

Before your Informational Interview, highlight your top questions. Since you have limited time with this interviewee, you will need to prioritize the questions you find most important.

Each Informational Interview will be different – some will be more conversational, some interviewee’s will take longer than others to answer your questions – so be flexible in your interview.

Note: whenever possible, personalize the question. For example, when you see “career field” below, insert the actual career field of the person with whom you are speaking.

Personal Background

• How did you become interested in a career in _____?
• What was your academic background or training?
• How long have you worked in this career field?
• What is the most rewarding part of your job?
• What is the most challenging part of your job?
• What do you wish you had known about this career field before you started working?
• If you could do it all over again, would you choose this same career field? Why or why not?
• How do you balance your work and personal life?

Career Path

• What is a typical entry-level job in this career field?
• What was your career path (what jobs did you have leading up to this job)?
• What are the typical career paths of others in this career field?
• In what ways do you see the type of jobs in this career field changing in the future?

Necessary Skills, Knowledge, and Abilities

• What are the top 5 skills or abilities needed in this career field?
• What courses or experiences would you recommend to students interested in this career field?
• What are the “hot issues” in this career right now?
• What do you think will be the “hot issues” in the career field in 10 years?

Organizational

• What is a typical work day like for you?
• How do those who need your products or services learn about your organization?
• How do you know your products or services are meeting the needs of others?
• How would you describe the “culture” of this organization?

Resources for Learning More

• What are the best resources for learning more about this field?
• What are some related career fields?
• What is your best piece of advice for someone thinking about entering this career field?
• Could you give me the name of one other person in your career field, or a related career field, who would be helpful for me to talk with about this career field? May I use your name when contacting that person? May I contact you again if I have additional questions?

Contact the Career Center for more information on Informational Interviewing, careers exploration, internships, and jobs! Student Union 211, 330-972-7747, uakron.edu/career
# Career Center

Career Lessons Learned from my Informational Interview Career Contacts

*Use this sheet to keep track of who you talked with, and most important career insight, or advice you gained.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career Contact’s Name</th>
<th>Job Title</th>
<th>Company or Organization</th>
<th>Most Important Advice, Career Lesson(s)</th>
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