

## INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW: *What is it?*

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Often the most current and specific information about a career field may not be available online. The best information comes from people who are actually working in that career field.

An **informational interview** is an informal conversation you can have with someone working in an area of interest to you. It is an effective research tool and is best done after preliminary online research. It is not a job interview, and the objective is not to find job openings.

You may feel awkward reaching out to people you don't know. However, most people actually enjoy taking a few moments out of their day to reflect on their professional life and give advice to someone with an interest in their field.

### **Benefits:**

- Find out about jobs, career paths, professional development information that you did not know about.
- Get tips and insider knowledge about how to prepare for your next career position or job search.
- Initiate a professional relationship and expand your network of contacts in a specific career field; meet people who may forward job leads to you in the future.
- Get tips and insider knowledge about how to prepare for and land your next position.

### **Six Steps of Informational Interviewing**

#### **Research Career Fields**

- Do some initial research on the career field or employer using internet and print resources.

#### **Identify people to interview**

- Pursue your own contacts. People you already know, even if they aren't in fields of interest to you, can lead you to people who are. This includes family, friends, teaching assistants, professors and former employers.

- Identify Sac State alumni to contact; they often take a special interest in "giving back" to Sac State students. Utilize Sac State Alumni [LinkedIn](#) page to find them.
- Review the Book of Lists, a directory of leading employers in major urban areas.

### **Prepare for the interview**

- Develop a brief introduction of yourself and your hopes for the meeting.
- Plan open-ended **questions to ask**.

### **Initiate contact**

- Contact the person by email or phone (voicemail after hours).
- Mention how you got his or her name.
- Ask whether it's a good time to talk for a few minutes.
- Emphasize that you are looking for information, not a job.
- Ask for a convenient time to have a 20-30 minute appointment.

### **Conduct the informational interview**

- Dress neatly and appropriately, as you would for a job interview.
- Arrive on time or a few minutes early.
- Bring your list of questions and take notes if you like.
- Restate that your objective is to get information and advice, not a job.
- Give a brief overview of yourself and your education and/or work background.
- Be prepared to direct the interview, but also let the conversation flow naturally, and encourage the interviewee to do most of the talking.
- Respect the person's time. Limit the meeting to the agreed-upon timeframe.
- Ask the person if you may contact them again in the future with other questions.
- Ask for names of other people to meet so as to gain different perspectives.

Note: You can bring a resume, but don't take it out right away or your interviewee may think you are actually fishing for a job. At some point you may wish to ask for input about it, but first establish a nice rapport with the person.

### **Follow-up and stay in touch**

- Take notes. Write down what you learned, what more you'd like to know, and what your next steps should be.
- Send a thank-you note within 48 hours to express your appreciation for the time and information they provided.
- Keep in touch with the person, especially if you had a particularly nice interaction; let them know that you followed up on their advice and the outcome. This person could become an important part of your network.