



INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

Though looking up information online is a great resource, it will only provide the basics of what you are seeking. They provide an enriching experience because not only will you receive more personalized information on an individual's experience, you will make connections and build your network, while also practicing professionalism and interviewing. Making these connections through networking can be helpful when applying for jobs or searching for professional experiences in your field of interest. Informational interviews are highly recommended when exploring majors or careers. They can provide first-hand experience from someone in the major, field, or industry you are considering and may greatly assist you with your decision.

Steps

The key to having a useful informational interview is to be prepared and to follow these steps:

Step 1: When looking for a company or professional to contact it is important to use all of your resources. Some prospective resources are professors, co-workers, peers, or LinkedIn. Once you have found an interviewee, find the best way to contact them. Remain professional and clearly describe your goals as well as the medium in which you would like to conduct the interview. Informational interviews can be conducted by email, phone, video conference, or in person. All forms are beneficial. It is simply a matter of what method works best for you and the contact.

Step 2: Once the interview is set up, it is important to follow through and make sure you approach the interview with professionalism. This includes the way you dress, how prepared you are, and how you carry yourself throughout the process, similar to an actual job interview. Bring questions to show the interviewee that you are interested in their experience, and ensure that your questions and concerns are addressed. Remember that even though this interview is providing you with more insight on the professional and the individual's experience with their profession, the questions need to remain from a more professional development standpoint, not about their personal life. Some examples of professionally appropriate questions are:

- What challenges do people in this position or industry face?
- What types of training programs or opportunities exist for new hires?
- Would you describe some typical entry-level positions within the organization or industry?

Step 3: Come prepared with enough questions to fill the allotted time, which is recommended to be 25-30 minutes. Once the interview is complete, send a thank you note to make a lasting impression. Thank you notes should be professional and specific to the experience. Notes that are handwritten or via email are a more appropriate way of reaching out to the individual than a text message or phone call. Handwritten notes are also a more personal method to show appreciation to the individual for taking time to assist you. Use these steps when conducting informational interviews to ensure that you have a positive experience, gain the information you need to make your decision, and help build your professional network.

SAMPLE: REQUEST FOR AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

Dear Ms. DeGarmo,

Dr. Jesse Fell, professor of psychology at Illinois State University, suggested that I contact you. He mentioned that as an alumna, you would be in an excellent position to provide information that might assist me in making a career decision.

As a psychology student at Illinois State, I am exploring career paths. Counseling, research and human resources all sound interesting, but I want to enter my final year of school with a clear sense of direction. I would like to learn about your personal career path and educational background in the interest of better understanding the day-to-day activities of a counselor.

Would you be willing to briefly meet or speak on the phone with me regarding this important matter? Thank you for your time and consideration of my request.

Sincerely,

Reggie Redbird
(555) 555-5555