

HOW **2** guide: *Informational Interviewing*

An informational interview is an activity where you meet with a professional in a particular field and “interview” them. If you are trying to determine what field or career you want to pursue, this is a great opportunity to learn what a career is “really like.” Your goal is to get as much information as possible to determine whether this career is a good “fit” for you. Ask questions that will help you understand the nature of the work. Sample questions are listed below.

Informational interview are also helpful in helping you better understand how to “break into” a certain field. Therefore, you will want to ask questions about who the employers are in the field and how to best market yourself to these employers.

Keys to Success

- If you make an appointment for an informational interview, do everything you can to not have to cancel or reschedule it. You are probably dealing with a busy professional who carved time out of his/her schedule to meet with you. Having to cancel does not make a positive impression and creates more work.
- Make a good first impression and establish your credibility by dressing professionally.
- Bring a professional looking portfolio (notebook) to take notes.
- Read about your contact’s company and industry so they feel you are seriously interested and so you will get the most out of your meeting.
- Once you have developed a relationship, ask for referrals. When you present your interests and needs in a concise and specific way, your contact will feel more confident in referring you to colleagues for similar informational meetings.
- Bring a copy of your resume along in case they offer to share it with their network of contacts.
- Send a thank you note, which can be typed or handwritten on quality paper, within 48 hours of your meeting.

Questions You Might Ask During an Informational Interview

- What do you do on a typical day in your job?
- What kinds of projects do you work on?
- What are the responsibilities/duties?
- How would you describe the demands of your position with respect to time involved per week, pressures, job complexity and interaction with people?
- What do you like best about your job?
- What characteristics of this job cause the most frustration or dissatisfaction?
- What kind of personal characteristics/attributes are needed to succeed in this field?
- What qualifications are needed?
- Can people specialize in this occupation? If so, what are the areas of specialization?
- What kinds of changes are taking place in this type of work?
- Has your occupation changed you as a person?
- What were the primary factors that led you to this occupation?
- What is the career potential in this field?
- Will there be good future opportunities?
- What are typical career paths in this field?
- What kinds of organizations do _____ work in?
- Who are the major employers in this field?
- What organizations hire entry-level people?
- Are there opportunities for a flexible schedule?
- What would you estimate as a starting salary for entry-level position in this field?
- What kind of experience should I get to make me more marketable to this field?
- What advice would you give to a person entering this field?