

WHAT IS AN INFORMATION INTERVIEW?

An Information interview is an informal conversation with someone working in a job you think you might like. As the interviewer, you ask questions to gather information from the person about their job.

An information interview is not a job interview; it is a tool you can use to research possible careers, finding out potential pathways to get into that career area, and a way to begin to build a network of people who could be helpful with your job search, when the time comes.

WHAT'S THE OBJECTIVE?

The objective of an information interview is to find out (first-hand and in some detail) the kind of work the person does, what they like and don't like about their job, and how they got into the job. This information will help you to decide if it's a career area you may want to pursue and, if so, it will give you tips on how to prepare for it.

WHY DO AN INFORMATION INTERVIEW?

Information interviews are one of the best ways to find out current information about the career area you're considering. Reading about careers online and watching video interviews are also helpful, but by doing an information interview you're accomplishing 2 things online research cannot:

- 1) you're seeing the person's work environment first-hand
- 2) you're making personal connections with people who may be able to help you in the future with providing job leads or contacts.

HOW CAN I FIND PEOPLE TO INTERVIEW?

Calling up someone you don't know and asking them for an interview can be a little nerve-racking. If you're nervous, try it out first with someone you know, such as a friend's parent. It's important to remember that most people like to talk about their work, especially if they really enjoy it. And many people will think highly of a young person who takes the initiative to research a career so thoroughly. This experience is also a great way to practice for a future job interview.

So where to start? Here is a list of potential interviewees:

- Your parents' friends or colleagues
- Your friends' parents' and their contacts
- Your teachers' / Professors' contacts
- LinkedIn, especially alumni of your university / your parents' or siblings' university
- Online search for companies or organizations

THINGS TO DO FOR AN INFORMATION INTERVIEW

- Dress neatly and arrive on time (ideally 10 minutes early)
- Turn off your phone; make sure there are no sounds or vibrations to distract you and the interviewee
- Be prepared to verbally introduce yourself and briefly tell the person about your interest in the field. You may want to prepare and practice this a few times out loud if you're a little nervous about the meeting. It only needs to be two or three sentences. Use the information on the scripts below if you wish.
- Have your questions prepared in advance (you can use Google for ideas on informational interview questions), and bring a pen and something to write on, such as a clipboard. Take brief notes only; don't spend all of your time writing things down word-for-word.
- Be prepared to lead the conversation. However, listen well and allow the person to speak freely, and don't over-control the conversation.
- Respect the person's time. Keep the interview to 20 minutes, if possible, and no more than 30 minutes.
- If you are interested in learning more about this career, ask the interviewee if they can recommend another person to contact for a short interview. The other person could be employed within the same organization or in another one.
- Thank the person for their time and information.

THINGS NOT TO DO FOR AN INFORMATION INTERVIEW

- Don't take anyone with you into the interview, especially if it was not previously discussed with the interviewee.
- Don't ask about current job openings. Stay focused on learning about the person's job. If the person brings up how to get a job at the organization you can discuss it briefly, of course, but don't try to change the focus to a job interview.
- Don't do all the talking. You're there to listen and gather information, not to talk about yourself. Of course if the person asks you about yourself, then talk freely. Just be sure not to hijack the conversation and put the focus on you.

TIPS FOR AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Make sure to record the name of who you met with, his/her job title, and the date of the interview
- Make notes on your impressions of the workplace and the information you learned
- File away your questions, answers and impressions, and any other information the interviewee gave to you. You might need it to refer to later, or to follow up with the person. Or perhaps they will contact you, so you'll want to remember who the person is and what they said! Remember, the purpose of an information interview is not only to find out information, but also to start to build your network, and get your name and face out there as a person to potentially hire when a job opening becomes available.
- Keep all of this information in one place and easily accessible, e.g. a file folder

SAMPLE TELEPHONE SCRIPT TO SET UP AN INTERVIEW

Before making the call, please do the following:

- * Make sure when you call that you have your schedule in front of you, and you know possible times you could get to the person's place of work for an interview.
- * Be prepared to do the interview over the phone at the time you make this call. The person may be unable to meet with you in person but is able to answer your questions via phone on the spot, so have your question list and a pen, and be ready to go.

Hello.

My name is Jane Davis and I'm a grade 11/ 12 at

_____.

Name of your school, e.g. Central High School or just say your age so they know you're a young person

I got your contact information from _____

Tell the person how you got contact, e.g. my mother, Sheila Davis / from the XYZ company website / LinkedIn

I'm researching possible careers and I've become very interested in

Type of work / career

and I would like to find out more about the field. Could I arrange a time to come to your place of work and speak with you about your job? I have a few questions prepared and I only need about 20 minutes of your time.

SAMPLE EMAIL SCRIPT TO SET UP AN INTERVIEW

Before sending any email requesting an information interview, please do the following:

- * Make sure you use "professional" email address. If you don't already have one, get a Gmail address that is easy to use, plain and has your name in it, e.g. janedavis1997@gmail.com. Use this email address only for "professional" emails, such as job hunting, scholarship applications, asking for a reference, etc.
- * Your email should be as brief as possible, and have no spelling errors, slang or abbreviations (other than standard ones, such as p.m. for afternoon).
- * In the subject line, put: Request for information interview from student

Dear Mr. Buffet,

My name is Jane Davis and I'm a grade 11 /12 student at

_____.

Name of your school, e.g. Central High School or just tell them your age

I got your contact information from _____

Tell the person how you got contact, e.g. my mother, Sheila Davis / from the XYZ company website / LinkedIn

I'm researching possible careers and I've become very interested in

Type of work / career

and I would like to find out more about the field. Could I arrange a time to come to your place of work and speak with you about your job? I have a few questions prepared and I only need about 20 minutes of your time.

I'm available at the following dates and times:

Monday, June 6, from 3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday, June 8 from 1:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Friday, June 10 from 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Are you available to speak with me for 20 minutes at any of these times? If you are not available, could you please suggest someone else in the same area of work who I could speak with?

Thank you for considering my request.

Jane Davis

Janedavis1997@gmail.com