



OTTERBEIN
UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR CAREER &
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Informational Interviews

What is an Informational Interview?

An informational interview is a focused meeting with a networking contact designed to help you choose or refine your career path by giving you the “insider” point of view. If you are in the process of making career choices, beginning a job hunt, changing careers, or even choosing a major, then informational interviews can help you explore your possibilities.

Informational interviews are particularly effective for college students, especially in helping them shape their career paths. Students can utilize informational interviews to:

- Learn about the realities of the work world and what to expect.
 - Discover opportunities that are available in a given field, including jobs and career paths you may not have thought of or known existed.
 - Confirm if a job or career is the “right fit” or not.
 - Glean information you need to strategize entry into your chosen career.
 - Gain access to information that not many other entry-level candidates will have. Job and internship offers often result from informational interviews, even though getting offers is not their purpose.
- Adapted from “Informational Interviewing: A Powerful Tool for College Students” by Katharine Hansen.*

Tips for Informational Interviewing

Identify People to Interview

It’s usually easiest to start with people you already know: friends, peers, present or former co-workers, supervisors, coaches, neighbors, or friends of the family. Even if they do not have information you need, they may be able to give you the name of someone who does.

To find a working professional, check with your advisor or a faculty member in your department. Ask the Center for Career & Professional Development or Alumni Relations for suggestions of alumni who are working in the field that interests you. Professional organizations, organizational directories, company websites, local business newspaper articles, and classroom guest speakers are also good resources.

Scheduling the Informational Interview

- Request an interview either by phone or email.
- Share a brief introduction about yourself.
- Indicate how you received their name and contact information.
- State your interest in soliciting advice and learning more about their field, organization or location.
- If sending an email, include a sentence about how and when you will contact this person again.

Sample Email Requesting an Informational Interview

Dear Ms. Jenkins,

My name is Cassie Cardinal and I am a sophomore Psychology major at Otterbein University. I was given your name by one of the counselors in the Center for Career & Professional Development. I am interested in learning more about the field of School Counseling and I am writing to inquire if I could schedule a time to ask you a few questions about

your educational background and career path. I am available to meet in person or talk over the phone, whichever is easier for you. Feel free to respond to this email, or I will follow up with you early next week if that is more convenient. Thank you for your time. I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

Cassie Cardinal

Research before the Interview

You should be prepared. Research the organization, person you'll be asking to speak with, product produced by the organization, etc. The more you know, the better you'll be able to formulate questions pertaining to the organization and job. The more knowledge you have, the more confident you will feel about your ability to communicate effectively. Ask yourself what it is you want to know and then figure out who has an investment in knowing that sort of information.

Dress and Conduct

Be prepared to make a good impression and to be remembered for the right reasons. Dress as you would for a regular job interview.

Be enthusiastic and show interest. Be direct and concise with your questions and answers and do not ramble. Have good eye contact and posture. Be positive in your remarks and reflect a good sense of humor.

Take Notes

Pretend you are a reporter. You don't need to write down everything, but make note of important points. There may also be names, phone numbers or other information that you may want to remember.

Possible Questions to Ask

1. What are the duties/functions/responsibilities of your job?
2. What is a typical day like?
3. How did you obtain your current position?
4. What kind of work/internship experience would employers look for in a job applicant?
5. What parts of your position do you personally find most satisfying and most challenging?
6. What did you do before you entered this occupation?
7. How does a person progress in your field?
8. What is a typical career path in this field or organization?
9. What is the best way to enter this field?
10. What were the keys to your career advancement?
11. How did you get where you are and what are your long-range goals?
12. What particular skills or talents are most essential to be effective in your position?
13. What work-related values are strongest in this type of work (variety, independence, etc.)?
14. Is there anything else I should know about this work?
15. Who else would you recommend I speak with?

Send a Note of Thanks

Be sure to send a thank you note or email shortly after the interview. This communication is an effective way to keep in touch and to be remembered. Let them know they were helpful and thank them for the time spent. Ask them to keep you in mind if they come across any other information that may be helpful to you in your career research. Include your address and phone number under your signature.