

Guidelines For Informational Interviewing

- Never ask for a job.
- You can go by yourself or with a small group.
- Dress appropriately.
- Come prepared to take notes if necessary.
- Stay within your time lines.
- Ask only those questions which are appropriate and of most importance to you.
- Make sure you know who you are talking to. Unless you are interested in a supervisory job, you do not want to be interviewing your potential boss by sounding like you want his or her job.
- Be a good listener. Be receptive.
- Take a real interest in the person, the field, and the organization.
- Be a good reporter. Find out the facts and information you need.
- Share some things about yourself but do not dominate the interview by talking about yourself.
- Be aware. An informational interview may turn into a job interview. If you are not sure, ask if they are talking with you about a specific job or opening.
- Ask if you can stay in contact with the person.
- Always get referrals of other people you can talk to.
- Always send a Thank you note.

Always Stick To Your Time Schedule In Informational Interviewing

You made a promise about how long you would take for the interview. Keep it. If it looks like the interview may go longer than that, make sure they do it.

Prepare your questions before hand. You want to ask the questions that are the most important for you. They may change from interview. You have only a short period of time for the interview so you need your key questions together.

Arranging For An Informational Interview By Phone

- Give a professional appearance.
- Allows you to make best use of your time.

some guidelines....

- Hello, my name is _____. I am doing some career research. I am really interested in the field of _____. I would like to make an appointment to talk with you for about 15 minutes, so I can find out more about it.
- If possible, say who referred you. Referrals open many doors and can get you better information.
- Emphasize you want information only. You are not applying for a job. You are trying to get some first hand information to help you make some career decisions. If it makes it any easier, tell them you are in a career exploration and planning class.
- Communicate enthusiasm. Let them see that the information you get from them can really help you. Why are you calling them? Why do you think you are interested in this field? How can the information help you?
- Be polite and negotiable in arranging times for interviewing. They may have a busy schedule, but so may you. If you are really interested in talking with them, you might have to put yourself out a little. If you show a willingness to do this, they will be willing to do it also. Make specific notes of who you are to see, when and where. Repeat it. Make sure you get it right. Ask for directions if necessary.

Arranging For An Informational Interview By Walking In Off The Street

You will get some good information about 80% of the time just by walking in off the street.

- Works well as a “plan B” strategy when your scheduled interview falls through, or when you just have some extra time.
- There is nothing wrong with it, but you should follow the guidelines below.

some guidelines....

- Give your “Hello” speech from above. Emphasize that you are not looking for a job, that you are exploring career's, you have some questions that will take about 15 minutes, and that you want to talk with someone doing _____ type of work.
- Be polite.
- Schedule an appointment if necessary.
- If you cannot get past the front desk, treat them as people. Ask them some of your questions. You will get some good information. They will get an understanding of what you want, and you will probably ask them something they cannot answer and you may then get referred to the person you want to see.
- Do not walk around without permission. That is a good way to alienate people, get yourself in trouble, and set yourself up not to get the information you want -- or a good job lead.

Examples of Questions You Could Ask

Personal Information

What are some things that you like about your job? Why?
How did you start out?
What is your training? Experience? Is that typical for someone in the field?
Is your company a good one to work for?
What are your duties and responsibilities?
What are your hours?
What do you see yourself doing in 5 years?
Are there responsibilities or social obligations outside of working hours in this field?

Ask Advice

How do most people go about getting an entry level job in this field?
What are the skills required?
What are the obstacles facing a beginner?
How do I overcome them?
What are the trends in the field?
What are the progressive firms?
How do you see the job market?
Can you suggest any other people I might talk to? May I use your name?

Ask About the Company

What are the advantages of working here? Disadvantages?
What are the products or service provided by this organization?
What is the company's standing in the industry?
What does this company look for in prospective employees?
What kinds of jobs are available?
How would you describe the working conditions here?
May I observe people at work?
Are there training programs for employees?
What kinds of fringe benefits are typical for people in this field?