

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

“Get the inside scoop on majors and careers!”

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WHY DO AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

An Informational Interview is simply talking with professionals who are currently in occupations you are considering in order to gain information and insights about a career, industry, or organization. This information can be used in choosing a major, exploring career options, or preparing for a job search. Be clear with yourself and the professional you are interviewing that this is not a job/internship interview or a request for a job/internship.

Reasons for conducting Informational Interviews:

Career Research:

- Gain information about specific careers.
- Uncover career options you never knew existed.
- Learn about important issues in a career field.
- Learn how to use your college years to gain experience and prepare for the job search.
- Help you determine which courses and skills are necessary for specific career paths.

Job/Internship Searching:

- Expand your network of contacts in a field for your job/internship search.
- Discover jobs that are not publicly advertised.
- Expand your knowledge of a particular organization or field.
- Learn about how to make yourself a more qualified candidate.
- Build confidence for your job interviews and develop professional communication skills.

FINDING PEOPLE TO INTERVIEW

- Begin by brainstorming what career fields and jobs interest you.
- Start with lists of people you already know: family, friends, fellow students, college faculty and staff, present or former coworkers, supervisors, neighbors, etc. (see if there are any matches to the careers/jobs that you are interested in)
- GMC's Alumni Mentor Program. This program, operated on College Central (www.collegecentral.com/gmc) allows students to connect with GMC alumni to learn about various occupations and network.
- Professional organizations and the Yellow Pages.
- You may also call an organization and ask for the name of the person by job title.
- Staff in Career Services can assist you with finding professionals to interview.

Write down names of everyone you know (include family, friends, classmates, co-workers, employers, neighbors, professors, Career Services Center, etc.):

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

Treat the Informational Interview just like a job interview. Dress and act professionally, and prepare as much as possible so you are making the most of the interviewee's time.

- Research the company and career field.
- Develop open-ended questions.
- Plan ahead what you want to communicate about yourself: skills, work values, and goals.

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.

SETTING UP THE INTERVIEW

Don't be afraid to call or email various professionals. Most people enjoy talking about themselves and their ideas as well as helping others. Remember to make it clear that you are looking for information, not a job. If that person is unable to see you, ask for the name of someone that might be able to help.

Scheduling by email

- **Here's a sample letter requesting an informational interview.**

Dear Mr. Michael Scott:

I am a Business Management student at Gwynedd-Mercy College, beginning my third semester. I came across your name (from-person/website/place). Human Resources has been an interest of mine since I took a class on that subject. Your firm has an outstanding reputation in that field of practice.

I would appreciate the opportunity to ask for your advice and information on your job and field. Any further insights you have would be greatly appreciated.

Please let me know if you are interested and when would be a good time to schedule an informational interview. I am available at your convenience, whether that be conducting it in-person, over the phone or email.

Sincerely,

Stevie Janowski

- **Here's a sample referral letter requesting an informational interview.**

Dear Ms. Mary Stevenson:

Dwight Schrute, who is a Communication Professor at Gwynedd-Mercy College, suggested that I contact you about my interest in Public Relations.

I'm currently a Communication major, but am not certain what area of Communication I want to pursue after graduation. I am extremely intrigued by the field, especially public relations.

I'd like to contact you in the near future to ask a few questions about your career path and field. I won't take much of your time and will greatly appreciate any advice you can offer. Please let me know if you are interested in conducting an Informational Interview and whether it would be easier for you to do it in-person, over the phone or through email. I would be very grateful for your suggestions and tips.

Sincerely,

Katie Student

Scheduling by phone

- "Hello, my name is _____. I'm conducting career research in your field. I would like to meet and talk with you for about 30 minutes so that I can find out more about your field of expertise."
- "Hi, my name is _____ and I'm a student at _____ College. I got your name from _____. You're in a line of work that I'm interested in, and I was hoping that you could help me gain insights into the profession. I'm sure that my questions could be answered in a 20-30-minute informational interview."

DURING THE INTERVIEW

- Develop rapport by discussing the interviewee's views and opinions, personal career development, and likes and dislikes regarding the field. Get into specific questions as they relate.
- Take notes.
- Possibly ask the interviewee to give you advice about your resume and qualifications as well as job search strategies.
- As you near the end of the interview, ask for referrals to others in the field. (IMPORTANT)
- Never overstay your welcome – remember their time is valuable.
- Even though you may have a lot of questions, you should be listening more than talking. You might discover information about unanticipated areas.
- Do not ask for a job. You agreed to ask for advice and information.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Career Preparation:

- How did you prepare for your career?
- What are the most important qualifications (i.e. education, skills, personality, etc.)?
- What prior experience do I need to get?
- How would you rate my qualifications?

Personal Experiences:

- What do you like most/least about your work?
- How does your work affect your personal time?
- How did you get your job?
- What kind of hours do you work? Is your schedule flexible or set?
- If your job was eliminated, what else could you do?

Career Information:

- What is a typical work week like?
- How much autonomy do employees typically have: dress, hours, vacation time, etc.?
- How would you estimate my future prospects in this career field?
- Does this career include or require travel?
- What are the salary ranges for positions in this field?
- What are some of the challenges and major issues in your field?

Job Hunting:

- Who are some key employers I should consider?
- What job titles should I look for? How can I locate jobs?
- How long do most employees stay in one position?
- What other related fields should I consider?

Advice:

- Would you mind reviewing my resume/portfolio?
- What professional organizations would you recommend joining?
- Can you suggest other people/resources that can provide additional information?

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Record, Analyze, and Evaluate the Informational Interview:
 - What did I learn from this interview (both positive and negative impressions)?
 - How does what I learned fit with my own interests, abilities, goals, values, etc.?
 - What do I still need to know?
 - What aspects of this person's work particularly interest me?
 - What skills does this person use that you have or feel that you could develop?
 - What other types of careers are related to this field?
 - What advice about future job searching did the subject give you?
- Do multiple informational interviews; a broad information base is essential.
- Stay in touch, share information, keep them updated.
- Don't forget to send a thank-you letter after the interview.

Sample thank you note:

Dear Mr. Gregg Jones:

Thank you very much for taking the time to meet with me Thursday to discuss the professional possibilities in the healthcare industry. I was impressed by your knowledge of today's complicated issues and appreciated your insight regarding the ways I can apply my Communication and Economics majors to contribute to hospital administration.

I will be in contact from time to time to keep you posted on my career research. I will send a copy of my resume to your office as soon as it is ready, and I thank you in advance for your generous offer of a resume critique. Thank you for your help and valuable information.

Sincerely,

(Your signature)

Final thoughts:

The Career Services staff is eager to support you in identifying and pursuing professional opportunities. Our staff is available for you to meet with through individual and group appointments and programs.



Gwynedd-Mercy College