

# Informational Interviews

## What are the benefits?

- Obtain first-hand knowledge about an occupation
- Enhance your communication skills and confidence in interviewing
- Make favorable impressions on experienced professionals

**Remember: This is not a job interview! You do not need to send your resume to chat about future careers!**

## How do I schedule an informational interview?

- Select industries or organizations you want to learn about.
  - Make a contact list with the interviewee's name, title, organization, mailing address, phone number and e-mail address
- Contact the interviewees.
  - Prepare a script with questions and talking points. See the Telephone Informational Interview Request Components to get an idea of what to add to your script.
- Schedule and conduct the informational interview!
  - Request an interview: Calling or emailing potential interviewees.
  - Execute the informational interview either in person, preferably at the contact's workplace to gain a first-hand perspective of the work environment, or via the phone.



## Telephone Informational Interview Request Components

Greeting: Dr./Mr./Ms. Last Name;

Introduction: State your first and last name, class standing, and USFSP;

Reference: Identify how you learned about the contact, who gave you his/her name; where did you find their contact information online, website, LinkedIn

Statement of Purpose: Indicate that your goal is to collect information about a perspective career; remember, you are NOT seeking an actual job.

Statement of Interest: Express why you want to learn more about the profession (why should they help you?)

Closing: Ask to schedule a 20-30 minute informational interview at a convenient time.

Hello, (Dr./Mr./Ms.)\_\_\_\_\_, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a \_\_\_\_\_ at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg. I obtained your name from \_\_\_\_\_ (name, how do you know the person, where you found their contact info) who suggested you would be a great source of information about careers in \_\_\_\_\_.

After researching various occupations, I have become very interested in \_\_\_\_\_ (name of occupation) because \_\_\_\_\_ (offer a reason why it appeals to you), and I would like your advice and guidance on how I can best prepare for a career in the field.

Would you be willing to meet/chat with me for a 20-30 minute informational interview, at your convenience, so I can ask questions about the profession and your career path?



## Tips:

- Gain confidence by engaging in a low-stress, mock informational interview with a family friend or Career Center staff member.
- Don't take negative responses personally.
- Be courteous and honest about your intentions and the professional's time commitment.
- Be prepared to answer questions the professional may ask: What do you already know about the occupation, and where did you get this information? What attracted you to this career field?

## What if you call and they have 20 minutes to chat? Go ahead with the informational interview! Make sure you're prepared by referring to the sample questions below:

1. How did you become interested in this occupation?
2. What attracted you to this particular organization?
3. Tell me about your career path. (e.g., major, types of positions, etc.)
4. Please describe the responsibilities and duties you have (e.g., types of activities, projects, assignments, problems, decisions).
5. What do you enjoy most about your job?
6. What are the major frustrations in your position?
7. Please describe a typical day in your occupation.
  - a. What is on your "to do" list?
  - b. What are the time requirements for this job? Are you expected to work overtime or weekend hours? Is the amount of time spent on the job more to the nature of the occupation or the particular organization?
8. What other careers are closely related to yours?
9. What preparation, education (particular degrees or licenses), training, background, or essential abilities are required entrance into your field?
10. What opportunities exist for advancement, promotion, or lateral movement within this career?
11. How long does it usually take to move from one step to the next along this career path?
12. How would you describe the culture of the organization?
13. What is the guiding philosophy or mission of the organization? Is it an actuality in practice?
14. What is the beginning salary for someone within your field? What fringe benefits are typically offered by employers in this industry? (DO NOT ASK: What is your salary?)
15. Please suggest any temporary, part-time, or summer work experiences that would help a person prepare for your occupation.
16. What other advice or information do you have for a person considering, preparing for, or entering this occupation?
17. Because you know this occupation well, what other questions should I be asking about it?
18. Are there other people in this field who I should try to meet? May I have their contact information? May I mention your name as the person who referred me?
19. What are the biggest challenges that you face in your position? What should a student like me anticipate?
20. Are there any organizations/places that you suggest a student like me join or get involved with?

## Notes:

- Add any other questions that will help clarify your occupational research or interest.
- Remember not to use close-ended or Yes/No questions (e.g., Do you like your job?) and replace with open ended questions (e.g., What aspects do you like about your job?).

## Follow-Up

1. After your informational interview, reflect on your thoughts, feelings, and reactions to what you learned. How do your personal and work values, interests, and skills align with this occupation based on the information you obtained from the interview? What do you find intriguing? What puts you off? What additional information do you need?
2. Write and send a thank you letter to the professional within 48 hours.