



Informational Interviewing

Overview

Informational interviews are an important networking tool that can help you in your career exploration and your job search. By talking to people currently in your field of interest you are able to gain understanding of the trends and nuances in the field. Gaining insights into a specific field helps students narrow down the various options they might have. Additionally, informational interviews allow students to expand their professional network.

How to Ask

Before conducting an informational interview, it is important to do your research and learn more about the field or organization you are interested in. As you narrow down your search write down the names and contact information of people that are doing the type of work that you are interested in. After you have identified a few people you would like to interview, the next step is to contact them. Typically, sending an email to the interviewee is the first step to arranging an informational interview. In your email include a brief introduction about yourself and let them know why you would like to speak to them. Once you have set up a time to talk, make sure to follow up the day before to confirm that you have all the meeting information correct. Remember to show up to your interview ten minutes early and to be professional and attentive.

Most informational interviews last about 15-30 minutes and it is important to be mindful of the interviewee's time. Another thing to consider is that not all informational interviews are face to face. Depending on the interviewee's preference, you might have a phone interview instead. Whether it is an in-person interview or a phone interview it is important to prepare ahead of time so that you have informed questions. Moreover, make sure you bring a notebook and a pen to take notes.

What to Ask

After doing research about the career field and the expert you will be interviewing, it is important to create questions that will serve as a framework for your conversation. Below you will find a few questions that you can use for your interview. Most students find that asking 5-7 questions is enough to carry out a 30 minute conversation.



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- Can you briefly tell me about your current job? Can you tell me about any recent projects you are working on?
- Can you tell me how you got to this position?
- Why did you want to work in your current organization/job?
- What do you like most about what you do?
- How do people break into this field?
- Can you discuss what made your job search successful? Perhaps discuss how what type or research or outreach you did during the job search?
- What does a typical career path look like in your industry?
- What was it like being on a team?
- What does a typical day look like for you?
- How would you describe your work environment/culture?
- What advice do you have for students considering this type of work?
- How has your HGSE experience played a role in your current employment?
- What do you read — in print and online — to keep up with developments in your field?
- Do you have other comments to add about your experience? Do you have any suggestions about who else I can contact to learn more about this type of work?