

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

What is it?

Informational interviewing is a brief conversation (20-30 minutes) with a professional in a career field you are considering. You can learn more about a field and get advice about how to enter that field.

How to conduct an informational interview

1. FIND PEOPLE TO INTERVIEW

Start with your existing network of family, friends, advisers, professors and people they know. Also consider using the *UW Alumni Association* or the *LinkedIn Alumni Search Tool*. Other ideas include attending networking or professional association meetings (*consider using the Seattle Networking Guide, attend a meet-up or find a professional association for your area of interest*).

2. PREPARE FOR THE INTERVIEW

Do preliminary research on the career field your interviewee represents. Write questions about the field that come to mind. Use these to make the meeting more useful and leave a good impression. *Be prepared to share about your own strengths, interests and goals as well.*

3. CONDUCT THE INTERVIEW

Ask for information, advice and contacts. **Never ask for a job.** Take notes during the interview and then use them to follow up and follow through. Questions may include:

- How did you get into this field? What is your work like?
- How does your job fit into the company overall?
- Describe a typical day or week. What do you like most and least?
- What credentials are needed for entry-level jobs?
- What skills/qualities are important to succeed here?
- What advice would you give to someone considering this field?
- Is any training provided on the job? What are opportunities for continued learning and growth?
- Can you suggest other people I might talk to about this field?

4. FOLLOW UP

Always send a thank-you note (email or handwritten). Follow up on a semi-regular basis with a brief email on how you've used their advice.

5 reasons to do one:

1. Confirm (or not) interest in an occupation.
2. Learn about jobs you never knew existed.
3. Learn the qualifications for that career.
4. Receive "insider" info that could help you get a job.
5. Develop networking skills and contacts!

Next steps
One area of interest I will explore:

Questions I want to ask in an informational interview:

Sample Request Email

Dear Ms. Smith,

I am currently a junior at the University of Washington and am very interested in the field of marketing. Having discovered your name on the website for the Puget Sound Chapter of the American Marketing Association, I thought that you would be an excellent person to assist me with career information.

As a Communication major, the field of marketing sounds appealing to me, but I want to get a clearer sense of direction. I would love your advice about career possibilities in marketing, as well as a better handle on the day-to-day activities of this field.

Would you be available for a brief meeting (20-30 minutes)? Thank you for considering.

Sincerely,

Chris M. Fine

NETWORKING

What is it?

Networking is a rewarding, lifelong activity that is about building relationships with others to share and gain information.

You can use networking as a way to seek or give advice, learn more about a profession, industry or company, meet like-minded individuals, learn of new opportunities and gain referrals. One of the main strategies for building connections is to maintain an openness and awareness of people you encounter in your daily activities including professors, co-workers, peers and family.

Different types and styles

Networking in-person takes place everywhere! Each person you meet is an opportunity to build a relationship and learn more. Formal opportunities include career fairs, employer information sessions and networking events.

Online networking offers exponential access to individuals whose paths you might never cross in real life. Use LinkedIn and other social media to locate and initiate connections. Follow up on online conversations with in-person meetings or chats. If that is not possible, try to schedule a phone or Skype call.

Networking advice

- Reach outside of your industry or major to broaden opportunities.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Before networking, know who you want to talk to and what topics you want to discuss.
- Be open and listen to what your networking contact is saying.
- Always follow up! It shows an interest in an ongoing relationship.

Introduction or elevator pitch:

(a) What is your name and what are you studying or interested in pursuing?

(b) What is important to know about you—interests, strengths, experiences?

(c) What do you know about this company or what question do you have?

Building your network:

Start with who you know. Brainstorm and create a list of people already in your network who would be open to helping you.

Expand your contacts. Where are you involved (or can get involved) and meet new people? Consider group projects, committees, lab groups, volunteer projects, clubs, local events, workout classes, etc.

The most common introduction question at a career fair is, **“What are you looking for here at the job fair?”**

Career Fair Tips

A good first impression is a lasting one. Don't forget to smile, make eye contact, and give a firm handshake.

1.

Study the employer list in advance and research the organizations of most interest.

2.

Bring copies of your resume.

3.

Know your strengths, interests and goals so when an employer asks, you are prepared to answer!

4.

Be memorable - before you leave the fair, return to your top choice employer to thank them and let them know you plan to follow up.

5.

Be ready to ask questions

6.