

## THE CATHERINE CAREER GUIDE TO

# Informational Interviewing

Informational Interviewing is a strategy used to build a professional network and find out more about jobs, careers, and organizations. Through conversation, you can acquire information about skills, educational requirements, related occupations, typical career paths, hours and working conditions.

### Asking for an Informational Interview

*You are not asking for a job!* The purpose of the meeting should be to gather information and advice. Before you connect, research the organization and the career field. Also make sure to include the following in your communications:

- Introduce yourself
- Indicate how you obtained their contact information
- State why you are requesting the interview—be specific!
- Specify how much time you would like to spend with them—usually 20-30 minutes is adequate
- Reflect and identify why you are interested in the field or company

Sample request for an interview:

“Hi, my name is Susan, and I’m a junior at St. Kate’s. I’m majoring in history, and am trying to clarify what I want to do with my degree. I saw on LinkedIn that you work at the Minnesota Historical Society, and I thought you might be a good source of information. Might there be a time in the next few weeks when you could meet with me for 30 minutes or so?”

### Preparing for the Interview

Most individuals in the workforce are eager to guide and mentor young professionals—*Take the initiative!* Make sure you prepare the following for your conversation:

- A short personal introduction including information about your values, interests, abilities, goals, etc.
- A list of questions (next section)
- Appropriate, professional attire—nothing sloppy or too casual. A nice shirt, conservative skirt or pants, and modest heels/shoes work well
- A copy of your resume to share if requested

## Sample Questions

### Job Specific:

- Will you please describe a routine day or week in your job?
- What are the major qualifications for success in this occupation?
- When and in what position did you start in this field?
- What qualifications would you be looking for if you were hiring for a position subordinate to yours in the office?
- What do you like about your job? What is your normal schedule?
- How would you describe the company/work environment culture?

### Field Specific:

- What are the pressures and difficulties in your work? This field?
- What do you recommend for someone wishing to enter this field? Academic preparation? Experience?
- How quickly is this field growing?
- What should I do to prepare myself for emerging trends and changes in this field?
- These are my strongest assets [skills, areas of knowledge, personality traits, and values]. Where would they fit in this field?

### Entry-Level Positions:

- How competitive is entry into this work? Outlook?
- What is a typical salary for entry level positions?
- What attributes and skills does a person need in this work?
- What are typical advancement possibilities?
- What are good entry level jobs to learn about this work?
- Who else might you suggest I contact for more information?
- May I use your name to introduce myself?

## Follow up

Sending a professional thank you note is an important courtesy! The content should be clearly written, professional in tone, and carefully proof read. In addition, let them know if you have followed up on their advice or with a suggested contact.



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