Informational Interviews

What is an informational interview? It is a meeting you set up with a person who has job experience in a career or industry in which you are interested.

Why would I do this? It can help you clarify your own career goals, expand your professional network, give you confidence, and identify your professional strengths and areas you need to develop.

How does it differ from a job interview? Your purpose is to gather information, rather than to obtain job. The atmosphere will be more relaxed, and the person you interview will do more of the talking.

How do I find someone to interview? Through your network! Ask for names from Career Services, faculty, co-workers, parents, work supervisors, and family friends. Many people genuinely like to help students in this way, so just go for it!

How do I prepare? Research the organization and the person you'll be speaking with. If the person is well known, use the library’s online research tools, or maybe just “Google” them. The day before the interview, call to confirm your appointment and verify the exact location. Prepare your questions ahead of time.

How do I arrange the interview? Usually a phone call is the best way to make first contact. Introduce yourself and your reason for calling, and then ask to schedule a 30-minute appointment.

What do I do when I get there? Re-introduce yourself and remind the interviewee why you are there. Ask your prepared questions, being mindful of the time limit. Plan to arrive 10 minutes early and carry a small notebook and pen. Be polite and professional. Refer to your list of prepared questions, but allow for spontaneous discussion.

Be enthusiastic and show interest. Employ an informal dialogue during the interview. Be direct and concise with your questions and answers and do not ramble. Have good eye contact and posture. Thank the person for the interview.

Is there anything to do afterwards? Yes! Make some notes of the responses and write a thank you note the same day.

Possible Questions for an Informational Interview

1. What are your main duties and responsibilities?
2. What characteristics and skills does a person need to do this job effectively?
3. How did you get into this profession?
4. Are there other ways for a person to enter this line of work?
5. Can you describe your typical day?
6. What are the rewards and frustrations of the work?
7. What advancement possibilities exist related to your work?
8. What is your impression of the job market in this field?
9. What kind of stress do you experience on the job?
10. What is the salary range for a person in this field? Entry level to top salary.
11. What related occupations might I investigate?
12. What kind of ongoing training is available to you?
13. Can you tell me names of two or three others who share your enthusiasm for this work? How might I contact them?
14. May I have a tour of your company/facility?

Learn more at: http://www.quintcareers.com/informational_interviewing.html