

THE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

Learning objectives:

- Learn what an information interview is
- Become familiar with the process of conducting an information interview

What is an informational interview?

This is a single appointment you schedule with a professional for the purpose of gaining current occupational or career-related information so you can choose a major and/or make career decisions.

Why participate in an informational interview?

Informational interviews are not job interviews, rather informational interviews may help you make a career choice or assist at the beginning of a job search as it will increase your circle of connections. You may ask for referrals. You may learn about a particular organization or field from an “insiders” perspective.

How do I find potential contacts?

It may seem intimidating at first to find someone to contact, but many professionals are familiar with informational interviews and like to talk about their careers. Seek out contacts from faculty and the Career Development office. Connecting with PC alumni is an excellent option. Log into LinkedIn and Find Alumni (use the sort to narrow down by geographic location, major, or skills etc.). Join Groups in LinkedIn and review members’ profiles to see where they work.

Prepare open-ended questions to ask. Here are a few to get you started:

- How did you get started in this field?
- What do you think has made you successful in your career?
- What are the typical educational requirements, job responsibilities and working conditions associated with your field?
- What soft skills, personal qualities and experiences do employers look for in candidates?
- What is the job outlook in this field? Is the job in demand or declining? What are the trends?
- How do you break into this field?
- What are the pros and cons of working in this field? What do you find most rewarding about your work?
- What professional associations, publications or events are associated with this field?
- What is the typical starting salary in this field? What is the average compensation for this field? Is there room for promotions?
- Based on our conversation today, can you think of other people I should talk to?

Other questions you have in mind – keep it professional!

Arrange the informational interview

Telephone or email to explain your request for a meeting (i.e. you are gathering information about their field of work to make career decisions; if pressed, you can make it clear that you are not asking for a job from them). If possible, introduce yourself using a personal referral – if none is available, let the person know how you found them and emphasize your common career interests or goals to bridge the connection. “I’m Jessica Long, a senior at Presbyterian College studying (insert major). I found your name . . . I am conducting career research to determine the best path for me and I would like to meet for 20-30 minutes at your convenience.” If the person is not located nearby, offer a telephone meeting or Face Time meeting. Dress professionally and take notes. Always send a thank you note afterwards.

VIEW THIS VIDEO BEFORE YOU BEGIN! [Prepare for the Informational Interview](#)