

# Informational Interviewing

## Learning About Careers While You're in School

Informational Interviews, more informally called career conversations, are a great way to learn more about careers that interest you. In an informational interview you have an opportunity to ask questions about a person's job and find out what he/she actually does each day.

### How can it benefit you?

- You Learn about careers of interest from people doing them.
- A side benefit of conducting an informational interview is that 1 out of every 12 informational interviews results in a job or internship offer.
- You get to know several employers, which if you stay in touch, can lead to future internship or jobs.
- You can practice talking with employers and become more comfortable in asking questions.

### Why Do Informational Interviews?

**Most people make career decisions based upon romantic notions as seen on TV or in the movies** without talking with people performing the job. Students commit lots of time and money to a career that they know nothing about.

**Richard Bolles**, author of the best-selling career guide, *What Color Is Your Parachute?* Coined the term informational interviewing. He refers to it as the process of **"trying on jobs to see if they fit you."**

**Informational interviews can be used by many types of career seekers:**

- **College students** embarking on their career path
- **Career Changers** who want to know which of their skills might transfer to a new field
- **Job Seekers** within the same career field

An Informational interview, is not the same as a job interview, but is probably the most effective form of networking.

It's not uncommon for a student to receive a job or internship offer as a result of an informational interview.

### Scheduling an Informational Interview

- Schedule several (3-5) informational interviews for each career.
- Make a list of questions to ask during the interview
- Put your resume, list of questions, paper and pen in a portfolio or folder to take with you.
- Dress professionally to make a good impression
- Ask the employer to evaluate your experiences and qualifications in comparison to the career you're interested in.
- Remember, besides gathering career information, you are also evaluating the employer & field as a good fit for you.
- Send a thank you note after your meeting thanking the employer for their assistance, time, and help.
- Send periodic emails letting them know of your progress and to ask for a future internship or job.

# Who To Call

You can find people to interview by asking your friends, relatives, instructors, or career counselors — or via Professional Associations. When you call to set up an appointment, it’s important to be prepared, because what you say on the phone and how you say it can influence your ability to land an interview.



Name	Phone Number	Contact Date	Results
<b>Close Contacts</b> (family, friends, etc.)			
<b>Acquaintances</b> (co-workers, neighbors, and school, church, social, sports clubs, etc.)			
<b>Cold Contacts</b> (those you don’t know directly — companies for directories, staffing agencies.)			

# What To Say

## Introduction

“Hello (to receptionist), I would like to speak with the \_\_\_\_\_ department.”

“Hi (to department assistant), I’d like to speak with the \_\_\_\_\_ supervisor (or person who’s in charge of your \_\_\_\_\_ staff).”

“Hello, this is \_\_\_\_\_. I wonder if you might be able to help me with some information?”

## Asking for a Meeting

“I’m attending Cañada College and am considering/working toward a degree/certificate in \_\_\_\_\_ to later work in the \_\_\_\_\_ field. I’m very interested in learning more about this field so that I can clarify my career goals. I would like to learn first hand about this field and would really like to meet with you. I’d like to know how you got into this field, what you like and dislike about it, and what a typical day may look like for you. This information would be very helpful to me in making a good career decision. Would it be possible to schedule 20-30 minutes with you at your convenience?”



# Informational Interview Questions

Prior to your informational interview, make a list of the questions you'll ask your interviewee about their career. Below is a sample list of questions you might want to consider asking. Add any others that you would like information about. Use this form to record your interview results.



Career Researching \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Interview \_\_\_\_\_

Company Name \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

1. What are typical entry-level positions in this field?
2. What are the typical job duties someone in this position performs?
3. How does a person enter this field? Any appropriate majors for this work?
4. What skills are required to work in this occupation?
5. What personality traits/qualities are useful for people in this profession?
6. What training/qualifications would you recommend for someone to enter this field?
7. What are some of the enjoyable aspects of this work?
8. What are some of the less enjoyable aspects of this work?
9. What are some pros and cons of this work?
10. What is a typical starting salary for this work?
11. How frequently do you hire for this position?
12. What is the current forecast for employment in this field?
13. Describe possible paths of advancement with this occupation.
14. Who else might I speak to about this career?