

Informational interviews are a low-key, informal experience that can be a valuable tool when making decisions about your career. You can gain several things with an informational interview:

- Interview practice
- Networking opportunities
- Information about career fields
- Insight into the hidden job market
- Personal contacts with management level personnel

Remember that an informational interview is all about getting information- do not ask for a job during an informational interview! By building trust with someone in your field of interest, you begin to develop a network of potential employers. Although you are not asking for a job, these individuals are now aware of your interests – and establishing a network of contacts in a field increases your chance of gaining employment!

## Get an Informational Interview

1. **Identify** an occupation you would like to investigate. You can find out about different occupations online. What might you like to do for a living? What are the qualifications for the job? What are the duties? What does it pay?
2. **Select** an employer in the local area working in the occupation you are interested in. You can find employers online, by asking school faculty, or contacting other people working in that field. After you select an employer to approach about an informational interview, find out as much information as you can about the company; the employer's website can be an excellent source of information.  
The State of Oregon is a great place to conduct informational interviews, as they cover many industries. The website below is a directory of Oregon state agencies, select one you might be interested in and contact them for an informational interview:  
<http://dasapp.oregon.gov/statephonebook/index.asp>
3. **Approach** the employer to schedule the interview. Your initial contact should be by telephone or email. Try to schedule your interview with a manager or supervisor who has the authority to hire. Identify yourself and explain you are researching careers in their field. Always remember to be flexible in your scheduling – employers have prior commitments!  
Although there are many techniques to requesting the informal interview, the following is a good approach:  
*"Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am researching careers in your field. I would appreciate the chance to meet and talk with you for about 15-20 minutes so I can find out more about your field of expertise."*  
Emphasize that you are simply trying to get firsthand information about their field, and whatever they can share would be appreciated.

## Prepare for you informational interview

1. Prepare answers to questions that the employer may ask you. To help get your foot in the door, it will be helpful to have short, concise answers to the following:
  - Why are you interested in this type work?
  - Why do you feel you would be good at it?
  - What interests you about this employer?
  - How would you sum up your work history?
  - What do you want from this interview, and how will you use the information?

2. Prepare questions to ask the employer, and ask questions that are most important to you. You will convey your motivation and interest to the employer by putting some thought into your questions. Possible questions include:
  - Why did you choose this field?
  - What do you like best about your job?
  - What kinds of problems do you deal with in your job?
  - What is a typical day like? What decisions do you make?
  - What qualifications and education are needed to work in this field?
  - What are the qualities necessary for success in this field?
  - What are the opportunities to advance in your field?
  - What is the best way to enter this field?
  - What things did you do before entering this field? Which were most helpful?
  - How do you see this field changing over the next several years?
  - What are your company's major products and services?
  - What does your company value?
  - What type of people does your company look for when hiring?
  - What is your company's hiring procedure?
3. The day before the interview, call to confirm the appointment. Know the location of the interview and how to get there, and be sure to get there 10 minutes early.
4. When you go to the informational interview dress appropriately – wear clean pressed clothes and be well groomed to make a good impression. Remember, 90% of all job openings are never advertised; make a good first impression so they will think of you when they have openings.
5. Be prepared to take notes. You don't need to write down everything the person says, but there may be names, phone numbers and other information you want to remember.
6. Treat the receptionist and all other employees well. Again, you want to make a good impression with as many people at the company as you can.
7. Take a copy of your resume; you may ask the person you are interviewing to review it and offer their advice on how to make it stronger.

### **After the informational interview**

1. Ask for your contact's business card, and give them yours, if you have one.
2. Ask for referrals. People in the same kind of business usually know their competition. Ask if they would give the names of others in their field you may be able to talk to.
3. Follow up with a thank-you note. Be sure to send a thank-you card or letter within 24 hours of the interview – this is a good way to keep in touch and to remind people of who you are. Include your address and phone number under your signature.