

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

In an informational interview, you talk with people in the working world to gain a better understanding of an occupation or industry – and to build a network of contacts in that field.

What is an Informational Interview?

Benefits of informational interviews

- Learn more about career options you're interested in
- Follow up on research from books, articles, courses, etc.
- Make information specific to YOU
- Fast-track the answers to some of your career questions
- Open the door to opportunities like internships, volunteer roles, summer jobs, part-time work, contracts, or paid work experience

Finding people to talk to

Leverage your connections at UBC

- Meet UBC alumni at Arts Career Expo, Beyond the BSc, or other events specific to your major
- Speak to recruiters at Employer Information sessions, UBC Career Days, and other career fairs
- Career Services has employer directories for specific industries such as science, new media, non-profits, and the public sector

Do your research

- Business in Vancouver (biv.com) is a weekly newspaper with articles and profiles that feature companies or people at companies in bold type, so they're easily identifiable. BIV also has an events calendar, which you can find for free online.
- The Vancouver Sun's "Working" section comes out on weekends, and is full of career-specific information

Put yourself out into the community

- Try changing your Facebook status: "Your Name is looking to talk to someone who..."
- Go to lectures or events and participate in discussions
- Find associations that hold events for professionals

How to ask for an interview

- Introduce yourself in a few short lines
- Explain how you found the person's contact information
- Be specific about what you're looking for. Use the words "informational interview" and say how long you want to meet (e.g., 15-30 minutes)
- If the person can't meet with you, ask them to refer you to other people or places to go for more information
- Offer to provide a resume so the person will know more about you

Sample questions to ask

- What are some tasks or projects you work on?
- What skills can help you excel in this field?
- What would entry-level work in this field look like? How do you advance? What does the typical career path look like?
- How would the experience from this kind of job transfer to other related roles?
- What is the work culture like in your industry? What kinds of people are you in contact with regularly?
- Who else should I talk to? What resources (like websites, industry associations, or organizations) should I look into?
- What is the most effective way to stay connected to current events and news particular to your industry?

Tips for success

- ① **Assume that people in the working world are willing to talk to you.** You may think people aren't interested in talking with you, but people will be supportive if you show genuine interest in what they do.
- ② **Don't confuse it with a job interview.** Be clear with the interviewee – and yourself – that you're only looking for information. Don't be afraid to mention skills or experiences that led you to this field, but don't fish for opportunities.
- ③ **Manage your time and his/hers.** Be clear on how long you'd like to talk, then arrive and leave on time.
- ④ **Leave with two ideas to move forward with.** Examples: two people to talk to next, or two organizations to volunteer with, or two websites you hadn't seen before.
- ⑤ **Send a thank you note.** And do it right away!

Your next steps

- Call 604.822.4011 to book a 30-minute session with a Career Educator for advice
- Look for industry associations where you can meet professionals of interest
- Volunteer to test out types of work and to connect with people

