

Informational Interviews

What is an informational interview? An informational interview is a meeting in which an individual asks for advice rather than employment. The individual uses the interview to gather information on the field, find employment leads and expand their professional network. This differs from a job interview because the job seeker asks the questions. While the individual initiates the interview, they must still follow the basic guidelines for interview etiquette. They must arrive promptly, dress appropriately, prepare informational questions, and make a good first impression.

How to arrange for an informational interview

- Network through friends, family, co-workers, and the Career Center to prepare a list of potential candidates to interview.
 - You can also prepare a list of companies or organizations which interest you and do some research to determine which of their employees might best provide information about your specific areas of interest.
 - Career Center counselors can help you brainstorm and provide some leads.
- Prioritize your list, based on areas of greatest interest. Select a couple of individuals to contact.
- Contact the person you would like to interview. Identify yourself as a student at Florida Southern College, let them know you are interested in the career they have chosen, and politely ask if you could set-up a 20-30 minute meeting with them to discuss their career and answer some questions.

Preparing for the informational interview

- Think about what exactly you want to learn from the interview and select questions accordingly.
 - See some sample questions below.
- Dress appropriately for the job you are investigating.
- Arrive no later than 10 minutes prior to your scheduled time.
- It is a good idea to bring a copy of your résumé in case it is requested, but do NOT approach the interview as if you are job searching. This is about gathering information ONLY!

Following-up after the interview

- Evaluate your experience. What did you learn? Did it prompt new questions? Did the interview reinforce your career interests? How good a “fit” was this career to your interests?
- Keep names, addresses, and phone numbers of your contact for future reference.
- Send a brief thank-you note to each individual you interviewed, thanking them for their time.

Some possible questions for an informational interview

- What is a typical day like for you?
- What is the most satisfying part of your job? Least satisfying part?
- Can you please describe your career path?
- Would you choose to enter this field again? If not, what other field would you choose?
- What is your educational background?
- What courses best prepared you for your position?
- Knowing what you know now about your field, would you have done it differently?
- What are your most valued skills in this field? How can I best obtain these skills while I am in college?
- How difficult would it be for you to change to a similar job in another business, industry or setting?
- What is the most common entry-level position in this field?
- What was the progression of jobs you had to get to your present position?
- What is your biggest responsibility, and how did you learn to handle this responsibility?
- How much travel and/or relocation is required in this field?
- Can you suggest other people I might be able to interview who might have similar career interests?

