

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
BIOMEDICAL SCIENCE MAJOR

CONDUCTING AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

An informational interview is a wonderful tool to glean more insight into a particular career. An informational interview involves meeting with someone to discuss his or her line of work, with the sole purpose being to gain information that will help you determine if this is a career you wish to pursue. An informational interview is just one tool to use as you explore careers, and you should never assume a line of work is right or wrong for you based on one interview.

Recommended Steps

1. Identify someone you would like to interview.
2. Contact the person to request an interview. E-mail is usually the best method. Keep the email as short as possible. Identify who you are, how you received the person's name, and your desire to do an informational interview.
3. Dress appropriately for the interview. Ironed slacks and a dress shirt are appropriate and jeans, t-shirts, sweatshirts, and sneakers are not. Arrive early and make prior plans to ensure that you can locate the building, room and parking if necessary. Bring prepared questions, a note pad, and pen.
4. Prepare questions before the informational interview. Good examples are: How did you get in this field? What was your career path? How would you describe a typical workday or week? What are the most satisfying aspects of your job? What are your biggest frustrations? How would you describe your work environment (fast-paced, deadlines, routine, exciting)? Do you belong to any professional organizations? Are there any websites you can recommend? What other career areas do you believe are related to your work? What are the latest development and primary issues in the field today? How does your career affect your lifestyle? How do you see your job changing over the next 10 years?
5. Once in the interview, be respectful of the interviewee's time. If you set up the interview as a 30 minute appointment, keep it under 30 minutes. Be intuitive; if the interviewee seems distracted or disinterested, wrap up the interview as quickly as possible.
6. While you don't want to put the interviewee on the spot (such as asking for a job), you may consider requesting a shadowing experience or volunteer position if you feel the interview went well. Something "soft" such as "I've really enjoyed learning more about your work; if you are ever in the position of needing a student assistant, I would be very interested in applying" would be appropriate in most situations.
7. Write a thank you as soon as possible after the interview. A thank you card is better than e-mail, but e-mail is better than nothing. If the interviewee made any type of offer, which you would like to pursue, acknowledge this in the thank you and be sure to include your contact information.

Additional Tips

- Separate the person from the occupation. You may not have liked the person you interviewed, but that doesn't mean the career isn't right for you. Likewise, you may have really liked the person and had a great interview, but that doesn't mean the occupation is right for you.
- Talk to the interviewer about your likes, dislikes, concerns, goals etc; he or she may be able to suggest other occupations for you to consider and /or other people you may want to interview.

Resources for more information:

- <http://www.internationalcollege.edu/CareerDev/cdevinfointerview.htm>
- http://www2.monstertrak.com/help_manuals/jobmanual/inform.html
- http://www.quintcareers.com/informational_interviewing.html

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