

Information interviews & job shadowing

Sample questions to ask in an informational interview

1. What do you actually do in your job? Please describe a typical day.
2. Do you work alone, with a partner, or with a team?
3. What are your working conditions?
4. What do you like best about your work? What do you like least?
5. What is the typical salary range for jobs like yours?
6. What kind of training or education does a person need for this job? Are there specific skills that a person needs to learn?
7. What things did you learn in school that help you in this work? Is there anything you wish you had studied more?
8. How much responsibility do you have? How much freedom do you have?
9. What personal qualities (emotional, physical, and mental) does a person need to have in order to do well and be happy in your job?
10. What are the current and future chances of employment in your occupation? Is there opportunity for advancement to a higher level of responsibility and income?
11. What are some of the satisfactions and rewards of this job?
12. If I wanted an occupation similar to yours, what advice would you give me?
13. Where can I get more information about this career? Could you recommend anyone else for me to talk with?

Two of the best ways to gather useful career information are through informational interviewing and job shadowing. An **informational interview** is a meeting with a person who currently works in a position that interests you. A **job shadow** is an opportunity to observe a person on the job in his or her workplace.

Why conduct an informational interview or job shadow?

- to expand your knowledge of a particular career or position
 - 1) to learn specifics about what you'd need in the way of skills and training or education
 - 2) to obtain a more realistic picture of the career in terms of job-growth potential, working conditions, pluses and minuses, environment, and responsibilities
- to help you make more informed decisions about your future
- to expand your career planning network
- to help you prepare for employment interviews and become more comfortable asking and answering questions

How do you prepare?

- Conduct a self-assessment to identify your skills, values, interests, and personal preferences.
- Identify possible careers that match your self-assessment.
- Do some preliminary research into careers you've identified.
- Find appropriate individuals to interview.
- Contact individuals and explain your purpose.
- Prepare a list of questions to use as the basis for your interview.

How should you conduct yourself?

- Dress as you would for an employment interview.
- Be on time and maintain a professional manner.
- Ask questions in a clear, concise way.
- Use active listening and observation skills.
- Let the interviewee do most of the talking.
- Bring a copy of your résumé and request feedback, if appropriate.
- Ask for names of others in the field you may contact.
- Never ask for a job!

How do you follow up afterward?

- Write a thank-you note immediately.
- Assess your career options in light of the information you've received.
- Contact other professionals whose careers interest you.