



Informational Interviewing & Job Shadowing

Two great 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 the skills and training or education you'd need
 - 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 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.

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Sample questions for an informational interview

1. Would you please describe a typical day or typical tasks in your job?
2. Do you work primarily alone or with others? What are the best and worst things about your work with other people?
3. What do you like best about your work? What do you like least?
4. What are some typical kinds of decisions you have to make at work?
5. What is the salary range for this type of work? What other benefits (health insurance, vacation time, discounts at local businesses, etc.) come with this job?
6. How does your job affect the rest of your daily life?
7. What kind of training or education does a person need for this job? What are the skills needed for this job?
8. What personal qualities (emotional, physical, and mental) does a person need in order to do well and be happy in your job?
9. What things did you learn in school that help you most in this work? What hobbies or activities outside of school have important lessons for this work?
10. What can I do now to help prepare me for this career?
11. Would you allow me to arrange a job shadow if I wanted to learn more about this career?

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