

Informational interview

It is designed to help you discover specifics about a career. Similar to a job interview, you meet with a professional in a career that you are interested in. You get to ask questions of that person and find out more about the position.

The following questions are intended to help you build a detailed picture of the occupation.

Use these questions only as a guideline. Your interview will be most effective if you formulate questions that reflect your genuine curiosity about careers.

Occupational Questions:

1. What is the title of the person you are interviewing?
2. What are other commonly-used titles for the position?
3. What are the duties performed during a typical day? Week? Month? Year? Does s/he have a set routine? (As the person describes the duties, ask what skills are needed). How much variety is there on a day-to-day basis?
4. What educational program is recommended as preparation? (Distinguish between courses which are desirable and those which are indispensable.)
5. What kinds of courses are most valuable in order to gain skills necessary for success in this occupation? (Distinguish between courses which are desirable and those which are indispensable.)
6. What degree or certificate do employers look for?
7. What kind of work/internship experience would employers look for in a job applicant?
8. How can a person obtain this work experience?
9. Are any co-curricular activities recommended?
10. What steps besides meeting educational and experiential requirements are necessary to "break into" this occupation? (i.e. - exam? interview? union membership?)
11. What are the important "key words" or "buzz words" to include in a resume or cover letter when job hunting in the field?
12. What are opportunities for advancement? To what position? Is an advanced degree needed? (If so, in what discipline?)
13. Which skills are most important to acquire? (i.e. - which skills do employers look for?)
14. What are the main or most important personal characteristics for success in the field?
15. What are the different settings in which people in this occupation may work (i.e. - educational institutions, businesses, etc.)?
16. What other kinds of workers frequently interact with this position?
17. Is there evidence of differential treatment between men and women workers with respect to job duties, pay, and opportunities for advancement?

18. What are the employment prospects in the advisor's geographic area? Where are the best employment prospects? What are the employment prospects at the advisor's company? Is mobility a necessary factor for success?
19. What are some related occupations?
20. What are the different salary ranges?
21. Does the typical worker have a set schedule (i.e. - 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.) or are the hours flexible?
22. What are the demands and frustrations that typically accompany this type of work?
23. Is there a typical chain of command in this field?
24. How can you determine that you have the ability or potential to be successful in this specific occupation?
25. Is this a rapidly growing field? Is it possible to predict future needs for workers in this field?
26. What types of technology are used and how are they used?
27. Where might job listings be found?
28. What entry level positions are there in this field that a liberal arts graduate might consider?
29. What does the advisor know now which would have been helpful to know when s/he was in your shoes?

Functional Questions:

1. How many hours does the advisor work?
 - A. Where is the work primarily conducted (office, home, at client's, on-the-road)?
 - B. Is work typically conducted on weekends, evenings, holidays?
 - C. Is this typical for people in this occupation?
2. What sort of education does the advisor have?
 - A. Is the education relevant to what the advisor is doing?
 - B. Does the advisor's college major play a significant role in his/her work?
3. What has been the advisor's career path from college to present?
4. What are the satisfying aspects of the advisor's work?
5. What are the greatest pressures, strains or anxieties in the work?
6. What are the major job responsibilities?
7. What are the toughest problems and decisions with which the advisor must cope?
8. What are the dissatisfying aspects of the work? Is this typical of the field?
9. How would the advisor describe the atmosphere/culture of the work place?
10. Does the advisor think you left you out any important questions that would be helpful in learning about the job or occupation?
11. Can the advisor suggest others who may be valuable sources of information?