

## Informative Interviews

By talking to people, a wealth of information can be obtained. That is the idea behind an **informative interview**. It offers you an 'on the spot' look doing what you think you would like to do and allows you to investigate different aspects of any career.

### Why do an informative interview?

1. To get valuable information for your job hunting and career planning.
2. To do a reality check on what you have read, heard or thought.
3. The person can give you information that is up-to-date, personal and subjective, specific and related to the local situation, as well as reflective on the atmosphere at work.
4. To gain self-confidence and learn the process of taking comfortable, assertive control in job hunting and interview settings.
5. To expand your circle of expert contacts, to get more referrals, and establish your own contacts.
6. To establish a link in targeting a possible job.

### What is the difference between informative interviews and job-hunting interviews?

Although both types of interview are formal two-way conversations, informative interviews are different in terms of:

- **Control:** You control the conversation. You know what kind of information you want and you ask the questions.
- **Purpose:** For you to gain meaningful information so that you can determine whether the field or job meets your interests or career objective.
- **Pressure:** There is less pressure on you. The focus is on their expertise and your interest in their expertise.

### Whom to contact? Identify those who:

- Share a common interest, enthusiasm or involvement in some activity or lifestyle that appeals to you.
- Work in settings you like (e.g. institutes, schools, ministries, laboratories, companies).
- Work in careers that will interest you (e.g. research, teaching, politics, management, sales).

### Where do you find these people?

1. Ask your PI, friends, family, neighbors, work colleagues etc.
2. Contact COAST career center, Alumni Office, faculty, and PI's.
3. Call community service agencies and trade organizations (e.g. business and professional organizations, Rotary Club, women's organizations).
4. Leverage the power of LinkedIn, Euraxess or other professional networking sites to connect with people.

Remember that people are generally interested in talking about what they do and how they do it.

### How to arrange an informative interview?

Personal referral is most effective. Have a mutual acquaintance be the bridge for your contact. Emails or phone calls are the next best, if you don't have a personal referral. Follow up your letter/email with a phone call.

Always follow up with a thank you note. In it, reiterate information you found particularly helpful or interesting. Keep records of names, dates, comment and referrals. Ask if you may call again in case you have any further questions.

## Reminders for Informational Interviews

1. You are not asking the person for a job. You are gathering information on which to base some decisions. Make sure your contacts understand this.
2. Explain how you obtained the person's name, e.g. DESY Alumni Network, colleague ...
3. You may also write an email first, explaining your intent to arrange a meeting.
4. Be prepared to take the lead in the conversation. Remember you are interviewing the person.
5. It is acceptable to have your questions written out and for you to take notes on what the person tells you.
6. Respect the person's time. Be appreciative, without being apologetic and plan a manageable agenda.
7. Keep your eyes open about the other organizational environment.
8. Keep your contacts updated on your progress. Maintaining your contacts is an ongoing process which will help you throughout your career.
9. Make sure to write a thank you note. Not only is it courteous, it keeps your name fresh in the contact's mind. Furthermore, it makes your network stronger.
10. You could have an updated resume or CV with you in case they ask for one. Remember this is not a job interview, so only offer a resume or CV if requested.

**Sample Questions** -Select four or five questions for the information-gathering interview. Ask about those things that are important to you.

1. How did you get into this work? Get started in the job?
2. How did you prepare yourself for this job or profession?
3. What do you like most about your job?
4. What skills, personal qualities, experiences and education are necessary for this career?
5. What do you do in a typical day?
6. What is your project/ organization trying to accomplish?
7. What would you advise me entering this career?
8. What, in your opinion, is the job outlook for this career? What will affect the growth or decline?
9. What are some current challenges in this field/job?
10. If you were looking to start in this field, who would you ask to get more information?
11. What is the range in compensation in this type of position?
12. Do you know anyone else I could speak with for additional information? (Try to get referrals to two more people)
13. What advice, ideas or suggestions do you have that would help me pursue my ... career?
14. May I contact you if I have further questions?