

Informational Interviewing

The best way to get accurate information about a career field is to talk to someone who is currently working in that field. No one else can give you a better sense of the ups and downs and ins and outs of that field. Most professionals enjoy helping an aspiring newcomer as long as you are asking for information and not a job. Informational interviewing is like asking for directions – you are looking for how to navigate the terrain and most everyone is happy to provide those directions to you. Here are tips on how to obtain and conduct an informational interview. If you have any questions, please consult the Career Development.

Identify

Identify occupations you want to explore and people you want to interview. This can be anybody who has a job that you find interesting. Use **Handshake** or **LinkedIn** to identify Berry alumni who might have similar career interests. Check with family, friends, your professors and Career Consultant for ideas of people in the community with whom to connect. If you have trouble identifying potential interviewees, let us know.

Contact

E-mail or call the person you wish to interview. Do not text if you have never met the person! Introduce yourself and explain that you are interested in their career field and would like to ask questions about their career path and work. Let them know how you got their name if you do not know them. Ask if you could arrange a time for a telephone interview or a time you could talk to them in person. You should limit the conversation to no longer than 30 minutes.

If you need to leave a message, tell them when you will plan to call them back or leave your phone number if it would be better easier for them to call you back.

Prepare and Research

Prepare yourself for the interview by researching the organization and career field. What do you want to know? Are you wanting to learn more about job preparation, life style, job outlook, job routine, or more about job search techniques and interviewing in the field? What you want to learn will determine the kinds of questions you ask.

Interview

If you go in person or it is a virtual meeting, dress professionally for the interview, watch your time, take notes and pay attention to your body language. Focus your questions on the company and the person's career path. Try to leave the interview with the name of at least one additional person to contact. You might ask, "Would you be able to suggest names of other people I could talk with about my interest in this area?" Don't ask for a job!

Follow up/Email

Write an email and/or thank you note within 24 hours of your interview. This is not optional! Refer to particularly helpful information you learned. The interviewer will feel appreciated and may be more likely to keep you in mind if an internship or a job become available.

Sample Questions to consider:

Preparation:

- What preparation is necessary for entry level jobs in this field?
- How important is graduate school in this field?

- Could you recommend some courses that I should be taking now in preparation for a career in this field?
- How do your education and past experience relate to your current position?
- How did you get into this field and into this position? What are some alternative routes into the field?
- What kind of background, training, special programs or other learning experiences does one need to enter the field?
- What professional journals, books, or publications do people in your field generally read?
- Are any professional associations particularly influential in the field?
- What advice would you give someone just entering the field, something you wish someone had mentioned when you were starting out?

Lifestyle:

- What kind of "lifestyle" choices have you had to make? How many hours do you work in a typical week? Do you take work home at night?
- Is there travel involved in your job? If yes, how often are you traveling?
- What is the typical salary range for an entry-, mid-, and upper-level position?
- What is appropriate dress for this industry?
- Has your work experience differed from your expectations? In what way?

Job Outlook:

- Do you anticipate employment in this field to grow, decrease, or remain stable? What trends are you seeing in the field?
- What are the opportunities for advancement? Is there a high turnover rate and if so, why?
- What types of employers hire people in your line of work?
- You mentioned that you made a transition into this field from another career path. How difficult was this?

Job Routine:

- Describe how you spend your time during a typical work day/week.
- What major satisfactions do you derive from working in this field?
- What are some of the issues/problems that you must deal with in your work?
- (If *you are interested in working for the company at some point*) Could you tell me a little about the management style here? How are promotions decided? What does one need to be successful in this field?

Job Search Techniques:

- What strategies would you use if you were in a job search for a position in this field?
- Would you mind reviewing my resume and giving me feedback?
- What types of questions should I expect when interviewing for a job in this field?
- Could you give me the names of others who might tell me more about your field? May I say you suggested I contact them?