The Information Interview

The information interview is an informal interview you conduct with a contact person who has knowledge about the field you wish to enter. An information interview is **not** an interview nor is it an opportunity to request a formal interview. Rather, an information interview is an opportunity to ask questions of a person already active in your desired field which you might not be able to ask of a potential hiring manager. As such, you can ask questions about salary as well as the positives and negatives of a specific position. Keep in mind that your contact person is taking time out of their schedule to help you, so be respectful of their time.

Where To Find Potential Information Interviewees
- Friends working in your potential field, friends of family, neighbors
- Alumni, faculty, classroom guest speakers
- Company literature, annual reports, brochures, websites, etc.
- Employment directories, newspapers, magazine articles, trade journals
- Speakers at conferences, student group meetings, graduation ceremonies
- NIU Career Services

Preparation is the key to conducting a successful information interview. The steps listed below will help you arrange an appointment and plan an effective interview.
- Identify an appropriate organization and contact person within the organization.
- Prepare and have your resume reviewed.
- Determine whether you want to arrange the interview in person or over the phone.
- If you are scheduling an interview in person, make certain you dress and act professionally.
- Arrange the interview at a time that is convenient to your contact person. Be flexible in scheduling the appointment.
- Read up on your field of interest, your interviewee and the company they work for.
- Prepare a list of relevant questions to use at the interview.
- Get a good night's sleep before the interview, and relax. Since you are seeking information and not a job, the interview is yours to control.

Information Interview Questions
Below are some questions appropriate for use in an information interview. Alter the list according to your information needs.
- How did you get your start in this career?
- What is a typical work day like? Do the duties change at any time, i.e., each week, month or season?
- How did you prepare for entry into this field? What specific training or degree did you obtain?
- Where is the best place to get appropriate education, training or experience?
- What is the entry-level salary range for your field? What is the salary range for higher levels?
- What are the opportunities for advancement within this field? This company?
- What rewards do you get from your work? What are the frustrations of your work?
- Are there good sources of information on this company, industry or field that you could recommend?
- Can you give me the names of people who might provide me with information? May I use your name?

The Follow-Up
The information interview doesn't end when you say good-bye. To make the most of what you learned you should follow-up.
- Review your notes, read suggested material
- Contact your new leads
- Send a thank-you note
- Send your resume, if appropriate
- Arrange another meeting in the future, if appropriate
- Report back to your contact regarding any leads given during the interview. Relate what happened and express your appreciation again.
To access all Career Service’s handouts, visit: niu.edu/careerservices/handouts.html