

INFORMATION INTERVIEWING

Introduction

Talking with people who are doing the work that interests you is an important option in the career exploration process. An information interview can help you get detailed information about the work and better understand what is involved on a day-to-day basis, thus assisting with determining if you are suited to this occupational field.

By networking with others, you can establish a list of potential people to contact for an interview. Networking sources include: family, friends and other social contacts; professionals and businesses you are familiar with; professional associations; trade unions; community agencies and telephone and other business directories.

Helpful Tips for Arranging an Interview

When contacting an employer or individual, preferably by telephone, give your name and reason for calling. If you were referred by someone else, indicate the source of the referral.

Ask for an appointment of 15-20 minutes to discuss the person's occupation. Ask for the appointment to be at the individual's place of employment to allow for observation of the work environment.

If the individual contacted cannot meet with you, ask for the name of another employee in the same occupation who may be able to help you. Remember, not all people you approach will be able or willing to offer an occupational interview, so keep trying.

Contact several individuals (3-4 people) in this occupational field to allow for a broad scope of information.

Be sure to inform the individual that you are asking for information only, not inquiring about a job. Send a thank you card following the interview.

Be prepared for the interview and practice with family and friends. Also, be ready to answer questions about yourself and the research you are conducting.

Keep organized records of the individuals you approached, their responses and the information you received.

What to Ask at the Interview

Even though there are probably hundreds of things you'd like to know about the occupation, there is some vital information you will need. Questions should centre around finding out the following information:

- job title
- what a typical work day is like
- how the person being interviewed got into this type of work
- job duties/major responsibilities

- skills required for the job
- required personal qualities
- what education/training would the person recommend
- where the training is available
- what other preparation, if any, is needed for this occupation
- what is the entry-level position for this job in this organization
- what is the typical career path for this occupation
- salary range
- future outlook for this field
- what the person likes/dislikes most about his/her work
- referral to other sources for additional information about the occupation

An information interview is an important part of your occupational research. However, if you would like further information on the occupation, then as a follow-up to the interview, you may want to attempt to arrange a job shadowing opportunity. This involves asking an individual if you can spend a day with the person at his/her workplace in order to observe the day-to-day activities of that job. Of course, the employer would have to agree and specific arrangements would have to be made.