



Informational Interviews

What is it?

An Informational Interview is a meeting initiated by you. It involves contacting people in fields of interest to you and gathering information about those fields that could help you make valuable decisions. You will be conducting the interview, however, it should be a low pressure situation for you allowing you to make a GOOD impression!

How can it help you?

- ⇒ You will certainly gain confidence in your interviewing skills, and become more comfortable in the interviewing process.
- ⇒ You can discover what skills are required for certain jobs and match them with your own abilities and strengths.
- ⇒ You can gather information on a specific organization (i.e. Xerox, United Way) or investigate a specific job (i.e., Editorial Assistant at Warner Brothers).
- ⇒ Most importantly: the people with whom you speak will remain contacts and lead you to other, perhaps even better contacts and sources of job opportunities.

How do you arrange an informational interview?

1. Contact the Center for Career Development
2. A counselor will give you several names of alumni or friends of Gettysburg College of whom you can do an informational interview. You can call, write a letter, drop by and schedule an appointment, or have a referral (either have someone who knows the contact make the appointment for you or mention that "_____ suggested that I contact you to see whether you would speak to me.")
3. Contact organizations that employ people with career interests similar to yours. If you are unaware of agencies, organizations or companies that employ people who are doing jobs that interest you, resources like the Job Bank books and Area Chambers of Commerce will help you identify specific places to contact.

Additional Tips

- ⇒ EMPHASIZE THAT YOU ARE NOT ASKING FOR A JOB!
- ⇒ Keep the interview to 20-30 minutes. But don't be surprised if the interview lasts an hour, people like to be helpful and enjoy talking about themselves.
- ⇒ It is a good idea to develop a basic understanding of the occupational field and companies prior to conducting Informational Interviews.
- ⇒ Prepare questions prior to informational interviewing.
- ⇒ If you are meeting in person, dress as if you were interviewing for a job. Women should wear dresses or suits, men should wear a suit and tie.
- ⇒ Bring a resume. It will give your contact an idea of how you are presenting yourself, and something to remind them of you in the future.
- ⇒ Compile a notebook with the questions asked and responses received.
- ⇒ Keep a list of the people with whom you talk and their job titles, addresses and phone numbers.
- ⇒ Always ask who else you should contact prior to the conclusion of your discussion. This referral is sometimes the best lead you can get!



Center for Career Development

53 W. Stevens St.
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www.gettysburg.edu/career



What questions should you ask?

Since you are interviewing for information only, use this opportunity to learn as much as you can about particular occupation. You may want to ask, modify, or add to the suggested checklist of questions here.

Present job:

⇒ Tell me about your present job and some of the responsibilities.

- ⇒ Describe how you occupy your time during a typical workweek.
- ⇒ What skills or talents are most essential for effectiveness in this job?
- ⇒ What are the toughest problems you must deal with?
- ⇒ What do you find most rewarding about the work itself, apart from external motivators, such as salary, fringe benefits, travel, etc.?
- ⇒ What least interests you about this job, or creates the most problems?

Preparation:

- ⇒ What credentials, educational degrees, licenses, etc., are required for entry into this kind of work?
- ⇒ What kinds of prior experiences are absolutely essential?
- ⇒ How did you prepare yourself for this work?
- ⇒ How well suited is my background for this type of work?
- ⇒ What educational preparation do you feel would be best?
- ⇒ What kinds of experiences, paid employment or otherwise, would you most strongly recommend?
- ⇒ What courses were of most use to you, or would you recommend for students today?

Prior experience and lifestyle:

- ⇒ Which of your past work experiences affect what you do now?
- ⇒ Have any of your job changes been for reasons of life style?
- ⇒ What obligations does your work place upon you, outside of the ordinary workweek? Do you enjoy these obligations?
- ⇒ How much flexibility do you have in terms of dress, hours of work, vacation schedule, place of residence, etc.?

Supply and demand:

- ⇒ What types of employers hire people in your line of work? Where are they located?
- ⇒ How do people find out about these jobs? Are they advertised in the newspapers (which ones?), by word-of-mouth (who spreads the word?), by the Human Resources Office?
- ⇒ Is turnover high? How does one move from position to position? Do people normally move to another organization, or do they move up in the organization?
- ⇒ How much do wages or salaries vary in your work by employer or region?
- ⇒ What kinds of job-related values are sought in this type of work? (Security, high income, fringe benefits, vacation time.) What form do these considerations take at your place of work? (e.g., what type of pension plan?)

Hiring decisions:

- ⇒ If you hired someone to work with you today, what factors would be most important in your hiring decision and why? Educational credentials? Past work experiences? Personality? Specific skills? Applicants knowledge of your organization, department or job?

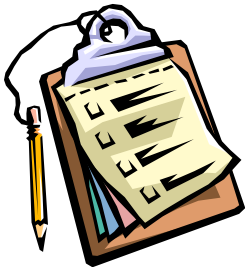
Career Future:

- ⇒ If things develop as you'd like, what would be the next step in your career?
- ⇒ If the work you do was suddenly eliminated, what different kinds of work do you feel that you could do?
- ⇒ How rapidly is your present career field growing? How would you describe or estimate future prospects?



Referral to Others:

- ⇒ Based on our conversation, what other people do you believe I should talk to?
- ⇒ Can you name a few of these people who might be willing to see me? May I have permission to use your name when I call or contact them?



How do you address questions from the resource person?

The person whom you are interviewing may want to know something about you as well as share information about her/himself. S/he may even tell you of job openings or inquire as to whether or not you are interested in hearing of any. How you answer will depend on where you are in your job search. You may or may not be ready to commit yourself to a particular occupational field. In any case, try to keep options open for yourself and respond accordingly. Answer questions regarding your skills and background honestly, and with a positive attitude.

What should you do following the informational interviews?

- √ Send a thank you letter. A thank you note will help you be remembered by the contact person in a positive light. Holiday cards and other postcards are very appropriate!
 - √ Keep in touch - cultivate the relationship.
- At a later date, you might want to send a letter expressing interest in working for them, recalling your Informational Interview and enclosing a copy of your resume. You may also want to telephone the contact person, remind him/her of your Informational Interview and inquire about employment opportunities, that they may have knowledge of within your field of interest.

Informational Interviewing can be informative and enjoyable!

For more information on informational interviewing or to find Gettysburg Alumni to contact in your field of interest, contact the Center for Career Development at x6616.

COVER LETTER FOR INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

31 Plum St.
New Brunswick, NJ 08840
August 1, 2002

Ms. Shelly Mars
Director
Athletic Department
IBM Corporation
Armonk, NY 10607

Dear Ms. Mars:

As a graduating senior from Gettysburg College's Health and Exercise Sciences Program, I am writing to you in order to seek your advice as a knowledgeable professional in the athletic field. I found your name in the Gettysburg Alumni Information Network at the Office of Career Planning & Advising here, and am thankful of the chance this has given me to obtain guidance from your expertise.

I am at a critical juncture of my career. My degree in HES, my experience over the summers and during the year as a sports coach and swimming instructor, and my overall love of and skills at team sports and teaching, induce me to pursue a career in the field of athletics. My interest is to research and inquire about current athletic opportunities in the corporate world and to determine whether or not it is a setting that would complement my skills and interests.

I would like to meet with you briefly, not to seek employment, but to learn your insights on: the growth projections for physical education in industry; the personality needed to succeed in corporate settings; and the dynamics of careers for women in this field. I am sure that your insights will assist me in making a substantive career decision.

I have enclosed a copy of my resume just to give you an idea of my background and how I am presenting myself. I will call your office to arrange a brief appointment, at your convenience, in a few days. I look forward to meeting you and learning from you.

Sincerely,

Joan Riley

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