

A GUIDE TO INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

Informational interviews are brief conversations that help you explore different career paths and make new connections. You can think of them as “curiosity conversations,” “fact-finding” or “career anthropology,” and as chances to meet new people who can help you build your career. These conversations are easy to arrange, fascinating to conduct, and vital to your career development.

- 1** Using personal connections (think friends, relatives, colleagues, classmates, professors) LinkedIn, AlumniFire, to find people whose careers interest you.
- 2** Through a shared contact or a brief message to connect, tell them you would like 30 minutes to ask them several questions about their career.
- 3** Conduct the interview, and stick to the time limit you set out in the invitation. Do not ask for a job. You are there to learn about their job. This helps you gain workplace insights and build a professional relationship.
- 4** If it goes well, ask if they know anyone else you might speak with about some aspect of this career field.
- 5** Thank them for their time.
- 6** Send a follow-up thank-you message within 48 hours of the conversation, mentioning particular points you most appreciated from the conversation.
- 7** Take notes on what you’ve learned (see second set of questions on the next page), and plan your next conversation.

Possible Interview Questions

- » How did you build your career, up to your current job?
- » What are some key aspects of your job?
- » What do you find most exciting about your job?
- » What do you find most challenging?
- » How does your current role connect to your college or graduate school experience?

Make it a Dialogue

- » Briefly let them know of the focus of your studies and interests, so they gain an idea of the expertise and skills you will bring to the workplace once you graduate

Follow-up Points to Note

- » How does this career path align with my values, strengths, interests, and accomplishments?
- » What was most exciting or intriguing about this conversation?
How might I apply it as I develop my career path?
- » What do I want to remember about this person, for when I reconnect with them?
- » What skills and experiences might I need to pursue to move into this field?
- » What might be most challenging for me in pursuing this career?
How could I address that challenge?
- » What new perspectives do I need to seek out to further explore this career path?
Whom should I connect with next?

