

The purpose of an information interview is to obtain information about an occupation that interests you by talking to someone in that occupation. Informational interviews will help you explore different occupations, clarify your career goals, and identify your professional strengths and weaknesses before training for a specific career, or making a career change. Informational interviews also help to improve your interviewing skills.

Follow these steps when doing informational interviews:

- Research the field(s) you are interested in by using DISCOVER (please see Glenda Salerno, Counseling Center secretary, or Dale Conrad, Career Development Counselor, for token to go on line) and VIRGINIA VIEW (www.vaview.vt.edu) to obtain background information.
- Brainstorm, network and use community resources to develop a list of people to interview. Informational interviews can be arranged through one or more of the following methods: in-person, telephone, referral, regular mail, or e-mail.
- Prepare a set of questions before the interview. Questions should cover the interviewee, the field, and the employing organization. Below are some sample questions.
- Remember this is not a job interview and stress that to everybody. Stress that you are seeking information only. You are asking the questions. Be prepared—do not waste people's time.
- Always follow-up your informational interview with a thank you note to the person with whom you interviewed. This should be done within the first week after the interview.
- Write up the information gained in your interviews to include in your career development portfolio.

Sample Questions

About the interviewee:

- What can you tell me about your education, training, and other experiences as they relate to your career field or job?
- How did you become interested in this field?
- What excites you the most about this field/your job?
- What does the future hold for you in this field/your job?
- Who do you know in this field who might be willing to talk to me?

About the Field/Job:

- On a typical day in this position, what do you do?
- Do the duties and the amount of work vary with the time of month or year?
- Describe for me the worst day on the job.
- What are some of the things you like most and least about your job?
- What skills are needed to do your job successfully?

About the Company/Organization:

- How did you get your first job and then this job here at _____?

- What qualifications does your organization look for in a new employee?
- What qualifications does your organization look for in the promotion of an employee?
- How difficult would it be for a person like myself with a degree in _____ to obtain employment with your organization?
- What could I expect as a starting salary with a degree in _____ with your organization?
- What do you expect to happen with your company during the next 5-10 years?

Write a three paragraph, 2-page, report on your interview. Paragraph one should contain the basic information obtained during the interview concerning the person, the career field, and the organization. In paragraph two, compare your interests, values, personality, and skills to those needed for this career field. In paragraph three, describe the way this experience has affected the way you feel about this career field. Can you still picture yourself working in this field? Discuss the other information you still need and where you might get it before formalizing your decisions. Place in your career development portfolio.