

Informational Interviews

Informational interviews are an excellent way to learn more about an occupation or career field that interests you. You arrange to spend a short period of time (15 – 20 minutes) asking questions of a professional who is in the field you want to pursue or has a job like you want. You can get referrals from friends, family, and professors or you can contact human resource departments at businesses or organizations you choose and make an appointment yourself. Performing interviews like this can give you valuable information on your career field and help you build a network for your job or graduate school search.

Informational Interview Tips

- **Be prepared.** Before you go, research the company and career field on the web. Learn about current efforts of the business or organization here in Hawai'i. For general information on the field go to Occupational Outlook Handbook at <http://www.bls.gov/oco/>. Click the A – Z index to get national information on different occupations.
- Prepare some questions you want to ask (review the questions listed below).
- **Be brief and courteous.** Keep to your arranged time.
- **Do not ask for a job.** This is an *informational* interview.
- **Follow up.** Send a note thanking your interviewee for their time. You can email or phone them at a later time to let them know your progress as you would any other networking contact.

Setting up an interview

Call or write the person you want to interview and describe what you want: you want to find out about her or his career field (this not a request for a job). Ask if you can have 15 – 20 minutes of their time and make an appointment with them. Take time to research the company and career field on the web. Review the questions below and add others you want to ask.

During the interview

Take initiative to introduce yourself with a handshake. Give a brief introduction by explaining your situation and why you are interviewing them (remember, your purpose is to get information and contacts, not a job!). Use your questions to get the conversation started and to get the information you want. Rather than sticking closely to your list of questions, listen carefully to the conversation and focus your questions and comments on what is most interesting and relevant to you. Listen carefully to their answers and wait until after the interview to jot down any notes. At the end of 15 – 20 minutes, thank them for their time, and shake hands as you leave.

Follow up on your interview

Within a day or two of your interview, send a follow up note thanking your interviewee for the interview. If they put you in touch with other contacts, it is VERY important that you acknowledge their effort. Thank them, call or write the contacts they gave you, and make arrangements to meet with these new contacts. If they are willing, maintain contact with them every month or so to keep them aware of your progress.

Sample interview questions below.

Questions you might ask your interviewee:

1. Could you tell me about your position as a _____?
2. What are some of the duties you perform?
3. What do you like most about the work you do?
4. What is most frustrating about your work?
5. What about the job was a surprise for you?
6. How did you prepare or train for this job?
7. What particular skills are needed?
8. What are the entry-level positions in this field?
9. What personality traits are needed to be successful in this field?
10. What is the salary range of a person starting in this field?
11. Which companies are prominent in this field?
12. Could you give me names of people I might contact about an opening in this field?
13. May I use your name in my introduction when I call or write to them?
14. Others you might ask: _____

