



INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

An information interview or “career conversation” is talking with someone in a career field that interests you to learn more about the career, the field, and paths of entry. It is as simple as that! This is a valuable tool to use while exploring your career or education options.

How can Information interviews help you?

- Learn about different areas of interest (occupations, job titles, education expectations, work prospects, and future directions for the profession/field).
- Discover new or different areas to what you have been considering.
- Learn what skills you will need to do the job effectively.
- Network and make personal contacts.
- Gain insight into the hidden job market.
- Become aware of the needs of employers and the realities of employment.
- Gain confidence in talking with people while learning what you need to know.
- Learn where you might fit into a particular company, organization or profession.

Wondering what you would ask in an information interview?

- What does a typical day or week look like?
- How did you get started in this field?
- What part of this job do you personally find most satisfying? Most challenging? What do you like and not like about working in this industry?
- Are there education programs that I should be aware of for success/entry into this field?
- How does a person progress in your field? What is a typical career path in this field or organization?
- What is the best way to enter this occupation?
- What particular skills or talents are most essential to be effective in your job?
- What are the major frustrations of this job? Of this field?
- What interests you least about the job or creates the most stress?
- What personal qualities do you believe contribute most to success in this field/job?
- Is there an association I can join, or an association meeting I can attend?
- What are the trends you are noticing in this profession or field?
- Is there anything else I should know?
- Is there someone you would suggest I speak with for more information on...?





INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

Wondering how to set up an Information Interview?

- 1) Gather as much information as possible about the profession - we have great career exploration resources on our website– studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca
- 2) Develop a list of potential contacts
 - From your research through professional association membership listings, talking with professors, friends, family members, McMaster Alumni & Partner Network database, and LinkedIn McMaster Alumni group etc.
 - Meet with our Experiential Learning Coordinator to help you connect to the right person – appointments available in oscarplus.mcmaster.ca
- 3) Prepare a list of questions
 - Think of questions that will verify what you already think you know as well as questions that you don't have answers to.
 - It is particularly useful to address barriers you feel you have. For example, you can ask how someone with your current set of skills and experience can overcome the “lack of experience” issue or ask what organizations might most value your background.
- 4) Make the connection
 - Introduce yourself and explain where you got their name/contact (a referral or from a directory etc.).
 - Explain that you are a McMaster Student (or Alumni) and are currently researching career options and would like to speak to them to get information/advice about the profession.
 - Ask for 10-15 minutes of their time and you can arrange an in person meeting or a time to talk on the phone.
 - You can initiate the contact by e-mail or phone.
 - Be sure to keep a record of meeting place, time, and contact info. Ensure you have their contact info and they have yours in case either party needs to reschedule.
- 5) During the meeting
 - Dress appropriately.
 - Bring paper, pen, and list of your questions
 - You can bring a copy of your resume in case they ask for it.
 - Be prepared to talk about yourself and why this area interests you.
 - Take notes on leads, resources, further contacts, suggestions etc.
 - Be enthusiastic and show interest. Be direct and concise with your questions and answers.
 - Maintain good eye contact and posture. Be positive in your remarks.
 - Be aware of the time limit- allow yourself 15 minutes but be prepared to stay longer if the person has more time to offer.
- 6) **Send a thank you note!**
 - You can also keep the person informed of your progress if you feel it is appropriate.

