

# \* PREPARING TO CONDUCT AN INFORMATION INTERVIEW

**An information interview** is a conversation with an individual who can give you information about an organization, a field of work, or a particular job that interests you.

**Though it may seem awkward to approach a relative stranger, seeking career information, remember: Most people are more than happy to discuss what they do for a living. It is through your sincere interest in their professional lives that your questions will be answered.**

**Information Interviews can help you:**

- ◆ Determine if a career field or company is right for you.
- ◆ Uncover new possibilities in a field.
- ◆ Gain insights into future trends.
- ◆ Learn the jargon of a field.
- ◆ Broaden your network of contacts.
- ◆ Organize your future job search.
- ◆ Help to better your resume or to interview.

## MAKING THE MOST OF INFORMATION INTERVIEWS

An information interview is a conversation with an individual who can give you information about an organization, a field or work, or a particular job that interests you. Information interviews can help you:

- Determine if a career field or company is right for you.
- Uncover new possibilities in a field.
- Gain insights into employers and the realities of employment.
- Learn jargon and important issues in the field.
- Gain confidence in dealing with the workforce and learn what you need to know.
- Broaden your network of contacts and possibilities.

Preparation is key when beginning the process of information interviewing. Follow these steps to ensure your success:

### STEP ONE - SELF-ASSESSMENT

Evaluate yourself so that you can better understand your unique combination of interests, values, personality traits, and skills. The more you know about yourself, the more likely you will be to pursue career choices that you will find enjoyable and rewarding. Meet with a counselor at SWT Career Services to assist you in your self-assessment and career goal-setting process.

### STEP TWO - CONDUCT RESEARCH ON YOUR CAREER PREFERENCES

Once you have some career options in mind, you should engage in a search for information to learn on your own as much as you can about that career or company. As you become more informed about the company or career field, then you will be able to ask more relevant questions during the interview. You do not want to waste your time with questions that could have easily been answered by doing your homework. There are many resources available to you during your information search. Among the recommended resources are each specific company's website, the SWT Career Services website (and its many links), and the Career Services Library.

### STEP THREE - IDENTIFY POTENTIAL CANDIDATES TO INTERVIEW

Develop a list of potential candidates to interview. This list can range from personal contacts (friends, family, neighbors, co-workers, professors, etc.), to the yellow pages, organizational directories, public speakers, even the name of almost any person who works with a company you might be interested in.

### STEP FOUR - CONTACT THE CANDIDATE FOR AN INTERVIEW

Establish your interview through a phone call, by person, through a referral, or by letter. See next page for examples of each type of preliminary contact.

**By Phone** - A phone contact should include: The intent to make an appointment at a mutually agreed upon time and a prepared statement explaining your intent.

**In Person** - If you would like to request an interview in person, keep in mind that the individual may be busy. Treat the receptionist (or other workers in the company) as resources.

**With Referral** - A referral is by far the most successful and rewarding method to receive an interview. All you need to do is call someone you know, or someone who has been referred to you by a friend, and ask the potential interviewee for an information interview.

**By Letter** - should include:

- The name of the person you would like to interview
- A brief introduction about yourself
- Why you are writing to the individual
- A brief statement of your interests or experiences in the person’s field or organization
- Why you would like to contact them (for information or advice)
- How and when you will contact the person again

Information Interview Request - Sample Letter

Phone Request Sample

**Name, Title of Interviewee**                      **Date of Letter**  
**Company Name**  
**Company Address**  
**City, State Zip Code**

**Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name,**

Your name was given to me by Give Referral’s Name and briefly describe your relationship to them. (if applicable). Person’s Last Name suggested that I contact you when I told him or her that I am considering a career in Career Field. I am in the process of learning as much as I can about different career fields so that I can make the best decision about which field I should pursue.

I would very much appreciate 30 minutes of your time so that I can visit you at your work site and ask you a few questions. I am currently a Year in School at Southwest Texas State University and would appreciate any advice you can provide. I am especially interested in knowing the types of experiences I should gain over the next few years, to increase my marketability in this field when I graduate.

I will contact you on Date about Two Weeks Later to arrange a meeting at your convenience. Thank you for your time.

**Sincerely,**

**Your Name**  
**Your Address**  
**City, State Zip Code**  
**Phone Number**  
**Email Address**

“Hello, my name is Your First and Last Name. I am a student at Southwest Texas State University, and I will be graduating Expected Graduation Date.

“Your career field is one that I am researching to help me make a decision about what career to pursue. Share a sentence or two explaining the reasons you are interested in the field or specific organization.

“I would appreciate it if I could meet with you for a half hour to observe your work environment and ask a few questions. Would that be possible in the near future?

“Thank you for your time and I look forward to meeting you in person at Appointed Time.

In Person Request Sample

“Hello, my name is Your First and Last Name. I will be graduating Graduation Date from Southwest Texas State University in Your Major.

“I would really appreciate any advice you could provide regarding positions and trends in Your Career Field. Would there be a convenient time you could meet with me for a half hour in the next couple of weeks?

“Thank you for your time and I look forward to meeting you in person at Appointed Time.

### STEP FIVE – DEVELOP A LIST OF QUESTIONS

Since you are the one requesting the interview, you must be prepared to guide the direction of the interview. Your questions should cover all of the areas you want to research. However, be flexible if new questions come to mind during the interview. Review this list of possible questions and categories of questions below.

- |                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <b><i>Job Duties</i></b>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is your job like?</li> <li>- Describe a typical day.</li> <li>- What are the duties/functions/responsibilities of your job?</li> </ul>  |
| <b><i>Training/Education</i></b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How well did your college experience prepare you for this job?</li> <li>- How important are grades for obtaining a job in this field?</li> </ul>   |
| <b><i>Future Potential</i></b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How would you describe the future growth for this field?</li> <li>- What sorts of changes are occurring in your occupation?</li> </ul>   |
| <b><i>Personal Experiences</i></b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What do you like most/least about your job?</li> <li>- Why did you decide to work for this company?</li> <li>- How did this type of work interest you and how did you get started?</li> <li>- If you could do things all over again, would you choose the same path for yourself? Why? What would you change?</li> </ul> |
| <b><i>Rewards of the Job</i></b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What rewards do you get from your job/career?</li> </ul>   |
| <b><i>Advancement Potential</i></b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What can you tell me about the corporate culture?</li> <li>- What are the career prospects in this field?</li> </ul>   |
| <b><i>Skills Needed</i></b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What are the skills that are most important for a position?</li> <li>- What combination of skills and abilities would be valuable in this career?</li> </ul>   |
| <b><i>Criteria for Hiring</i></b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What abilities or personal qualities do you believe contribute the most to success in this field/job?</li> <li>- What recommendations would you have for an entry-level person considering this career?</li> </ul>   |
| <b><i>Advice</i></b>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do you have any advice for someone interested in this field?</li> <li>- Can you suggest ways a student could obtain the necessary experience?</li> <li>- What advice do you have for a student seeking to qualify for this position?</li> </ul>  |

### STEP SIX - UTILIZE THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

***Network*** - Realize that the person you are interviewing is a networking contact. The person has invested time in you, and most people like for their investments to pay off. Keep in touch with the interviewee if you can, and make sure to utilize him/her as a contact person within the company or field.

***Referrals*** - The interviewee may not be able to help you find a job, however he/she may be able to refer you to someone who can. Before leaving the interview, ask your contact to suggest names of others who might be helpful to you and ask permission to use his or her name when contacting these new contacts.

***Sharing Information*** - Share information about yourself in the interview, but do not dominate the interview by talking about yourself. Your purpose is to get information that will help you learn more about the field, however you want to keep the interview conversational.

***Listen*** - Be receptive and show that the information he or she is providing is important to you. Take notes so that you can look back on the information given.

**STEP SEVEN - SEND A THANK YOU LETTER**

Be sure to send a thank you letter within a few days after the interview. In the letter include:

- That the interviewee was very helpful.
- A request that the person keep you in mind if they come across any other information that may be helpful to you in your career research.
- Thank the interviewee for his or her time.

**LAST MINUTE HINTS**

1. Ask what you want to know, but allow the person answering your questions to talk. You might acquire information about unanticipated areas of employment.
2. Regard any one individual's information carefully—a broad information base is essential.
3. Be prepared to make a good impression and to be remembered by the employer.
4. Dress as you would for a regular job interview.
5. Do not mix information interviews with job seeking (i.e., Do not hit them up for a job).
6. Be enthusiastic and show interest in the profession.
7. Employ an informal dialogue during the interview.
8. Be direct and concise with your questions and answers. Avoid rambling.
9. Maintain good eye contact and posture.
10. Be positive in your remarks, and reflect a good sense of humor.

**AND KEEP IN MIND THAT...**

- One person cannot give you all the answers.
- Avoid making impressions about an area of work based solely on whether the person interviewed was likeable or the surroundings were attractive.
- You can't be rejected in an information interview, as in a job interview, but you can learn a great deal.

**CAREER SERVICES**

LBJ Student Center 5-7.1

512.245.2645 (phone)

512.245.3993 (fax)

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|----------------------------------|--|
| ◆ Individual Career Counseling   | ◆ Experiential Learning Activities     |
| ◆ Exploratory Career Assessments | Job Shadowing – Winter & Spring Breaks |
| DISCOVER Software                | Internship Postings                    |
| Myers-Briggs Type Indicator      |  |
| Strong Interest Inventory        | ◆ Employer Connections                 |
| Campbell Interest Skills Survey  | Resume Critiques                       |
| ◆ Career Information Center      | Practice Interviews                    |
| Student Computer Lab             | Job Postings                           |
| Extensive Print Resources        | Resume Referrals                       |
| Winway Resume Program            | Job Fairs                              |

Visit us anytime at [www.careerservices.txstate.edu](http://www.careerservices.txstate.edu)