



Networking

Informational Interviewing

An informational interview is an informal conversation you have with someone working in an area of interest to you. It is a best practice when looking to learn more about a career or particular employer, and can also be used to get advice on how to improve your job search skills. It is not a real job interview; therefore, it should be kept to under 30 minutes. Through informational interviews you can:

- Find out about jobs you might like (i.e., how they fit your interests, values, skills, and personality).
- Learn more about the realities of working for a particular company/organization.
- Discover career fields you never knew existed.
- Gain information about the local labor market (i.e., how the outlook for a job you are seeking differs between Ohio and other states).
- Tap into “insider information” that will increase your strategic awareness (i.e., learning how applicants can stand out when submitting their resumes and interviewing for positions within an organization, etc.).
- Find out about different ways to prepare for a particular career.
- Obtain leads on volunteer or internship opportunities as well as current or anticipated job openings.

Applicable Career Communities:



Whom Should I Interview?

Look for individuals who work in:

- Settings you like (e.g., hospitals, politics, big business, theater)
- Career areas in which you are interested (e.g., broadcaster, stockbroker, criminal lawyer, market researcher)
- Specific organizations (e.g., Peace Corps, Microsoft, Battelle) that appeal to you.

Consider the following categories of contacts - might someone that you know in one of these categories be a good person in which to start your search?

<i>Family/Relatives</i>	<i>Coaches/ Teammates</i>
<i>Friends/ Classmates/ Roommates</i>	<i>Current/Past Supervisors</i>
<i>Home contacts/ Family friends</i>	<i>Professors/ Faculty/ Advisors</i>
<i>Co-Workers</i>	<i>Social Media Contacts/ Followers</i>

Where Do I Find These People?

Start contacting those you know already, and be sure to ask if they know anyone in their network who may also be willing to speak with you.

Want more? Connect with your Career Coach for personalized job search strategies!



The Arts and Sciences Center for Career and Professional Success organizes events that allow students to meet with alumni, employment recruiters, and internship site supervisors – all of whom are great sources of information!

If you are unable to find a person to interview via your network of contacts or with help from Career Success, you can utilize online professional networking platforms such as AlumniFire or LinkedIn. These online platforms are excellent resources to connect with alumni. AlumniFire is an online networking and mentoring community that helps Ohio State alumni and current students connect with each other in meaningful ways to resolve questions, navigate opportunities and open doors in the professional world. AlumniFire is the best online platform for networking beginners since alumni have specifically elected to help current students. LinkedIn is a great option for students who are looking to connect with a broader array of alumni or join networking groups such as The College of Arts and Sciences group on LinkedIn. Both platforms are a great way to ask for an informational interview. To learn best strategies that will surely yield a successful result in finding someone to interview, refer to the networking tip sheets found at <https://artsandsciences.osu.edu/career-success/students/navigating-career-planning-process/guides-tip-sheets>

If you are hesitant to initiate contact to request an informational interview, keep in mind that people are generally excited and interested in talking about what they do. Also, many “careerists” value informational interviewing (it’s a practice that has been around for quite a while!) and will likely think that you may have some ideas that will be of interest to them.

How Should I Prepare?

As your time with the interviewee will be limited, you should follow the steps below to maximize the actual interview experience.

- Clarify your learning goals. Are you seeking information about a career field? Are you seeking professional contacts with whom to network? Do you want to learn about what it’s like to work for a particular company?
- Prepare a list of questions (see sample questions below).
- Avoid asking questions that pertain to information you can easily find online.

The following questions are provided as samples for you to consider. You will likely need to develop a couple of questions that speak to the “big questions” you have about a particular career field, employment setting, or specific organization.

Career Preparation

- How did you prepare for this line of work?
- Is volunteer work an accepted way to gain experience in this field?
- If you were starting out again, what would you do differently?

Job Description and Occupational Outlook

- Describe your typical work week. What do you enjoy most?
- What are the toughest demands/problems you have to deal with?
- What are some of the reasons people leave this field?

Company Details

- Is this organization highly structured (hierarchical)?
- Does this company have a strong history of promoting from within?
- Are salary and benefits more-or-less competitive for the field? If not, are there compensating factors?

Lifestyle

- Does your career allow for a balance between work and personal time?
- How much flexibility do you have in terms of dress, hours, vacation, etc.?

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Job Hunting

- How did you get your job?
- What kind of position could a college graduate anticipate when entering this field?
- What are the future prospects of this organization? For this industry?

Advice

- Are there any professional groups that an undergraduate could join which would be beneficial?
- Can you give me feedback on my resume, either in terms of how to better present my qualifications or additional experiences I should pursue to build a stronger resume?

Although informational interviews are best conducted in a relaxed manner, to yield opportunities for spontaneous discussion, they also need to be focused so that you can obtain the key information you are seeking. Open up with a brief introduction of yourself and your goals for the interview, easing into your list of questions. Showing you are prepared

A common way to request an informational interview is to send an email like the one found below:

From: Brutus Buckeye [buckeye.1@osu.edu]
 To: Carmen Oval [coval@xyz.org]
 Subject: Ohio State student seeking career advice (referred by Scarlet Gray)

Dear Ms. Oval,

I understand from a mutual acquaintance, Bucky Badger, that your work history includes experience as a Market Research Analyst. As this is an area that interests me, I am hoping that you are available for an informational interview.

I am studying Communications at Ohio State and am in the process of obtaining as much information as I can about occupations that seem to be a good fit given my interests, values, personality, and skills.

It would be great if I could speak to you about your work in this field. Please know that I am not looking for your assistance in finding employment. Are you available to talk at some point before (insert a date 10 days out)? Ideally, I'd like to speak with you for about 20 minutes.

Thank you for considering my request!

Brutus Buckeye
 (614) 123-4567

demonstrates good organizational skills on your part.

Initiating Contact

Contact the person you hope to interview and ask to speak to him/ her about his/her career. Identify yourself and share that you are a student at Ohio State who is in the process of exploring career options. If you were referred by someone in your network, mention that person's name to establish the connection.

Make it clear that you are seeking information rather than looking for his/her assistance with obtaining a specific internship or job. Remember, this strategy is called an "informational interview" not a "find me a job interview". It may turn out that the contact will know of an opportunity that is a good fit for you, but you shouldn't approach them with that expectation. If the person is unavailable or not interested in assisting you, ask if he/she knows of anyone else who may be able to help you.

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