

Information Interviews

Ryerson Career Development and Employment Centre

WHAT IS AN INFORMATION INTERVIEW?

An information interview is an extremely effective method of obtaining inside information about potential occupations or a career path that interests you. It can give you different points of view and insight into your prospective career choice.

During the interview, the focus is usually on gathering general information about a particular company, industry, marketplace and economic outlook, possible opportunities and new directions.

WHY DO AN INFORMATION INTERVIEW?

- It is a chance to network. You get a special opportunity to view an organization from the inside and to meet somebody who has been "through it all"
- It gives you a broader sense and direction for Career Planning
- It allows you to confirm whether your interests, skills and expectations match the "real thing"

HOW TO GET STARTED

Research the career or profession that interests you. Next, look for successful companies involved in that particular field. If you need a starting point, refer to "Other Resources" on the back of this sheet.

Once you have chosen a particular company and individual, telephone or write the person you wish to interview well before the date the interview would take place. Starting a conversation to get an information interview with a stranger is a challenge. You may feel shy, or afraid to impose, or worried that the person may not want to talk to you. Introduce yourself and explain who you are (e.g. a student pursuing a degree in their field). Perhaps, mention how you found the person's name.

State the type of work you are interested in researching, the reason why, and the amount of time it would take to conduct the interview (usually 20 - 30 minutes). If the person is unable to meet with you, ask for a referral or ask to schedule the interview at a time that is most convenient to him/her.

Start-off suggestions:

Approach A: "Hello, my name is _____, and I understand that you are a (or work as a) _____. I'm currently exploring this career/occupation as a possibility for the future. I wonder if I could take about 20 minutes of your time to find out more about what you do (your career field)."

Approach B: "Hello, my name is _____. A mutual acquaintance, _____, suggested I give you a call. He/she said you would be the right person to talk to about working in your career field (occupation). Would you be able to speak with me now? I only need about 20 minutes of your time."

- *Approach C:* "Hello, my name is _____ and I understand that you are a (or work as a) _____. I'm looking for advice about entering this career field (occupation)."

Could I take a few minutes of your time to find out what advice you have for someone who wants to get into your line of work?"



Career Development & Employment Centre

Ryerson University

POD 60, 350 Victoria Street, Toronto, ON, M5B 2K3

Telephone: 416-979-5177

E-mail: career@ryerson.ca

Website: <http://www.ryerson.ca/career/>

If you get a negative response:

Chances are, not everyone will be willing to help you, but that doesn't mean it's time to quit.

Try these responses:

Worker: "I'm too busy right now to talk to you."

You: "Thank you for your time. Could you recommend anyone else to speak to?"

Worker: "I'd like to help you, but I have too much work to do right now."

You: "I really appreciate your interest and I understand you're busy. Is there a more convenient time that we could talk?"

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

- On a typical day, describe what your activities would be.
- Tell me about your working conditions, e.g., physical, environmental, sensory, stress.
- What training or education is required for this type of work?
- What personal qualities or abilities are important to be successful in this field?
- What is your level of freedom to solve problems and take action on the job?
- What part of this job do you find most satisfying? Most challenging?
- What potential, and downside, do you see for this field in the future?
- How does your work contribute to the organization's overall goals or mission?
- How did you find your job?
- What is the salary for entry-level and more advanced positions in the field?
- How do you see jobs in this field changing in the future?
- Is there a demand for people in this occupation?
- With the information you have about my education, skills, and experience, what other fields or jobs would you suggest I research further before I make a final decision?

You requested the interview. Be prepared to ask questions. Be concise so as not to waste the person's time. Allow the person an opportunity to provide additional information. Use a paper or electronic diary to keep track of your contacts and to add notes during your meetings. (You can continue to use the same log when you network.) If you have not already seen the work area, ask for a tour.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Add more information to the notes you took during the interview. Always send a thank-you letter promptly (within 1-2 days after the interview).

OTHER RESOURCES

- Ryerson University Alumni Directory (Career Centre)
 - Blue Book of Canadian Business (www.bluebook.ca)
 - Financial Post Survey of Industries
 - Scott's Canadian SourceBook (Career Centre)
 - Professional Organization and Journals
 - Career Cruising (www.careercruising.com)
- (for username and pass code contact the Career Centre)



Career Development & Employment Centre

Ryerson University

POD 60, 350 Victoria Street, Toronto, ON, M5B 2K3

Telephone: 416-979-5177

E-mail: career@ryerson.ca

Website: <http://www.ryerson.ca/career/>