



Information Interviews

What is an information interview?

- ✓ A discussion with someone who is working in a career or position that interests you
- ✓ A research tool — a way for you to find useful and specific information that you could not find in books or on the Internet
- ✓ An opportunity for you to interact with professionals and get specific advice to help you advance career

Note: Information interviewing is NOT interviewing for a job. It is a research tool.

Information Interviews Help You

- ✓ Get a 'reality check' about what a career actually entails and decide whether it is an occupation that suits you
- ✓ Gain insider tips regarding what courses to take, what experience to get, and how to market yourself when actively searching for similar positions
- ✓ Develop knowledge of the industry, recent trends and developments, and lingo/jargon
- ✓ Build new contacts in your field of interest
- ✓ Develop communication skills and confidence in meeting and talking with new people

How do you find people who will talk to you?

Start with people you know well. You will be surprised by who they may know and can refer you to. This includes:

- ✓ **Professors, TAs, and Former Teachers**
- ✓ **Family, Family Friends, and Neighbours**
- ✓ **Friends and Classmates**
- ✓ **Extern Job Shadowing Program (see CLN Events & Workshops).** Shadow someone working in a career area for up to a week
- ✓ **Information Interviews Database (see CLN Events & Workshops).** Professional contacts who will speak with U of T students

Be Prepared Before You Ask for an Information Interview

- ✓ Research the profession. What aspect of the field are you most curious about?
- ✓ Read the contact's profile and his/her company's profile on LinkedIn
- ✓ Research their organization using the company website and Google

Need More Help? Visit the AA&CC and ask to meet with a career counsellor or employment coach.

Using LinkedIn to Find Information Interview Contacts

LinkedIn can be a great source of information for you to find contacts.

- ✓ **Use the Advanced Search Function.** Identify Level 1 contacts (people you are connected to) who are in your field of interest
- ✓ **Identify Level 2 Contacts.** These are people that your direct contacts are connected to. You can ask your contacts if they can refer you for information interviews
- ✓ **Join LinkedIn and follow organizations and join groups of interest.** These can be excellent sources of new contacts

Please see the tips on reverse on how to ask for an information interview.

How do I ask for an Information Interview?

- ✓ You can choose to make the initial contact by phone, email, or a LinkedIn message
- ✓ Let your contact know who you are and the purpose of the request. For example "I am a soon-to-be U of T grad currently researching careers in _____ and was hoping to speak to you to get some advice"
- ✓ If you are making the request in writing, let them know what information would be helpful
- ✓ Remind them how they know you or who referred you to them
- ✓ Be specific about how much time you are looking for (frequently 15 to 30 minutes)
- ✓ Always say 'please' and 'thank you'

Asking for Contact for Referrals

- ✓ Let your contact know the purpose of your request (what field you are researching)
- ✓ If you have identified one of their contacts through LinkedIn, let them know to whom you would like to speak and why it would be helpful to you
- ✓ Always say 'please' and 'thank you'!

Questions to Ask

There are no questions that you must ask. Ask questions that demonstrate that you have done the basic research already. The following are some sample questions:

- ✓ How did you get into this field? What is your educational background, and your career path?
- ✓ How did you get your job? Are there other areas of work in this field? What are typical entry level positions?
- ✓ What courses/jobs/volunteer roles you would recommend as preparation for this field?
- ✓ Do you think this field is expanding/stable? Are there significant changes you foresee in this industry? In what timeframe?
- ✓ Can you describe a typical day? What are the challenges and rewards of your work?
- ✓ What skills/qualities do I need to be successful?
- ✓ Are there professional associations in the field to contact, or professional journals/listservs/LinkedIn groups that you subscribe to?
- ✓ Whom else might I talk to for more information?

At the Information Interview

- ✓ Pay attention to the conversation length; some employers are busy, and can only talk for a specific amount of time (e.g., 15 minutes)
- ✓ Pay as close attention as possible; take notes if they agree that you can write while they talk
- ✓ Thank the contact for their time
- ✓ Do not ask to submit a resume; the purpose is to gain information. If the employer requests it, you can provide one

Information Interview Resources

How-to-Information-Interview Tutorials:

<https://www.utoronto.ca/aacc/information-interviews>

www.quintcareers.com/informational_interviewing.html

Follow-up: Always send your contact a thank you letter or email within one business day of the information interview, to leave a positive impression and help to continue the relationship.