

Informational Interviewing Guideline

If you are still exploring career options or want to find out more about a chosen career direction, one of the most helpful strategies around is **Informational Interviewing**. Increasingly, it is becoming a significant career tool because it can provide invaluable information while requiring a relatively small investment of time.

Here's how it works.

1. You make contact with a professional in a career field that you think you would like to work in. [Hint: This is where Career Services can be very helpful in providing potential contact resources]. Friends and family can also be helpful simply by asking, "Do you know anyone who works in the field of _____?"
2. Once you have a name and contact information, how you approach the resource person will be very important. Remember at this stage, you are not seeking a job, but instead are focusing on exploring career options and learning more about the work they do. Ask if it would be possible for you to meet with them for no more than 30 minutes and be sure to honor this timeframe. If a face-to-face appointment is not possible, a phone conversation is OK.
3. Four basic questions can help you get started with gathering helpful information.
 - How did you get into this kind of work and what was your preparation?
 - What are the rewards and challenges of this kind of career?
 - What advice would you give a person who wants to pursue this work as a career?
 - Who else do you know that would be a good resource person for me to talk to?

You can build on these questions with additional inquires about what kinds of majors, courses, or work/internship experiences would be useful. Other informational interviewing questions are available on the University Career Center web site at <http://www.ncsu.edu/career/students/explore/informational.php>.

4. You should treat this meeting in the same way you would treat a job interview. Appropriate dress (at least business casual) is important since you will be making first impressions with people who could be potential job or internship resources in the near future. Always ask for a business card and be sure to send a brief note of thanks for giving you the gift of their time and insights.

Informational interviewing can have both short-term and long-term benefits. You immediately gain information and insights that can be helpful in focusing your career direction. In the long run, you have established personal contact with professionals who can be resources in the future to assist you with your job search.

Students who want to pursue this valuable resource can get started by checking out informational databases on the Career Center Website.

- Career Search (<http://www.ncsu.edu/career/students/jobinternships/cs.php>) is a database of over 2 million organizations and companies that you can search by industry, product and location.
- Another good use of e-Pack (<http://www.ncsu.edu/career/students/jobinternships/epack.php>) is to do a company search and click on Contacts in the information.
- A resource that is especially helpful for humanities and social sciences students is E-Leads (<http://www.ncsu.edu/career/students/jobinternships/eleads.php>), which contains both organizations and contact persons who are open to talking with students.