



Opportunities for Ohioans  
with Disabilities

# Information Interview

An illustration of two people sitting at a desk. The person on the left is wearing a teal blazer and has their hands clasped on the desk. The person on the right is wearing a blue top and has their hands clasped. There are papers on the desk. The background is a yellow wall with a framed picture and a window with purple curtains.

[www.ood.ohio.gov](http://www.ood.ohio.gov)

800. 282. 4586

# What is Informational

*"In the Information Interview process, I can provide potential future employees with specifics about the qualifications for jobs. This can help them determine at what level to enter a field and know the requirements they'll need – vocational training, certificate program, associate's degree or bachelor's degree. Each level takes more time, money and skill. The process helps a person determine the best path to a career. "*

*-an employer in staff development*

*"One of my consumers found her future job by doing an informational interview at the Veterans Administration Hospital. The person she contacted was so impressed with her that she offered her a position when she was near the end of her occupational training. This gave her a head start over her fellow classmates who waited until they finished training to explore job opportunities."*

*- an OOD counselor near Cleveland*

# Interviewing?

An informational interview is one that you initiate – you ask the questions. It's a casual, yet professional method of conducting research on career possibilities, so that you can make informed choices. The purpose is to obtain information, not to get a job. Used skillfully, it's a key strategy for career exploration.

Unlike job interviews, informational interviews don't require that you sell yourself to an employer and don't depend on existing job vacancies. They do provide one of the best methods to gather information from professionals doing a specific job or from the people who hire individuals to do that job. The process can help you learn about entry-level qualifications, necessary skills, working conditions, wages, hours, advancement opportunities and more.

This booklet will help you define your informational interviewing objectives, make your contacts, schedule appointments and direct the conversation flow. If you're in the process of choosing an academic major, making career choices, changing careers or beginning a job hunt, these interviews may help you explore your options. They are one practical way to develop interviewing skills and are also useful in building a personal network of contacts who can assist you to achieve your goals.

*"Informational interviewing not only helped me develop an understanding of my chosen career field, but it also helped me establish a network of individuals who I can contact when I look for future employment."*  
– a college student in Central Ohio

## When should you do an Informational Interview?

You can start immediately; it will always give you useful information. However, there are three critical times to do your interviews:

- before you pursue a post-secondary education program or decide on a major course of study toward an associate's or bachelor's degree;
- while you are in your program; and
- when you begin your job search.

## What are the steps?

1. Identify possible sources to contact.
2. Telephone for an appointment.
3. Prepare your questions.
4. Conduct the interview.
5. Follow-up with a thank you note.
6. Record information on Contact Log.



# 1 . Identify possible sources to contact.

You may already have a number of sources of career information at your finger tips. Here are some possibilities:

- If you are currently in school, ask your instructors for names of companies that employ people in occupations compatible with your interests. Many schools and universities have placement offices that contain extensive job resource information.
- The telephone book can be helpful since the Yellow Pages are organized by business, product or service, and usually include an index for reference.
- Read the business section of newspapers to stay informed.
- The public library has numerous guides such as the Occupational Outlook Handbook, the Ohio Industry Directory (Harris) and the Guide to Occupational Exploration. They also have reference folders on larger companies that include annual reports and clippings of news stories. Start at the library's general information desk to locate the department or person in charge of career information.
- If you have access to a computer and the Internet, you can locate various job banks, bulletin boards and employer databases. Your Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) counselor should be able to provide you with some of these Web addresses.
- Friends, classmates, neighbors and relatives are all good sources of job information. They may know somebody who works in a specific job or know of someone to ask.
- Membership in churches, social clubs, sports organizations or political groups can also result in good contacts.
- People who provide you with services (such as a real estate agent, insurance salesperson, hair stylist, mechanic, etc.) might have insight into career opportunities.
- Job fairs, industrial expos, health fairs and other events are often open to the public at shopping malls or conference centers. They provide unlimited opportunities to get information in an informal and non-threatening environment. People who staff these events come to talk and share information. It's a wonderful opportunity to learn.
- Throughout Ohio, there are One Stop Resource Centers that can provide information about local employers. The locations of these centers are listed under the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services in the blue government section of your telephone book.
- Trade and professional organizations specific to various industries can be a gold mine because the members are people who are actually doing the job – whether it's accounting, engineering or advertising. The Chamber of Commerce often has these member listings.

## 2 . Telephone for an appointment.

Although there are several ways to get information, the best method by far is the “face-to-face” meeting. Place a telephone call to arrange an appointment. No one likes surprise visitors at work. When placing the call to request an information interview, contact a specific person, introduce yourself, explain the purpose of your call and emphasize that you’re not looking for a job at the present time. Your fill-in-the-blank script might sound like this:

“Mr./Mrs./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_. My name is \_\_\_\_\_. “I am trying to determine the type of work I would like to do. One of my interests is \_\_\_\_\_. Since you are working in the field, would it be possible to meet with you to learn about your profession? Please understand that I am not looking for a job. Would it be possible for me to schedule 20 minutes of your time to come in and talk with you?”

It’s important that you explain the purpose of your call to the person with whom you want to meet. Try not to get into a conversation with a secretary or receptionist. This is why you need to have the name of the person you’re calling. It might be necessary to call twice, once to get the name of the person you want to schedule an appointment with and again to actually schedule the appointment.

Other methods to obtain information about your career include job shadowing, internships sponsored by the school, or structured telephone interviews. Job shadowing involves following a person during the work day to actually see the tasks and duties he or she performs. Structured telephone interviews can be effective tools for people living in rural areas or for those planning to relocate. Conducting the information interview over the phone is an option if you’re unable to meet your contact in person.

## 3 . Prepare your questions.

To get the best information about the occupation or career that you are exploring, it’s important to ask specific questions. Before going to the interview, prepare a list of questions. Take the list with you to the interview and refer to it often to ensure that you get all of the information you need. Following are sample questions you may want to use. Depending on the particular job and the field in which you are interested, other questions may be appropriate as well:

- How did you get started in this field?
- What do you like about your job or field?
- What skills and abilities are needed to do this type of work?
- What changes do see you in your field in the near and distant future?

- What are the challenges you face in your job?
- What are the educational or training requirements?
- What are the minimum licensing or certification requirements?
- What are your duties in a typical day?
- How do people advance in this field? What are the typical career paths of advancement?
- What is the salary range for entry-level positions?
- What are the usual benefits offered by companies for this level position?
- Do you see a demand for this type of work increasing in the future?
- Are internships offered by companies in this field? Does your company offer any?
- Do you have any suggestions, recommendations or advice to offer me concerning this occupation?
- Are you aware of any professional organizations where I could get more information?
- Could you refer me to others who can give me information about this occupation?

## **4. Conduct the interview.**

You have an appointment. You have your list of questions. You have reviewed them and are familiar with them. You know for sure where your appointment is and how much time it takes to get there. You know where you're going to park. You are dressed appropriately. You are on time. You have the name of the person with whom you are going to meet. You have a notebook to record information. Remember to be a good listener and stay focused.

## **5. Follow-up.**

Write a simple thank you note to the person with whom you met. This person has provided you with valuable information. Thanking him or her in writing will leave a positive lasting impression of you. Writing thank you notes is a common courtesy in the world of work and now is a good time to begin such habits. You never know when you might meet this person again – he or she could end up interviewing you in the future for the job of your dreams.

## **6. Record information in Contact log.**

Complete the Contact Log in the back of this booklet so that you will have all the information in one place. You can use it when you start your job hunt.

# Top 10 Tips on Information Interviewing

1. **Invest in your future** - Take time now to identify the job or field you want to work in when you finish school.
2. **Be organized** - Plan carefully so that you obtain what you want from the call or visit.
3. **Be concise** - Write down the questions you need to have answered.
4. **Be creative** - Look for jobs in interesting and non-traditional places. For example: you could be a nurse on a cruise ship or a teacher of English in China.
5. **Be a detective** - Who has the information you want? The person doing the job? The person who supervises the job? The person who hires people for the job? Each person will have valuable information but from very different perspectives.
6. **Be brief** - Time is money to a business person. Let people know that you value their time by getting to the point and asking well thought out questions. A phone interview should take about 10 minutes – a face-to-face meeting, no longer than 20 minutes.
7. **Be sensitive** - Some topics can put people on edge. It would be acceptable to ask a person for the entry-level pay for an accountant in Columbus. It would not be appropriate to ask how much he/she makes.
8. **Be appreciative** - Immediately thank everyone who gives you information. Then, follow-up again with a note.
9. **Keep good records** - These information interviews will be used to begin a list of companies and people you would (or would not) like to work for when you begin your job search. The information you gather about points of entry, wages, benefits, etc., will help you conduct a focused job search.
10. **Have fun** - People love to talk about their jobs and you're giving them a chance to do so. Ask questions such as, "What do you like best about your job?" or "Why did you choose this occupation?" People will share all kinds of interesting and sometimes humorous stories.

# INFORMATION INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

COUNSELOR: \_\_\_\_\_

Sample introductory statement:

*"Hello. My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I'm considering a career in \_\_\_\_\_ (major or field) and would like some information. Would you be willing to give me some information related to your business or your knowledge of this field or connect me with someone who can?"*

JOB/FIELD TARGETED: \_\_\_\_\_

COMPANY OR AGENCY NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

PERSON INTERVIEWED:

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

TYPE OF INTERVIEW: \_\_\_\_\_ IN-PERSON \_\_\_\_\_ ON SITE \_\_\_\_\_ JOB SHADOW

OTHER (describe) \_\_\_\_\_

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: (summarize on the back of this sheet)

1. What type of jobs does the company have for someone majoring in \_\_\_\_\_?

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2. Select one job mentioned and ask about:

Minimum qualifications \_\_\_\_\_

Skills/abilities necessary \_\_\_\_\_

Typical duties \_\_\_\_\_

~Advancement /career path \_\_\_\_\_

~Projected number of entry level jobs the year I graduate \_\_\_\_\_

~Salary Range \_\_\_\_\_

~Benefits \_\_\_\_\_

Job Security/Turnover \_\_\_\_\_

\*Mandatory ~Optional as time permits

*Be sure to thank the interviewee for his/her assistance with a written thank-you note.*

**AFTER THE INTERVIEW:**

Am I interested in this job/field? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Maybe \_\_\_\_\_

How has this interview helped clarify or redefine my career goal? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Now you have the information, how do you use it?

## Before you select your major:

- Does this field sound appealing to you based on the information you have gathered?
- Are the jobs you are interested in available in the geographic area where you would like to live? If not, where are these jobs located and would you be willing to move there?
- Is the pay what you expected? Will you be able to live on it now and in the future?
- If you are receiving Social Security disability payments (SSI, SSDI), investigate how the starting salary could affect those benefits and what you could do to position yourself most effectively. This is called a Benefits Analysis. Ask your counselor about obtaining this service.
- Determine the entry-level qualifications needed and make sure you meet (or exceed) them by the end of your school program.

## While you are in school:

- Identify which entry-level jobs put you on the right career path to reach your ideal job the fastest. Remember, many graduates do not start at their ideal job.
- Determine if the hours, shifts and work-days are consistent with your life style, disability considerations and family situation.
- Analyze the job duties, and investigate whether technology or other accommodations would help you perform the duties more effectively. For example, should you learn to use screen reader software that voices what is on the computer monitor so you can access computerized data?
- Decide what type of transportation is available to help you get to work or to do the job. What can you do now to start planning for that need?
- Determine if an internship would give you an edge in getting into your target company.
- Would special courses enhance your employability (e.g., knowledge of specific software programs, experience with a piece of equipment)? If so, investigate them.
- Analyze the personal attributes that you might need to improve your employability. For example, could you improve your public speaking abilities through volunteer activities or a speech class?
- Select a variety of sources for information on a career. To get the broadest picture possible, talk with the university department head, someone from human resources and the person actually doing the job.
- Identify any licensing or certification requirements for the field and investigate any prerequisites.

## Once you begin your job search:

- Review all the companies you have gathered information about and determine your top three companies to target for employment.
- In your resume and cover letter, highlight your skills and experience that match what employers told you they wanted.
- Telephone your previous contacts and let them know you are ready for employment. Ask who you should talk with about completing an application.
- Prepare for the job interview by familiarizing yourself with company expectations.
- Determine if you have already spoken to someone who could be a good mentor or coach.



# The Power of a Simple Thank You

A brief thank you note after an interview can wield considerable power and influence, and reflect favorably on you and your future. Writing one isn't terribly difficult or time consuming. Yet, it could make the difference between success and coming up short. Developing this habit will definitely benefit you as you complete job interviews. The practice of sending thank you notes can also become a networking tool to use throughout your career.

- By sending a thank you note, you show common courtesy and respect.

Often in today's busy world, we simply don't acknowledge each other's time, efforts and commitments. By sending a thank you note, you're telling your interviewer in no uncertain terms that you appreciate the time that he or she has given you.

- So few people send a thank you note that you automatically stand out if you do, especially after an interview.
- A thank you note gives you an opportunity to reiterate points you want to highlight.

After using the first paragraph of your note to thank the interviewer, you can use a brief second paragraph to touch upon some key points. You might want to emphasize a related experience or a skill. If there was a rough spot in the interview, you can use this as an opportunity to clear things up.

- A thank you note lets you make points that you forgot to make in the interview.

After a meeting, you might ask yourself, "Why didn't I say/ask \_\_\_\_\_?"  
Again (perhaps in the second paragraph), you can write, "After our discussion, it occurred to me that I forgot to mention \_\_\_\_\_."

- A thank you note demonstrates your written communication skills.

Your interviewer will see first hand how you handle yourself on paper, which is an important skill in every job.

**Turn the page for a sample thank you note.**

## **Sample Thank You Note**

Use one or all of the following paragraphs as appropriate, modify them or create your own note.

**Thank you again for agreeing to be a member of my personal "network." This is an important time in my life as I decide a career for my future. I truly value the advice of professionals like you who know \_\_\_\_\_ (field) so well.**

**Your offer to introduce me to other professionals in your network is truly appreciated. If you have time to do so, it would be extremely helpful.**

**It was a pleasure meeting with you and your coworkers. The meeting gave me a much better understanding of the work performed by your organization and the significant challenges and rewards involved in such work.**

**I cannot thank you enough for your willingness to help me launch this next phase of my career. I will keep you informed of my progress. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you think of any additional suggestions for expanding my network.**

**Respectfully,**

**(Your name)**

**Add your phone number or e-mail address to make it easy for the person to contact you in the future.**

# Websites

## Informational Interviewing Tutorial

[www.quintcareers.com/information\\_background.html](http://www.quintcareers.com/information_background.html)

This site provides background information about informational interviews, including these startling statistics: One out of every 200 resumes (or as many as 1,500 in some studies) results in a job offer. In contrast, one out of every 12 informational interviews results in the person being offered a job. It's the ultimate networking technique, especially considering that the purpose is to get information, not an offer to start work. Job offers just happen to be a delightful side benefit!

## How to Explore Careers Through Informational Interviewing

[www2.jobtrak.com/help\\_manuals/jobmanual/inform.html](http://www2.jobtrak.com/help_manuals/jobmanual/inform.html)

During the course of a given day, you have many opportunities to learn from others about their careers or jobs. You'll find that most people are more than willing to talk about themselves. This article describes the process of talking to people who have jobs that interest you.

## Interviewing for Information

<http://www.rlscareercenter.org/infointvw.htm>

This site provides suggestions, questions and a sample phone call guide to help you use the information interviewing technique.

## Interviewing Techniques/Sample Questions

[www.minotstateu.edu/careers/interviewing.shtml](http://www.minotstateu.edu/careers/interviewing.shtml)

This site offers tips on preparing for the interview, staying alert and other topics.

## Informational Interview

<http://jobsearch.about.com/cs/infointerviews/a/infointerview.htm>

An informational interview is one of the most valuable sources of research on an occupation. While it may cover some of the same ground available through printed material or a company Web site, it also presents opportunities for an intimate and flexible inside view of a job field that's unmatched by those other sources.

## The Career Center - Florida State University

[www.career.fsu.edu/mockinterview](http://www.career.fsu.edu/mockinterview)

An informational interview is an appointment that you schedule with an employed individual to gain current, regional and/or specialized information from their "insider" point.

of view. Interviews are arranged with those likely to provide information directly or with those who can refer you to people with information. This site has videos of different mock interviews.

## Career Center - University of California, Berkeley

<https://career.berkeley.edu/Info/InfoInterview.stm>

An informational interview is an informal conversation with someone working in an area of interest to you who will give you information and advice. This site give an overview, the benefits of informational interviewing and six steps for informational interviewing.

## Career Center - University of California, Santa Cruz

[http://careers.ucsc.edu/handouts/interviewing/Information\\_Interviewing.html](http://careers.ucsc.edu/handouts/interviewing/Information_Interviewing.html)

Information interviewing is a strategy to use when exploring career fields and building a network in a career field that interests you. Information interviewing means meeting with people to ask for information, not a job. Here you will find the benefits of information interviewing, steps to sucessful information interviewing and networking, and questions to ask in an information interview.



# Contact Log

Name and Address of Company	Contact person, phone/e-mail	Date of contact	Notes
		Date Thank You sent	
		Date of contact	
		Date Thank You sent	
		Date of contact	
		Date Thank You sent	
		Date of contact	
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# Notes

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The Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities Agency partners with individuals with disabilities to achieve quality employment, independence and disability determination outcomes through integrated services, partnerships and innovation.



The Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities Agency does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, disability, genetic information, military status, veterans' status, national origin/ancestry, race, religion, sex or sexual orientation.