

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING GUIDE

WEST CAMPUS CAREER CENTER

VALENCIA COLLEGE

SSB 206 • 407-582-1464 • [HTTP://VALENCIACOLLEGE.EDU/CAREERCENTER](http://valenciacollege.edu/careercenter)

WHAT IS IT?

- The process by which you locate people employed in an occupation of interest to you, and meet with them to talk about their career

WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE?

- To gather information from a person who is working in a career field that is of interest to you so that you can better understand the realities and demands of that occupation
- To expand your network of contacts

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BENEFITS?

- Clarify some assumptions about the career you have been considering
- Help with your career research
 - Face-to-face interviews can be much more informative than books, videos and other sources
- Gain experience in interviewing with professionals
- Observe people in their work environment and other related factors

HOW DO I FIND CONTACTS?

- Ask your professors, parents, relatives, friends and classmates. Facebook, Twitter & LinkedIn.com can be excellent resources for networking and identifying contacts
- Make a list of companies where you want to make contacts and start to make calls for appointments
- Consult *The Orlando Business Journal 2014 Book of Lists*
- Consult the yellow pages of the telephone directory or internet directory
- Visit the Career Center for other possibilities

RESEARCH AND PREPARATION?

- Research the career so that you have a basis of knowledge in which to draw from. This will aid you in making conversation.
- Research information on the employer where your information interview is scheduled
- Create a list of questions you plan to ask
- ***Do not go to the informational interview with a hidden agenda- Do not seek, or ask for a job during your meeting.***

HOW SHOULD I REQUEST AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW?

- Telephone – This method provides the quickest response. If the person you contact is not available to meet with you, ask them to refer you to someone who might assist you. Be clear that you are only seeking information, not a job.
- Email – Compose a message and follow up later with a phone call. Introduce yourself, explain your reason for requesting the meeting and provide a window of time when you would like to meet. Expressing interest in the person's job/field will make it more likely they will agree to meet with you. Make sure that there are no typos and/or grammar errors in your email message.
- Personal Referral – Ask your contact (professor, friend, parent, etc.) to arrange the appointment or use this person's name as a referral. When you make the call, mention that this person suggested that you call to speak to him/her about their career.

Note: Do not expect to meet with a contact immediately. Give him/her time so that your meeting is convenient for his/her schedule.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

CAREER PREPARATION

- Why did you choose this career path?
- What educational degrees, licenses, or other credentials are required for entry-level jobs in this career?
- What was your undergraduate major? How big of a role did it play in your career choice?
- What are the most important characteristics or skills needed to be successful in this field?
- Do you use information that you learned in specific college courses on a regular basis?

PRESENT JOB

- Which of your past work experiences affect what you do now?
- What would you do differently if you were starting out now?
- How do you occupy your time during a typical work week?
- What skills and talents are most essential for effectiveness in this position?
- What is most rewarding for you about your work itself, aside from external motivators like salary, fringe benefits, etc.?
- What are the toughest problems you must deal with?
- What are some of your work obligations outside the ordinary work week?

CAREER FUTURE

- If things develop according to your plan, what sort of ideal position do you see for yourself?
- How rapidly is your field growing? How would you describe future prospects for someone just starting out?

PLEASE ADVISE

- What educational preparation do you feel would be best for a career in this field?
- What kinds of experiences, paid employment or otherwise, would you recommend to me?
- If you were a college student again, what would you do differently?
- If you were to hire someone to fill a significant position on your staff, what are the three most important factors you would consider?
- Can you suggest someone else who would be helpful to talk to? May I use your name when I contact him/her?

THE INFORMATION INTERVIEW

- Make a good impression- Dress professionally and pay attention to details such as personal hygiene, shoes, etc.
- Be on time, preferably a few minutes early
- Be friendly and polite; not too stiff and not too casual
- Do not ask personal questions or make insensitive comments
- Stand when approached, offer a firm handshake and confidently introduce yourself

AFTER THE INFORMATION INTERVIEW

- It is good etiquette (manners) to send a thank you note or email to someone when they have taken time from their schedule to meet with you. You should thank him/her for their time as well as their willingness to share his/her experience with you. You could also ask if it would be possible to shadow him/her for a day (or part of a day) to observe someone in that career in action.
- Consider the information you've learned about the occupation. Based on the information you've learned from your research and your information interview, evaluate whether or not that particular career/field is a good option for you. Do you believe you would be satisfied with a career in that field? Would it sustain your interest over time?
- If you would like to consider other career options, visit the Career Center (SSB 206) and meet with a Career Advisor to discuss other career options.