

Informational Interviewing Guide

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What is *Informational Interviewing*?

Informational Interviewing is a very effective tool used for career exploration. It literally means that YOU interview someone to gather information that will help you choose a career, refine your career path, or break into your chosen field.

How will you benefit?

By using this strategy you will:

- Gather information about careers
- Clarify your career goals
- Expand your professional network
- Build confidence for job interviews
- Access up-to-date career information
- Learn more about work environments
- Get advice about job search strategies
- Discover new jobs and internships

TIPS

- Remember, people like to share!
- Ask for facts and advice, not a job.
- Be sincere in your request for information.
- Think of yourself five years from now – wouldn't you like to help a fellow Batesie?

Who should you interview?

First, identify what you want out of the interview. Do you want to:

- Uncover career options for your major? Talk to Bates graduates with the same major.
- Learn more about a certain career path? Interview Bates alumni in that occupation.
- Network with professionals at a specific company or city? Research contacts there.

Second, consider your network. Think of:

- Friends, parents, other family members
- Friends of your family or family of your friends
- Professors, teachers, and past employers
- Professionals you admire
- Bates alumni listed in the Bates Online Community as “**BCDC Advisors**”

How to Ask

You can call, email, or write to your contact. The most effective strategy is to send an email or a letter at first, and then follow up with a phone call.

- Always introduce yourself
- Explain your situation - "I'm on a career search" or "I am investigating career paths."
- Describe your connection to the contact – "I'm a current student at Bates College and I understand you are a graduate of Bates" or "I'm a friend of Mary's."
- Explain what you are seeking – "I'm seeking information and advice about your industry."

Prepare for the Informational Interview

- Research the company online
- Prepare questions (see below)
- Plan your outfit and appearance
- Print a copy of your resume
- Confirm the meeting
- Plan how to get there

During the Interview

- Be professional
- Exude enthusiasm
- Stay focused
- Listen
- Create a dialogue
- Share information
- Take notes
- Manage the time

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Remember, this is a professional conversation whether on the phone or in person. You are representing Bates College as well as meeting someone in your professional network who could potentially introduce you to your future employer. Your dress, behavior and all communications should be extremely professional.

Informational Interview Questions

Prepare a list ahead of time that includes the questions that are most interesting and helpful for you. For a typical 30 minute informational interview, **choose 10-12 questions** to ask.

ABOUT HIS/HER BACKGROUND

- Can you tell me about your background and career path?
- How did you get started in this type of work?
- Why does this type of work interest you?
- What do you like best about your career/job/employer?
- How did you get your job?
- How well did your college experience prepare you for this job?

ABOUT THE JOB

- What do you do? What are the duties/functions/responsibilities of your job?
- Can you describe a typical day or week on the job?

ABOUT THE COMPANY

- Why did you decide to work for this company?
- How does your company differ from its competitors?
- What kind of future do you see for this organization?
- What can you tell me about the corporate culture?

ABOUT THE OCCUPATION

- What skills/abilities are utilized in this occupation?
- What types of employers hire people in this occupation?
- What other career areas do you feel are related to this work?
- What is the salary range for various levels in this field?
- Which professional journals and organizations would help me learn more about this field?

ABOUT THE INDUSTRY

- What trends do you see for this industry in the next 3 to 5 years?
- How much of your business is tied to (the economy, government spending, supplies, etc.)?
- How is the economy affecting this industry?
- What can you tell me about the employment outlook in this industry?

ABOUT THE CAREER PATH

- What is a typical career path in this field or organization?
- What are your long term goals?
- If your job progresses as you would like, what would be the next step in your career?
- If your work were suddenly eliminated, what kinds of work do you feel prepared to do?

HOW TO ENTER THE OCCUPATION/INDUSTRY

- What is the best way to enter this occupation? What are the typical entry-level job titles?
- What salary level would a new person start with? Are there other forms of compensation?
- How important are grades/GPA for obtaining a job in this field?

HOW TO GET A JOB

- How do people find out about jobs in this field? How are jobs advertised?
- Who makes the hiring decisions for your department?
- When I am ready to apply for a job, who should I contact?

ADVICE

- Do you have any advice for someone interested in this field?
- Considering what you know about my skills and education, where might I fit in this field?
- What experience, paid or volunteer, would you recommend?
- What other careers would you suggest I research further before I make a final decision?

REFERRALS/NEXT STEPS

- Based on our conversation today, what other types of people do you believe I should talk to? Can you name a few of these people? May I have permission to use your name when I contact them?

After the Interview

- Analyze and evaluate the information you gathered – what else do you need to learn?
- Evaluate yourself – what would you do differently next time?
- Follow through on your next steps – what commitments did you make?
- Contact referrals – who else do you plan to interview?
- **Very important: SEND A THANK YOU NOTE! Send a hand-written note or email thanking your contact for his/her time and mentioning something specific that was particularly helpful.**
- Beyond that, consider staying in touch by sending an update to your contacts when you land your new job!