

Career Information

Interviewing guide

Wondering what you can do with your degree?
Having trouble deciding between career options?
Have a dream job in mind, but not sure how to get there?

Through Career Information Interviewing, you can gain first-hand knowledge about the careers you're considering, while building your professional network.

What is a Career Information Interview?

A Career Information Interview (CII) is a private meeting with an experienced professional in the career area(s) of your choice, conducted to gain a better understanding of the day-to-day realities of that career/field. By asking a series of specific questions, you can gain personal insight into the overall climate of the industry, discover different points of entry, and learn about education/career pathways to get to where you want to go. These insights can help you make informed decisions about your future.

By taking the time to meet with industry representatives, you're also setting yourself up for success by building relationships with people who can potentially uncover 'hidden' opportunities (i.e., opportunities that are not posted or advertised), which are a growing reality in today's job market.

How to set up a Career Information Interview

1. THE RESEARCH

After making a list of occupations that you're interested in exploring, begin seeking out contacts. Start with your personal and professional networks: family friends, relatives, teachers, professors, mentors, or past employers. Then, start looking at organizations, human resource representatives, professional associations, hiring managers, or business owners. LinkedIn is a great online resource to seek out and connect with new professional contacts.

2. THE CONTACTS

Reach out to your list of contacts to request a 15-30 minute meeting, (in person or over the phone) to conduct a CII. To make a great first impression, be sure to include some personal details about yourself and why you're interested in connecting. Professional etiquette is important. See the email template below for guidance.

3. THE MEETING

After researching the company and industry, show up to your meeting on time, with a list of questions, a notebook to capture the responses, personal business cards, your resume, and a pen. Think about preparing and practicing a brief personal introduction ahead of time to make a great impression. This is not the time to apply for a job, but it can certainly lead to employment opportunities in the future. See the sample questions below as a starting point for interview preparation.

4. THE FOLLOW-UP

Within 48 hours of completing the CII, follow-up with a thank-you note or email. Include your biggest take-aways from the session and any resources or next steps that were discussed. Keep in touch with your new contacts on LinkedIn or via email with any related news or next steps.

Sample email introduction

Subject line: Request for career advice

Dear Ms. Contact:

I obtained your name from [insert resource or contact here]. I am writing to you because I am in the process of exploring possible career options, and your position as a Volunteer Coordinator with the Public Ecology Centre sounds very intriguing to me.

I am currently in my final year of a Sociology degree at the University of Saskatchewan, and I have recently started volunteering as a lab assistant on campus. I am interested in learning more about how you became a Volunteer Coordinator, what it is like working in the non-profit sector, and any career advice you have for a new grad interested in the environmental field.

Would you be available to meet for a 20-minute conversation where I can ask you a few questions about your career and how you got into your Volunteer Coordinator position? I would be happy to meet you at your office, or anywhere else that's convenient for you.

Thanks for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Anita Career

Sample questions

1. How did you get into your current line of work?
2. What competencies, knowledge, skills or experiences are necessary for this work?
3. What makes someone successful in this field?
4. What type of formal training have you had?
5. What do you like the most about your job?
6. What do you like the least about your job?
7. Do you think the need for this work is expanding or contracting?
8. What organizational sectors employ people with your area of expertise?
9. What kind of training or experience would be helpful to a person entering your field?
10. What other past experiences or training have been helpful to you in this position?
11. What advice would you give someone who's considering entering this field?
12. What is the culture and climate of this profession?
13. What main problems or frustrations do you encounter in your line of work?
14. Are there related fields you think might be worthwhile exploring?
15. Given my skills and background, do you think it's realistic for me to consider moving into this field?
16. Given my interests and career goals, can you think of anyone else I should talk to?

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