

What is informational interviewing?

Informational interviewing provides an opportunity to gather information that will help you make decisions about your career goals. It is not a job interview. It's a process to tap the expertise of Johns Hopkins alumni about a job, career field, or organization that interests you.

How can informational interviewing help me choose a career?

It provides a way for you to:

- Get an insider's perspective on future trends, growth potential, and the unique challenges to maintaining a healthy work/life balance in a given career
- Test your expectations of a career field with the real world experience of an industry professional
- Get advice on your job search strategy and how you can be most effective
- Focus your options
- Provide referrals to additional contacts for more information and advice

How do I set up an informational interview?

- Telephone
- E-mail (particularly a virtual introduction from someone who knows the individual you want to meet)
- Referral (a more formal version of the above)
- Letter
- Drop-in (least preferable)
- Be considerate! Interviewees have busy schedules—be respectful in accommodating them.

How do I prepare for the Interview?

1. Do your homework. Learn about the organization through its website, annual reports, the Internet, and the individual you are interviewing
2. Learn more about the career in general including trends, current issues, etc. (*Note:* The Department of Labor's website and *Occupational Outlook Handbook* and are excellent sources.)

3. Read *Starting Out or Starting Over—50 Questions You Ought to Ask* (attached).
4. Prepare a 30-second "elevator speech" that states clearly
 - Who you are
 - What connection you share with the interviewee
 - Why you would like to tap the individual's unique expertise
 - What you are requesting of the individual
5. Use the attached contact log to help manage your contacts

How do I conduct the interview?

- Reiterate your reasons for meeting with this person
- Relax. Remember, this isn't a job interview
- Ask open-ended questions that show you have done your homework
- Take notes
- DON'T ASK FOR A JOB
- Get the names of others to contact
- Honor the time that the interviewee has scheduled
- Use the attached contact log to record important details from your interviews

How should I follow up?

- Send a thank you letter via mail or e-mail. (Visit www.alumni.jhu.edu or click here to see a sample)
- Evaluate the information you received
- Keep good notes to use later. Include dates, names, addresses, etc.
- Use and maintain the attached contact log for your files
- Contact appropriate individuals when you begin your job search

Adapted in part from:

Lucht, John. *The New Rites of Passage at \$100,000+*, Viceroy Press (1998), New York, New York.

Hecklinger, F. J. and Black, B. M. *Training for Life*, 7th Ed. Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co. (1996), Dubuque, Iowa.

Starting Out or Starting Over— 50 Questions You Ought to Ask

Prior to your informational interview, it's a good idea to prepare a list of questions to help guide your conversation. Think about the information that you'd like to find out. Ask open-ended questions. Relax and be natural. Below are 50 questions to help get you started.

Personal Experience

- What is your academic background?
- How did you become interested in the type of work you do?
- How did your background lead you to this position?
- How did you get your job?
- How long have you worked in this field?
- What makes it exciting to come to work every day?
- What is the most rewarding part of your job?
- What is the most challenging aspect of your job?
- What does it take to be successful in your career?
- What are your daily responsibilities?
- What types of individuals do you interact with in your position?
- How does this career affect your lifestyle and work/family balance?
- What are some typical entry-level opportunities in this field?
- What did you do to make yourself marketable in your profession?
- Do you think my experience relates to this field?
- What experiences, employment or otherwise, would you recommend to someone pursuing a career in this field?
- What do you wish you had known about this field or organization before you entered it?
- If you could do things all over again, would you choose the same path for yourself? Why or why not? What would you do differently?

Education, Training, and Skills

- What are the basic prerequisites for jobs in this field?
- What are the educational requirements?
- Is graduate school recommended or required?
- What special knowledge, skills, or personal characteristics are needed?
- What other kinds of experience are desirable for a job in this field?

Organizational Structure

- What is the management style in this organization?
- How does your organization support the professional growth and development of its employees?
- Is there room for growth in your organization?
- How are decisions made? Do employees feel included in the process?
- Whom do you supervise and to whom do you report?
- How does your organization differ from its competitors?

Organizational Culture

- How would you describe the culture within your organization?
- Is there a dress code?
- What kind of hours to employees keep?
- Are work schedule flexible?
- Do people take vacations?

Career Paths/Occupational Outlook

- What would be a typical career path in this field?
- What opportunities for advancement are there in this field?
- Is the field growing? If so, in what areas?
- How do you see jobs in this field changing in the future?
- What is the entry-level salary range for in this profession?
- What are the biggest issues facing this field or organization?
- Are there any special concerns or issues for women in your field?
- Given your experience, what are the challenges to working in this field?

Referrals/Suggestions

- What are the best resources for learning more about this field?
- Based on your experience, do you have any special advice for someone entering this field?
- In your opinion, what is the best way to get started?
- What kinds of job-hunting strategies would you suggest for those entering this field?
- Do you know of organizations hiring entry-level employees in this field?
- If you were me and looking for this type of work in an organization such as yours, how would you proceed?
- With the information you have about my education, skills, and experience, what other fields or jobs would you suggest I research before making a final decision?
- I've compiled a list of organizations in this field to research. Would you be willing to look it over and suggest any others?
- What do you think of my resume? Do you see any problem areas? How would you suggest I change it?
- Can you suggest others that I might contact? May I use your name?

**Need more career resources?
Visit us online any time at www.alumni.jhu.edu.**

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW CONTACT LOG

The Johns Hopkins University Alumni Association
Guide to the Informational Interview

Contact Information

Name _____ Company _____
Address _____ Email _____

Work Phone _____ Cell Phone _____
City _____ State ____ Zip _____ Assistant's Name _____

Contact History

Date	Name	Message
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Interview Preparation and Notes

Key Company Facts:

Interview Notes:

Follow Up

Thank You Note Sent

Referred Individuals Contacted Name _____ Date _____

Referred Individuals Contacted Name _____ Date _____

Referred Individuals Contacted Name _____ Date _____

Referred Individuals Contacted Name _____ Date _____

Referred Individuals Contacted Name _____ Date _____