Information Interviewing

You can approach someone by email or phone and request an in-person meeting. Your goal is to connect with others in order to learn more about a company, an industry or to learn about job search strategies while building your network. Many students are reluctant to do this as they are concerned that employers or professionals will not be interested in talking to them. However, many people are more than willing to help others. If a high school student contacted you because they wanted to know more about the University of Calgary and the major you are taking, wouldn’t you be willing to talk to them? So be courageous and reach out!

When you contact people, always be courteous and respectful of their time. Common courtesies include being prompt and not asking for a job during the meeting. As well, it is good professional conduct to acknowledge when you have reached the agreed upon time and offer to close the meeting. Remain flexible and be prepared for anything to happen.

What Are the Benefits Of Information Interviews?

Information interviews are beneficial because they allow you to:

- Access up-to-date career information
- Build confidence for interviews
- Discover exciting job opportunities
- Expand your professional network
- Explore careers and clarify your career goals
- Identify your professional strengths and areas needing improvement
- See the organization from the inside

Find the Person to Interview

There are various ways to identify people to meet with. The best place is to start is with people you already know. This includes peers, professors and family members. Ask them if they know someone in a particular company or field that you might benefit from talking with. Other possible ways to identify people to talk to include:

- Conferences
- Company websites
- Professional organizations
- LinkedIn
• Professional events, charity events, sports events
• Periodicals and resource books
• Volunteer positions

Scheduling the Meeting

Once you have found the person you wish to speak with, the next step is to contact them in order to schedule the meeting. You may decide to contact the person by email or phone or even both.

Sample Phone Script:

Hello [Mr./Ms. Doe], my name is [. . .]. I’m a student at the University of Calgary and am in the [faculty name] program. I obtained your name from . . .

Ask if they are free to talk for a few minutes. If they’re not, ask for the best time to call back and be sure you actually call then.

I understand you are the [. . . position] and I’m interested in learning more about your career [or company]. I’m in the process of gathering information about the types of careers [or positions] that may be in line with my interests [and/or area of expertise]. Would it be possible to meet with you for 15 – 20 minutes to learn about your career [or company and the (job title) positions they have]?

Be prepared for a response such as: “I think our human resources people can probably answer your questions.” You may want to respond with: “I’m sure that would be true if I were looking for a job, but I’d like to talk with you because _________ told me you could give me the best advice and suggested that I would benefit from your experience and insight.”

Sample Email 1:

Dear Mr. or Ms. (last name):

My name is (. . .) and I am a student at the University of Calgary. I am in the (program name). I came across your name (explain where and how) and I was intrigued to learn more about you and your career (or organization). I am currently conducting career (or company or industry) research and would appreciate the opportunity to learn about your own career path.

Would you be open to meeting with me for 15 - 20 minutes to discuss this? I would be happy to buy you a coffee or tea if you would be willing to share some of your valuable insights with me.

Regards,

(Full name)
Sample Email 2:

Dear Mr. or Ms. (last name):

My name is (...), and I am a recent graduate from the University of Calgary. We met (where and when) and I was impressed by your (highlight something specific here). I am currently conducting career (or company or industry) research and would appreciate the opportunity to learn about your own career path.

Would you be open to meeting with me for 15 - 20 minutes to discuss this?

Regards,

(Full name)

Sample Questions

There are dozens of questions you may want answered, so think about them carefully before you arrive at your interview. Write your questions down just in case you get nervous, but don't get too rigid or just read them off. Be sensitive to the time constraints of the person you are talking with and remember you asked for 15 to 20 minutes. The key to this whole process is enthusiasm! If you are truly interested in a topic, that will shine through. When it does, the person you are talking with will most likely respond positively.

* Remember, this should seem like a conversation, not an interrogation.

- How did you get started in this field, and what do you think has made you successful throughout your career?
- Describe a typical day for you.
- What are the pros and cons of working in this field?
- What traits, skills or experiences do employers in your field look for in candidates?
- If you were me, what would you do to try to break into this field?
- What publications, professional associations, or events should I check out for additional information?
- Do you know anyone else I can speak to for advice?
- If I have additional questions in the future, can I reach out to you again?