

# Career Development Assignment

## *Informational Interviewing*

### What is Informational Interviewing?

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Informational interviewing is a great way to gain perspective on the career path you are considering. By talking with people who currently work in the field, you can learn about:

- Skills necessary to be successful
- Experiences it would be helpful to gain to increase your marketability as an entry level candidate
- Day-to-day tasks
- Potential work environments, company culture, and employers
- Rewards and challenges of the work
- Career paths within an organization and/or a given field

As an added bonus of informational interviewing, you will be actively working on expanding your professional network. Networking is the number one way people find jobs.

### Assignment

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Find an individual that is in a job or working for a company that sounds interesting to you. Conduct an informational interview with the individual. Write a one-page reflection paper about what you learned from the conversation and how it affects the way you are thinking about your career path and/or action you plan to take to best prepare for success in your career.

### Tips

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#### Finding a Contact

If you do not know anyone in your immediate circle of contacts, you might consider joining a relevant LinkedIn group or connecting with someone through networking (asking classmates, instructors, friends, or family for an introduction to someone in your field). This will help strengthen your professional networking skills.

#### The Interview

Arrange to meet in person or over the phone with your networking contact. Ask them for 20 minutes of their time and stick to that limit, to be respectful of the time they are taking out of their busy lives to speak to you. Develop thoughtful questions in advance and have them in front of you during the interview for reference. Your questions should pertain to learning about the person's career path, the field, their organization, and advice they may have to offer you. The last question you should ask them is for a referral to someone else in their network that they think it would be helpful for you to speak to (this is how you build your professional network!). Be sure to send a thank you email to the individual, and follow up with the contact they recommended to you.

## **Tips for Preparing:**

1. Identify the information you want.
2. Make a list of people you know.
3. Schedule the appointment.
4. Plan an agenda for the session.
5. Conduct yourself as a professional.
6. Show interest.
7. Be prepared to answer questions about what you are looking for.
8. Get names.
9. Send thank-you and follow-up letters.
10. Take advantage of any referrals you receive.