

Cheat Sheet: Informational Interviews

Basic Tip:

Informational interviews are not done to get a job. They are generally done to gain practice and networking experience.

Why do them?

- Informational interviews can be a great way to gather information about the company in which you are interested (Ex: what kinds of jobs are available).
- Do research on the company BEFORE the interview. Company websites usually offer vast information and press releases on the company's history, products, management, philosophy, and many other important areas.
- Informational interviews are a great way to test your resume. Bring a copy to the interview and be sure to provide it to the interviewer when you sit down with him. Bring notes to the interview-- nothing too extensive, just major points to help organize your thoughts.
- Bring written questions for the interviewer and notes that you may have taken during your research of the company. Ask questions during the informational interview to show that you are interested in the company and that you have done your homework.

What to ask?

- Ask about the company. You should do enough research before the interview that you shouldn't need to ask obvious or inane questions.
- Ask the interviewer about his personal experience with the company. This gives you a chance to learn more about the company's culture and someone's firsthand experience with the company.
- Ask about the types of jobs in the company, the company's objectives, its future course of business and the company's goals.

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- Avoid asking about salary since that is often considered inappropriate. Most experts recommend that you research the salary range BEFORE the interview, so you have a good idea of what the position may pay. Many experts believe it's usually best to wait to the "offer" stage to discuss specifics about salary.

What to wear?

- Dress in a conservative, professional business suit. This is always a safe, dependable choice. The last thing you want on your mind during an informational interview is whether or not your outfit is appropriate.
- SEE our CareerSpots videos "Interview Dress for Men" and "The Look" (interview dress for women) for specifics about appearance and interview dress.

How to follow up?

- Ask for an interviewer's business card since it's an easy way to get their contact information.
- Also ask the interviewer for the best way to reach her-- whether by phone, mail, or email—and write her a "Thank You" note, showing your enthusiasm for the job, re-stating your positive attributes and any other positive information that would be useful to her. Thank you notes are very important since they display your interest in the company. A simple note that takes minutes to write can mean a big payoff later.
- Some experts estimate that as many as 85% of job opportunities are NEVER ADVERTISED! Scheduling an informational interview with a company may be a great way to uncover these opportunities.