



**CAREER
SERVICES**
GROVE CITY COLLEGE

Informational Interviewing and Job Shadowing

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THE INFORMATION INTERVIEW

Interviewing people to find out about their jobs is not the same as interviewing with them for a job. For this reason, the visit is often called an **information** interview to differentiate it from an **employment** interview.

In an **employment** interview:

- a. You are being interviewed, and
- b. You are trying to obtain a job with the person doing the interviewing.

In an **information** interview:

- a. You are interviewing the other person, and
- b. You are trying to obtain certain kinds of information about the person's job that will help you decide if you are interested in that kind of work as a possible career choice.

The following information is intended to help you with an information interview. The items are only suggestions, and you should feel free to structure the interview in any way that will enable you to get the information that you need.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS FOR THE INFORMATION INTERVIEW

His/Her Background and Training

1. What kind of education and/or training have you had for your present position?
2. What other kinds of jobs did you have before this one? How were they related?
3. If you made a radical job change, what kinds of things led you to make the changes?
4. What experiences have you had that have been helpful to you in your present position?
5. What other occupations did you consider before you chose this one? Why did you choose this occupation rather than one of the alternatives?

Descriptions of His/Her Present Position

1. What do you do during an "average" day, if there is such a thing?
 - a. What types of things do you do?
 - b. What kinds of interactions do you have with other people?
 - c. For what kinds of things are you responsible?
2. What are your opportunities to travel?
3. What kinds of satisfaction do you get from your job?
4. What are some of the frustrations that you have in your job?

Other Questions

1. What advice would you have for someone like me who is thinking about going into this field?
2. What specific requirements would I need for a job of this kind?
3. What kinds of opportunities do you think this field has for people who are just entering it?
4. What do you think would be the best education and/or training for someone interested in this kind of job?
5. Could you suggest any others in the field whom I might also interview? May I tell them that you referred me to them?

Other Questions You Would Like to Ask

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

“SHADOWING” FOR CAREER INFORMATION

“Shadowing” describes an activity in which you spend an extended period of time observing a person in his/her job environment. The objective of the experience is for you to learn as much as possible about the specific activities involved in an occupation. You will become familiar with the environment, amount and kind of people contacts, knowledge required for performing tasks, and the like.

What do you need to do to “Shadow”? Identify someone in an occupation of interest and ask if you might quietly observe the person at work for a morning or afternoon, or an entire day, if possible. Some occupations involve confidential information, such as counseling, or may intrude into another person’s privacy, such as an examination of a patient by a physician. If so, add this statement to your request, “I will understand if you think this experience may not be appropriate for me to observe. Are there any activities I could observe or additional people I could talk to during these times?”

Some General Guidelines to follow when planning this kind of experience include the following:

1. Conduct an information interview prior to requesting time for shadowing. During the interview be sensitive to how busy the person being interviewed seems to be and/or how busy the work environment is, and whether the person might be receptive to your request.

2. If requesting the experience seems feasible, tell the person what you want to gain from the opportunity. Your goals may include knowledge of the different kinds of tasks performed, types of people involved, amount of teamwork, degree of pressure, time constraints, etc.
3. Once you have made arrangements for shadowing, confirm the time in a brief thank you note you write following the information interview.
4. On the day of the shadowing experience, arrive on time appropriately dressed for the work setting. Have a notebook to gather the information you are interested in and to record the names of people you will thank later.
5. While on the job, stay out of people's way as much as possible, and be quiet and thoughtful of others. Be sensitive to situations in which you may want to leave the room without being asked, e.g. the person you are observing becomes extremely angry during a conversation with another person on the telephone, or a patient seems to be uncomfortable with you in the room.
6. Write down questions as they occur to you, and ask them at convenient times or at the end of the session.
7. If possible, before you leave, review the experience with the person you have shadowed. If there is not enough time, include specific observations as well as what you may have learned in your 'thank you' letter. If it seems appropriate, you may want to deliver the thank you note with a small plate of goodies for the staff to have with their coffee. That would be a thoughtful and appropriate gesture.