

Information Interviews

An information interview is an appointment that you schedule with a particular individual for the purpose of gaining current, regional, and/or specialized information from an "insider" point of view. If you are in the process of making career choices or beginning a job hunt, then information interviews may help you explore your possibilities.

Unlike job interviews, information interviews do not require that you sell yourself to an employer, and do not depend on existing job vacancies. Information interviews are arranged with those likely to provide information directly or with those who can refer you to persons with information.

WHY DO INFORMATION INTERVIEWS?

- To get valuable information for your job hunting and career planning (e.g. choosing an academic major or career). It's a good way to "reality check" what you've read, heard, and think.
- To learn about a particular organization, how you might fit in, and what problems or needs the employer has. Knowing these things will help you slant your qualifications towards the needs of the organization.
- To gain experience and self-confidence in interviewing with professionals through discussing yourself and your career interests.
- To enlarge your circle of "expert" contacts in the area. REMEMBER, IT IS WHO YOU KNOW (OR GET TO KNOW) THAT GETS YOU A JOB. It's never too early to establish contacts.
- To ask for other referrals (e.g., "Can you suggest some other people that I might talk to about jobs in this field?")

WHO MIGHT I CONTACT?

Identifying who to talk to often blocks people from doing information interviews. ("I don't know anyone in this field..."). Look for those who:

- Share a common academic major or interest, enthusiasm, or involvement in some activity or lifestyle that appeals to you...or
- Work in a setting you like or
- Work in career areas you're interested in or
- Work in specific jobs in specific organizations
- In this case: have international and a similar educational background

HOW SHOULD I PREPARE?

Remember, people are generally interested in talking about what they do and how they do it. But, don't waste their time or your time -- be prepared! Know your interests, skills, values and how they relate to the career field represented by the persons you're interviewing.

Read about the career area and organization of the person you'll be interviewing. Know exactly what kinds of information you want by having a list of questions in mind. Generally, don't ask something routine that is readily available elsewhere. Check the Internet for any Web sites associated with the organization or career field in which you're interested. Use the following list of questions to help in formulating your own.

WHAT QUESTIONS COULD I ASK DURING THE INFORMATION INTERVIEW?

1. (Background) Tell me how you got started in this field. What was your education? What educational background or related experience might be helpful in entering this field?
2. (Work Environment) What are the daily duties of your job? What are the working conditions? What skills/abilities are utilized in this work?
3. (Problems) What are the toughest problems you deal with? What problems does the organization as a whole have? What is being done to solve these problems?
4. (Rewards) What do you find most rewarding about this work?
5. (Potential) Where do you see yourself going in a few years? What are your long term goals?
6. (The Industry) What trends do you see for this industry in the next 3 to 5 years? What kind of future do you see for this organization? How much of your business is tied to the economy, government spending, weather, supplies, etc.?
7. (Advice) How well-suited is my background for this field? When the time comes, how would I go about finding a job in this field? What experience, paid or volunteer, would you recommend? What suggestions do you have to help make my resume more effective?
8. (Hiring Decision) What are the most important factors used to hire people in this work (education, past experience, personality, special skills). Who makes the hiring decisions for your department? Who supervises the boss? When I am ready to apply for a job, who should I contact?
9. (Job Market) How do people find out about your jobs? Are they advertised in the newspaper (which ones?), on the Web? by word-of-mouth (who spreads the word?) by the personnel office?
10. Do you have any other advice for me?

You are welcome to add additional questions and leave out the ones that don't suit the situation. This is especially true if you interview someone that has a lot of general information about the international alumni in the Finnish labor market.

GOOD LUCK!