

Work-Based Learning (WBL) Informational Interview Packet

Overview

Students can learn about industries, professions, and the skills needed in the workplace through informational interviewing. Most professionals enjoy talking about their careers. Therefore, well-developed informational interviews can provide a comfortable exchange of advice and information. These interviews can help students plan their futures and achieve personal goals. This packet provides WBL students with guidance on how to conduct an effective informational interview.

Pre-Interview Coordination

The following information will help students coordinate an informational interview for any industry sector. Students may modify any of these recommendations based on intended outcomes and areas of interest:

- Decide on three areas of career interest and develop a list of possible contacts. As you choose these areas, develop a written list of your objectives based on the following:
 - What do you expect to learn?
 - How will this knowledge help you navigate your education and career path?
 - How do you plan to leverage what is learned during your interview in your future WBL placement?
- Talk with your WBL Coordinator, school counselor, career coach, family, and friends to develop a list of industries and possible interviewees.
- Select three employers whose industries best align with the career options outlined in your High School and Beyond Plan.
- Consider interviewing professionals from various roles within an industry. You may hear very different answers from a company owner, supervisor, or mid-level manager.
- Write a letter or email to introduce yourself and ask for a 30-minute informational interview.
 - A sample is included in this packet. This sample may also substitute as a script for a telephone request.
- Be prepared to explain the purpose of the interview and your objectives when you receive a response. Explain how and why you selected that person for the interview.
- Schedule a date, time, and location for your interview. Confirm this information with the interviewee as you approach the interview date.
 - If you must travel for your interview, make sure you have reliable transportation and can get to the interview 15 minutes early to avoid any potential travel issues.
 - If you are using technology for a virtual interview, be sure you have the required hardware and software. Ensure a secure network connection and be comfortable using the software.
- Individualize your questions based on the industry, company, and employee you will be interviewing. Incorporate your own personal knowledge into questions if possible.
 - A sample list of questions is included in this packet. You may use them as necessary or develop your own questions based on your goals for the interview.
- Prioritize your questions and practice asking them. You will probably not have time to ask all your questions so be clear about which are most important. Be prepared to elaborate on your questions.
- Complete the appropriate paperwork if you leave campus during the school day to conduct your interview.

Interview Day Best Practices

On the day of your interview, follow these guidelines to ensure you represent yourself and your school in the best light. These guidelines will be well-received by industry professionals and may also help you with a potential WBL placement opportunity.

- Prepare everything for your interview in advance.
 - Dress appropriately for the industry of the person you are interviewing.
 - Ensure you have all your notes and a clean copy of your questions for you and your interviewee if necessary.
 - Arrive at your location or sign into your meeting platform approximately 15 minutes early.
- Establish a professional first impression.
 - Ensure you make proper eye contact with your interviewee.
 - Thank your interviewee for taking the time to meet with you at the beginning and the end of the interview.
 - Offer a professional handshake if your interview is in person and maintain proper posture throughout the interview.
- Be flexible with the interview.
 - Take time to develop a rapport at the beginning of the interview.
 - Ask the questions you have prepared but also be open to new questions related to new information you learn from your interviewee.
 - Be prepared for the interviewee to ask you questions and answer clearly and concisely.

Post-Interview Action Steps

After your interview, make sure you take action to get the most out of the experience. The following action steps will ensure you retain as much information from your interview and document you're learning appropriately in your portfolio.

- Reflect on your interview immediately after your meeting.
 - Consider what went well and what you could have done differently.
 - Document as many new things as possible you learned and how they can help you in your career.
 - Discuss your interview with your WBL Coordinator and seek feedback on your performance.
- Write and send a thank you note to your interviewee (a sample is included in this packet).
 - Express your appreciation for their time and information.
 - Mention one specific question and answer that helped you learn more about the industry.
 - Describe how you will use the information you learned.
- Review your interview notes and develop a written report or reflection writing sample.
 - Synthesize the interview questions and answers, your immediate post-interview thoughts, and insight from your WBL Coordinator.
 - Organize your thoughts into a journal entry or essay.
 - Add your final draft to your WBL portfolio.

Informational Interview Sample Questions

Overview

The following questions can be used during an informational interview to learn more about an industry and secure a WBL placement. Students may use these questions as written or modify them as necessary based on the industry and professional being interviewed.

Nature of the Work and Industry

- What do you do on a typical day?
- What are examples of the tasks performed in your occupation?
- What technical skills are necessary to succeed in this occupation?
- How much of the time do people work on their own, versus in teams or groups?
- What kinds of data do you work with and/or analyze?
- What tools and equipment are used?
- What are the typical hours in this profession and how would you describe the working environment?

Education and Skills Required for the Occupation

- What kinds of academic skills are required to be successful in this profession?
- What kinds of education and degrees are required to work in this field?
- How are skills such as problem-solving, communication, and teamwork required in this profession?
- What kind of specialized training is required?
- What are the specific skills you would look for in an entry-level employee or intern?

Long-Term Employment Outlook

- Are the opportunities in this career path increasing, decreasing, or remaining stable?
- In what parts of the state, country, or world are opportunities increasing?
- Can you describe a typical career path in your organization?
- Does this career offer the opportunity to acquire skills and responsibilities that would allow for advancement?
- In what kinds of other organizations or occupations could an individual apply these skills?

Salary and Earning Potential

- What pay range and benefits can an employee expect?
- How rapidly do pay and benefits increase?
- What is the maximum possible income in this industry?

Occupational Challenges and Motivations

- What are some of the main challenges in your day-to-day work?
- What gives you the most satisfaction or enjoyment?
- What is your greatest source of motivation to succeed?

Final comments

- What advice would you give a person considering a career in this field?
- Can you refer me to anyone else in this or other fields that I could speak with for more information?
- Are there other sources of information that will help me learn more about this industry?

Informational Interview Reflection Questions

Overview

The following questions will help a student reflect on what was learned during the informational interview. Responses to these questions can outline a student's reflective journal entry or essay and be included in the WBL portfolio.

1. What interests of mine align with what is necessary to succeed in this industry?

2. What personality traits do I possess that would help me be successful?

3. What skills and special knowledge do I already have that will help me maintain long-term success in this industry?

4. What skills and special knowledge will I need to develop?

5. Where can I develop these new skills and/or knowledge?

6. Do I believe I would find a long-term career in this industry fulfilling? Why or why not?

7. Overall, how has the information obtained helped me clarify or redefine my educational and career goals?

Informational Interview: Sample Introductory Email

Dear **(Potential Interviewee)**:

My name is **(Student Name)**, and I am a student at **(School Name)** who is interested in learning as much as possible about education and employment opportunities available to me after graduation. I am contacting professionals from various industries that interest me to learn the skills and education needed to succeed in my desired career.

To better understand the **(Industry)** industry, I will be conducting informational interviews over the next couple of weeks. I believe it is important to learn about careers directly from someone who knows how to be successful, and I hope to spend some time learning from you.

Please let me know if we can schedule a 30-minute informational interview at a time and place that is convenient for you. I can meet you in person or coordinate something virtually depending on your availability.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you and hope we can connect sometime soon.

Sincerely,

(Student Name)
(Student Phone Number)
(Student Email)

Informational Interview: Sample Thank You Email

Dear **(Interviewee)**:

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me about your work. I learned a lot from our conversation, and your insight has helped me make a more informed decision about my future. I was especially interested in your comments about **(insert one to three specific lessons learned)**.

Most importantly, the information you shared will help me clarify my educational and career goals moving forward. You have been a tremendous help in many ways.

Thank you again for allowing me to interview you. If I can do anything in the future to help you or your company, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

(Student Name)

(Student Phone Number)

(Student Email)