



GATHER INFORMATION THROUGH AN INFORMATION INTERVIEW

Why?

An information interview is an excellent way to acquire information about roles and organisations that interest you. It can offer you a clearer understanding of what a role includes and what kind of understanding, knowledge and practical skills the duties require. If you are contemplating a career option and would like to know more about what the work is actually like, what qualifications or skills it requires, whether you have what the job takes and whether the job will live up to your expectations, an information interview can be a good way of finding answers.

Information interviews also strengthen your networking skills and encourage you to actively seek information. This will come in handy when writing open applications: because you do not have a job advertisement to respond to, you will have to find out about the employer's hopes and needs yourself.

How?

Contact a person who works in a position or organisation that interests you and ask them for an interview. Before you reach out, think about how you want to introduce yourself and why you want to interview the person in question. You can conduct the interview virtually or face to face, for example in a café or at the interviewee's workplace.

Reserve enough time for the interview. An hour is usually a good length, but sometimes the interviewee's schedule does not allow for a meeting this long. The minimum length of a successful interview is about 30 minutes. Interviews often run longer than expected because interviewees like speaking about themselves and can get carried away. When setting up the interview, tell the interviewee how long you would like the interview to be.

Prepare for the interview by thinking of questions that genuinely interest you. This is your chance to ask exactly the questions that can help you outline or specify your career plans. You can make use of the following questions:

- How did you end up with your current job?
- What kinds of duties does your work include? What is your typical workday like? What is the most rewarding thing about your work?
- What kind of understanding, knowledge and skills does your work require? What else is helpful? What are the biggest challenges in your work? Does the job require formal qualifications?
- What is the salary level like in your field/position? What do the future and job prospects look like in your field? What kinds of future prospects and needs are there in your organisation?



- How does your organisation recruit new talent? If I wanted to apply for this position or organisation, whom should I contact and how?
- Who else is worth speaking with?

Feeling nervous?

The idea of an information interview often feels difficult because you can feel nervous about contacting a person who you do not necessarily know. But remember that people like to talk about their work, so your interviewee will probably only be flattered that you asked and give you a positive reception. The best starting point for an interview is a genuine interest in the interviewee's work and career. Do bear in mind that asking for an interview at a very short notice is inconsiderate. A suitable time to suggest for an interview is two or three weeks ahead.

If you feel that you do not have any potential interviewees in your network, you can ask for tips from your degree programme staff, google potential people or surf the websites of interesting organisations. LinkedIn is also a good tool for finding potential interviewees: you can use the [LinkedIn alumni tool](#) to search for University of Helsinki alumni with a similar educational background to yours or who work in positions or organisations that interest you. Your own university's alumni are usually very motivated to give back to their alma mater and help out their junior colleagues.