

Informational Interviewing and Job Shadowing

The next step is to talk to people about careers. There are some different ways you can do this.

Informational Interviewing is where you talk to one or more people working in careers that are of interest to you. You can find these people in a number of ways. You may already know someone who has an interesting career. Your friends or relatives might know someone who is working in that field. You can look locate some mentors by logging on mavjobs.com and using the Mentor Network. Mentors on mavjobs.com are registered employers or people who graduated from Minnesota State Mankato and are working in a variety of careers. These volunteer Mentors have listed their contact information so you can talk to them about what they do. To find out more about the Mentor Network, visit <http://www.mnsu.edu/cdc/resources/mentornetwork.html>. Your professors or classmates may also know some people who would be happy to talk to you about careers.

Job Shadowing is when you follow someone around for all or part of his or her work day to find out about an occupation. Some people do this on the same day of their informational interview. It can be time consuming, but is usually very informative.

Talking to students in a program: You may want to find out what students experience while they are working toward a particular major. Do remember that students are not in the workforce yet. They may not be able to help you with finding out if you would like a job or career. They can help you to learn about classes in a major and tell you what a program is like.

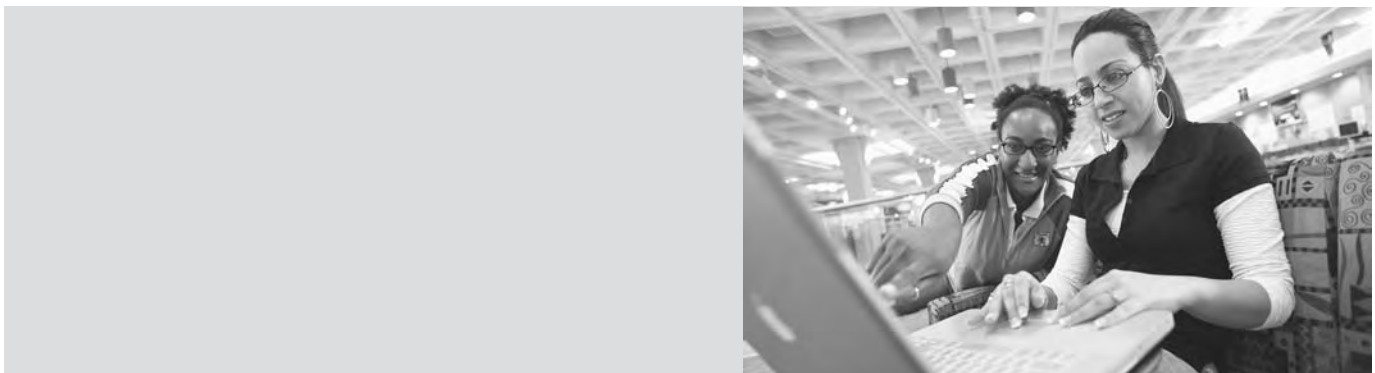
Talking to professors in a program: Professors not only know the subject matter for the classes they teach, but they also know about occupations related to their department. They may also keep in touch with graduates from their departments and can tell you where these grads are working. Professors often have connections to employers at various organizations and can help you to connect with other professionals in their field.

How do I set up an informational interview?

Asking people if you can have an appointment to interview or job shadow can be intimidating. It can also feel overwhelming to decide what to ask about. These next tips should help you.

Call or e-mail the person and be courteous. Let him or her know how much time they can expect to spend with you. Usually a half hour is a good amount of time for an interview. It is better to visit the person in his or her workspace, but it can still be useful if they only have time for a phone call.

You will also want to find out about the company ahead of time. Check out their Web site. Find out what the company does.



Prepare for the interview and bring a list of questions with you. Think about what you want to know. The following questions can be a good start for you.

1. What is your job title?
2. How did you get in to this career? What type of education or training did you get? Is this a typical path for this occupation?
3. What is a typical day like for you?
4. Could you estimate the starting salary in this field?
5. What is the best way to find out about openings in this field?
6. What is your favorite thing about this field?
7. What is your biggest challenge in this occupation?
8. What are some misconceptions people have about this occupation?
9. How would you recommend that I get prepared to be successful in this field?
10. What would you recommend that I read or do to learn more about this field?
11. What is the best way to find out about job openings in this field?
12. Can you refer me to anyone else in this field that I should talk to?

Remember, this could be the start of your professional career! You will want to dress professionally, like you would if you were interviewing for a job. Arrive early and be courteous to everyone you see. Bring your resume if you have one. Many times the person you are interviewing will keep your resume on file and refer back to it if he or she hears of opportunities you might enjoy. Be friendly and upbeat, and talk about why you were interested in interviewing the person. You can and should take notes so you have all of the information you need. Save the notes you gather and contact information you obtained from this person in case you want to follow up with him or her later on in your career.

After the interview, send a thank you note. Review the information you gathered, and think about how the information fits with what you want out of a job. Many people like to do more than one interview with different people in the same occupation. Sometimes what a person likes or dislikes about a job is specific to his or her situation, and cannot be assumed that aspect will be in every job in this field.