

CAREERS

INFORMATION GATHERING INTERVIEWS

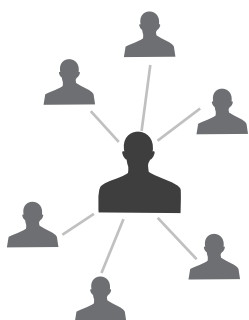
What is an Information Gathering Interview?

An Information Gathering Interview (IGI) is an interview to gather information from someone working in a field that is of interest to you. It is an excellent way to gain information if you feel that you do not have enough information to make a career decision or to successfully pursue a career or apply for a position in that field of work. IGI's can also help you to validate what you already know about a career. The IGI, however, is not a time to ask for a job.



Many people are happy to give advice particularly to those students who are being proactive about managing their career. However, be prepared for knockbacks. If an individual does not wish to be interviewed, just move on to the next person on your list. Generally people are happy to talk about their jobs and careers and are willing to give you a wealth of information.

Where to start



The key to obtaining an IGI is knowing what you want to find out about. The clearer you are, the easier it will be to find someone who will agree to your request.

1. Identify what you want to know and make a list of questions

2. Identify the roles or job titles that you are seeking information about

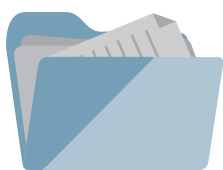
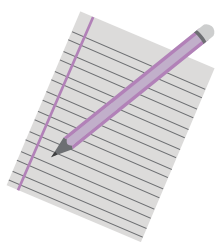
- Start with people you know: academics, tutors, friends or family
- Interview a few people you know to get a balanced view of a position in this field
- Current or previous work experience providers
- The Western Sydney University Careers team may provide you with contacts
- Professional associations
- Human Resources Departments
- Yellow pages, Business Directories, Corporate web pages
- Careers expos.

3. Organise the interview

- Send a letter or email requesting an IGI. You can use a similar approach to that used in a cover letter, except that you are requesting an interview for information **NOT** work (refer to information sheet on cover letters)
- Explain that you are asking for information about JOB TITLE/CAREER and you expect the interview will take 20-30 minutes
- Try to organise face to face interviews as they are the most valuable and effective. If this is not possible, informational interviews can be held over the phone or via email.

4. Prepare for the interview

- Research the organisation, find out as much information as you can e.g. products or services they provide, who their customers are, how many staff are employed etc
- Prepare a list of questions - see the examples section of this document
- Organise what you will wear - dress as if you were attending a job interview
- Consider how you are going to record information you will receive in the interview. If you are considering taping the interview, don't assume the interviewee will agree to the interview being taped. Contact the interviewee prior to the interview to seek their permission
- Practice asking your questions and check the timing.



Conducting the interview

- Arrive 10 minutes early
- Greet the interviewee politely, introduce yourself, shake hands, smile and thank them for meeting with you
- Start the interview by stating your objective e.g. "I am here to learn and gather information about..."
- Have your list of questions handy - you don't want to waste time looking through a folder or bag for them
- Record the interviewee's responses to your answers and any additional comments they may make during the course of the interview. Don't let note taking impede the flow of conversation - jot down important points only
- Share information and talk about your skills, qualifications and interests. You may even show them your resume and get feedback
- Keep to time
- At the end of the interview, thank the interviewee for their time - this is not a job interview so **DO NOT** ask for a job.



Sample questions



Try to make your questions open-ended questions that will generate discussion. Make sure the answer to your questions are not easily accessible from the internet or other company literature, that is, do not ask questions to what you should know the answer. Ask questions that are appropriate and important to **YOU**, for example:

- How did you get your job?
- What is a typical career path in this field?
- What skills are essential to be effective in this job?
- What is the most rewarding thing about your job? What is the most frustrating thing about your job?
- Could you describe a typical working day? Does this field of work place demands on your personal life?
- With hindsight, would you do anything differently? If so, what?
- What do you think the future holds for work in this field?
- How would I go about getting work experience in this field?
- What would you recommend for inclusion in a career plan to facilitate the acquisition of these skills? Do you have or have you previously had a mentor? What courses or experiences have been valuable to you in your work?

Following up

Always send a thank you note or email to the interviewee. Evaluate the information you received and store it in hard copy or electronically, you will want to refer to this information in the future. The interviewee is a good start to building a network of contacts. Link up with them on LinkedIn to help stay connected.

