

# HOW TO CONDUCT INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS



**McGill**

**CaPS**

Career Planning Service  
Service de planification de carrière

# INFORMATION INTERVIEWS

**What are they?** An information interview involves contacting and talking with someone in a field and/or company of interest to increase your knowledge of the sector and receive advice and information from someone with concrete experience in the area.

**Who can I talk to?** You can interview anyone who knows about the work you would like to do, ideally someone employed in your field of interest or in an organization or sector where you would like to work.

- Start with people you already know
- Ask if they know of anyone in your field or company of interest and can introduce you
- Research organizations of interest; use the ideas in this guide to find current employees in relevant positions to contact
- Approach new contacts (i.e. people you meet at career fairs or speakers from on-campus career panels and events)
- Find current employees using the tips in the CaPS How to Contact Employers Guide

**Why would I do this?** Information interviews can help you fine tune your career objectives, to discover additional possibilities or areas of interest, and to develop contacts and potential mentors in your field.

**How should I contact them?** Start with an email. Follow up with a call, if need be. Arrange a meeting.

## What to write in the email:

Intro + what you want (ask for advice)

- *As a recent McGill graduate with a strong interest in...I would like to get your advice on...*

Why you chose them

- *I am interested in you/your organization because...*

Who you are

- *I have a background in...and would like to use my experience in...to make a transition to...*

How you will follow up

- *I would like to follow up with you on...to see if we could arrange a meeting...*

\*There is generally no need to attach your CV at this stage.

## At an information interview

Your enthusiasm, preparation and ability to communicate clearly are key. Prior to the meeting, think about the type of information that would be helpful to you, and come up with some questions that will help you determine if the company/position is a good fit with your interests and values.

The following list is meant to help you get started at an information interview. Other questions will naturally flow from your conversation once you get going. Focus on the areas and concerns of most relevance to you

and respect anything your interviewee does not want to or is not able to talk about. Always remember to thank them for their time and ask if there is anyone else they would recommend you speak with.

Take notes only sparingly so that you can listen attentively. You can review and expand your points following the interview.

\*Following the interview, send a thank-you note or email within 24 hours of the interview.

### Questions to ask at an information interview

#### Questions about their career path/training:

- How did you get into this field?
- What has your career path been like to date? Is it representative of most people in this kind of position?
- What education/training do you have?
- Are you a member of any professional orders or associations? Which ones do you feel are the most important to belong to?
- What are the future prospects in this field? What trends do you see developing over the next few years?
- If you could do things all over again, would you choose the same path for yourself and why?

#### Questions about their current position and responsibilities:

- What does a typical day/week in your job look like?
- What do you enjoy the most about your job? The least?
- What skills have you found essential for success in this occupation?
- Could you tell me about one of the main challenges you face in this position?

#### Questions about working conditions:

- How many hours do you work in a typical week?
- How much autonomy do you have in terms of what you focus on at work?
- What kind of supervision did you have when you were starting out? Now?
- How is your performance evaluated?
- What kind of professional development opportunities are available?

#### Additional questions:

- What advice would have helped you when you were starting out?
- How would you recommend I “try out” this line of work (i.e. through a summer job, internship, volunteering, shadowing...)?
- What other fields or jobs would you suggest I research?
- Is there anyone you would recommend I talk to next? When I call, may I mention that you referred me?

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## **CaPS**

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