

How do I interview?

Interviewing is a very adult skill and can be a bit scary at first. Remember that generally people enjoy being asked about their jobs and interests. In fact, many times they are flattered that a young adult is wanting to learn from them. They *want* to be helpful to you in your journey.

The best way to maximize your experience is to realize that YOU are organizing the meeting. Remember that it is business and not personal. You need to be courteous of other people's time. Introduce yourself, take good notes, and always thank the interviewee.

The most important question in any informational interview is, "Is there anyone else to whom I should speak?" Learning this networking skill will help you be more successful in the work place.

Requesting an Interview

What do I say when I make a telephone call or a personal visit?

1. Introduce yourself:

Hello, my name is _____. I am a senior at Olympic High School.

2. Explain the reason for your call:

The reason I am calling you is that your name was given to me by _____ . She/he said you are an expert authority on the subject of _____ OR on the career of _____. As part of my senior _____ (English Composition or Social Studies) class, I am researching _____ for my culminating project.

3. Explain what is involved:

One of the requirements for our culminating projects is to conduct interviews with people who are experts in or have substantial knowledge about our selected topic of research. Being interviewed would involve meeting with me at an agreed upon time so that I may ask questions and you can share information.

4. Ask the person if he/she is willing to be your community consultant or willing to meet with you to discuss further the opportunity:

Would you be willing to assist me with my culminating project by being willing to be interviewed?

5. When you get a positive response, arrange a date and a time to meet at his/her convenience and at a safe, public place.

When is the best time for you to meet with me?

6. Thank the person for his/her time. Let him/her know you are looking forward to meeting with him/her.

Thank you for your time. I am looking forward to meeting with you.

Where to interview?

For ALL meetings (during or outside of school)...

- Meet in a safe place (person's place of business, restaurant, etc.)
- Dress appropriately for the workplace (professional, business casual, casual)
- Be on time for your appointment
- Be prepared – have an outline of your project
 - DO NOT meet for an interview without a clear idea of your project direction
- Have your list of questions ready and take notes of the answers (required projection documentation)
- Be courteous
- Request a business card (for contact information)
- Thank the person for his/her time when you leave
- SEND A THANK YOU NOTE RIGHT AWAY!

IF you are going to miss school to interview...

- Get a prearranged absence contract form (from attendance office) and have teachers and parents complete it BEFORE the day of your absence.
- Check with your teachers about assignments you will need to complete due to your absence

Interviewing Techniques

Your project will require that you review a lot of information. A minimum of 15 sources must be included on your annotated bibliography. At least three of those sources must be interviews with different people. The interviews will provide you with excellent information, possibly the most useful information you gather. Interviewing helps you learn the necessary skill of networking.

1. Plan your interview and be prepared.
2. Know what type of information you hope to gain – Have your questions written and reviewed by your teacher and peers.
3. Focus on open-questions to gain more information.
4. Have materials ready: pens, paper and tape recorder if necessary.
5. Dress appropriately.
6. Be on Time – a business person's time is very valuable, being late may result in missing the interview all together.
7. Keep focused and stay on topic.
8. Take correct and accurate notes.
9. Thank the interviewee.
10. Be sure to ask for a business card so you can send a written thank you note after your meeting.
11. The **most important interview question** is always, "Can you recommend anyone else with whom I might speak?" This is called **networking** and is a necessary skill in the work place.

Sample Interview Questions

1. On a typical day in this position, what do you do?
2. What training or education is required for this type of work?
3. What personal qualities or abilities are important to being successful in this job?
4. What part of this job do you find most satisfying? Most challenging?
5. How did you get your job?
6. What opportunities for advancement are there in this field?
7. What entry-level jobs are best for learning as much as possible?
8. What are the salary ranges for various levels in this field?
9. How do you see jobs in this field changing in the future?
10. Is there a demand for people in this occupation?
11. What special advice would you give a person entering this field?
12. What types of training do companies offer persons entering this field?
13. What are the basic prerequisites for jobs in this field?
14. Which professional journals and organizations would help me learn more about this field?
15. Are there others you know of in this field that I should talk to?
16. What do you think of the experience I've had so far in terms of entering this field?
17. From your perspective, what are the problems you see working in this field?
18. What other fields or jobs related to this one would you suggest I research?

Email Etiquette

How do I compose an email to someone I don't know?

There are a few important points to remember when composing email, particularly when the email's recipient is a superior and/or someone who does not know you.

- Be sure to include a meaningful subject line; this helps clarify what your message is about and may also help the recipient prioritize reading your email
- Just like a written letter, be sure to open your email with a greeting like Dear Dr. Jones, or Ms. Smith:
- Use standard spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. **THERE'S NOTHING WORSE THAN AN EMAIL SCREAMING A MESSAGE IN ALL CAPS.**
- Write clear, short paragraphs and be direct and to the point; professionals and academics alike see their email accounts as business. Don't write unnecessarily long emails or otherwise waste the recipient's time
- Be friendly and cordial, but don't try to joke around (jokes and witty remarks may be inappropriate and, more commonly, may not come off appropriately in email)

What are some guides for continuing email conversations?

Once you have exchanged emails with a person on a given subject, it is probably OK to leave greetings out of your follow-up emails. Here are some other points to consider about continuing conversations over email:

- Try to respond within a reasonable time frame, though "reasonable" will depend on the recipient's expectations and the subject being discussed
- Trim back the old messages: most email clients will keep copying older messages to the bottom of an email. Delete older messages so as to keep your message size from getting too large, and to keep your messages looking clean.
- If someone asks a lot of questions, it may be OK to embed your answers into the sender's message copied at the bottom of your email. However, if you're going to do this, be sure to say so at the top, and leave generous space, for example:

> How long are you staying?

Less than two weeks.

> Will you have time to visit with us?

I'm really hoping to, but my schedule will be pretty tight. Let me get back to you about that after the weekend.

What sorts of information shouldn't be sent via email?

Most people do not realize that email is not as private as it may seem. Without additional setup, email is not encrypted; meaning that your email is "open" and could possibly be read by an unintended person as it is transmitted to your reader. With that in mind, never send the following information over email:

- Usernames and passwords
- Credit card or other account information

Additionally, avoid sensitive or information that could be potentially damaging to someone's career and/or reputation, including your own. Beyond email's general lack of security and confidentiality, your recipient can always accidentally hit the Forward button, leave her email account open on a computer, or print and forget that she's printed a copy of your email.

What about sending attachments?

The ease of transmitting files to a particular person makes email very attractive. However, there are some guidelines you should follow:

- Never send an attachment to someone you don't know the first time you contact them (unless, of course, the contact has posted a job ad requesting a resume in a Word document). They (or their computers) might think it is spam or a virus, and delete your message.
- Avoid unnecessarily large file sizes. Digital photos especially: most digital photos come off the camera much larger than can be viewed on screen. Learn how to resize your digital photographs.
- When you must send a large file or set of files, do the recipient the courtesy of sending an email telling them what you'll be sending and why.
- Be sure to have anti-virus software installed on your computer to scan all of your outgoing and incoming messages for viruses.

Email Listservs and Discussion Groups

Poor email behavior is always cropping up on email listservs and discussion groups. Here are some common mistakes to avoid:

- Double-check the To: area of your email when you reply. Too many people have intended to reply to a message poster alone when, in fact, their reply went to the entire list—much to their embarrassment. If you want to be extra-careful, start a new email and type the single recipient's address.
- Do not air your grievances or beefs about your school, colleagues, or employer on a list. Personal attacks should also be avoided. Such postings make the organization you are associated with look bad, while also making you sound like a gossip and whiner. Particularly on large lists, you also may not know who else is on it. Be professional, and likewise avoid piling onto discussions about who's got it worst at work, school, etc.
- If you are new to a discussion list, you should "lurk" for awhile—that is, just be a reader to get the sense of what the group talks about, how it talks about it, and what types of behaviors are expected from list members. Only when you have gotten that sense should you initiate a post.