

Informational Interviews and Job Shadowing

An **informational interview** is a conversation with a professional from your field who can offer insight into a company, position or career. They can be from HR, recent graduates or OSU alumni — anyone who can serve as a connector in your field. Consider reaching out to professors, family, friends, etc. Most informational interviews last about 30 minutes. **Job shadowing** is an unpaid opportunity to observe a professional in a position of interest. The time varies depending on availability and type of position—some shadows last an hour, others several days. ***Tip*** **The Career Development Center offers a yearly Job Shadow program** where you can apply to be matched with a company of interest for a shadow in the summer.

Informational Interview Questions

- How did you get started in this field?
- What do you enjoy most about your job?
- What are common entry-level positions in your field?
- What skills are needed to be successful in your role?
- How is the industry changing/what challenges do you face?
- What set of characteristics does your organization look for when hiring?
- What's it like to work at your company?
- What advice would you give a person aspiring to enter your field of work?
- What has been the biggest learning curve for you in this role?
- **Can you connect me with others at your company or at similar organizations?**

Reaching Out

- Introduce yourself with your name, major and university.
- Describe your interest in the person's field and/or position and your specific request.
- Make clear that you want to conduct an informational interview or job shadow.
- Be flexible.
- Be clear on the amount of time this will take.
- Express your appreciation, excitement and passion. Remember, they are doing you a favor! But don't stress, many professionals are happy to help students.
- Always respect the professional's time and consideration and stick to your agreed schedule. Informational interviews and job shadows are a courtesy to you as a developing professional and student.

Sample Email

Hello _____,

My name is _____, and I am a sophomore at Oregon State University in the College of Earth, Ocean, and Atmospheric Sciences, majoring in geology. My academic advisor, Big Bird, gave me your name and contact information as a geology alumnus who is open to meeting with students. I am specifically interested in pursuing a career in seismology.

I would be very grateful for an opportunity to introduce myself and ask you some questions about the U.S. Geological Survey and how you got to where you are. Are you available for a 20-30 minute conversation in the next couple of weeks? I am flexible to work around your schedule and can meet in person or via Zoom. My number is 555-555-5555. I look forward to meeting you!

Thank you,
