

Information Interviews

An information interview is a simple for effective way to research specialty specific information. Consider using this simple guide as part of your career research in order to inform your career progress.

Step 1

Start with the end in mind

Start by identifying the information you require. List the questions you need answering – How is the specialty changing? Where are the opportunities? How can I get in to it? What should I expect? Use the information interviews prompts in **step 4** to help you make a full list of all the questions you want to explore.

Step 2

Find three people

Use your support community and network to identify three people who can help you. You may find them from a variety of sources – from your previous roles, people your colleagues/friends recommend, from related internet sites.

Try to start with an early win by finding someone who you know is keen to help.

Try to seek out a range of views, from those who may be very influential and experienced, to those who may be much newer to the system.

Step 3

Arrange a meeting

1. Introduce yourself (by phone, e-mail or face to face) and say why you've made contact
2. Establish a link by mentioning the people you know in common or better still the person who recommended them to you
3. Give some positive feedback, e.g. "You've been recommended by ... who says you're the ideal person to speak to because of your experience/interest in .." Remember we all like to feel valued.
4. Say you are carrying out **information interviews** with some key people in the specialty and would really appreciate their time
5. Make it clear **why** you want the discussion and **how** it will help you – what do you want to achieve as a result of them offering your time?
6. Ask for 10-15 minutes
7. Make sure you get to meet them in their chosen venue
8. Be yourself and don't be too pushy – you don't want to be seen as a salesperson
9. Be prepared for rejection – the person may not have time or the interest to speak with you – but you may be able to ask '*can you recommend anybody else I could speak to?*'
10. Be prepared for a chance conversation – carry your questions around with you!

Golden Rules

- Don't try to use the time as an impromptu way of getting feedback on your CV. If you would like CV feedback, make sure the person knows this in advance.
- Stick to your structure and time limit
- Find a good way of recording the information that works for you – look for the key themes on completion
- Let people know how you get on if they are interested in your progress; keep them informed if relevant

Step 4

Conducting the Information Interview

Once you've introduced yourself and why you're there, you might find the following structure useful.

Question	Ideas
Thank you for seeing me	Make a positive first impression, remember to smile and show you appreciate them offering their time
How did you get in to this specialty?	Explore traditional entry routes and alternative ways of getting in. How are things changing now? E.g. Is the specialty becoming more community based?
What are the key skills and personal qualities required for this specialty?	Notice if there are any themes emerging; notice any positives and negatives stereotypes
What excites you most about the job?	What are the best bits about the job? Think about what they say. Does it: Use your prime skills? (the ones you LOVE using and are GOOD at) Build on your passions? Link to what else you want to achieve in your life? Involve people who inspire you in a place that energises you and provides the right payoffs?
What's not so good about the work?	Once again, test the things that are important to you personally.
How do you see the specialty/sector changing over the next 3-5-10 years?	What challenges and problems do you foresee? Here you are getting the person to look ahead and what is needed in the future. They may well highlight problems as well as opportunities. Both will give you invaluable information on what skills and experience the specialty will value in the future.
What is the current competition level for training?	Is the information biased, based on personal opinion, hearsay, or fact? Are there differences regionally/nationally? Have you looked at the MMC website for competition ratios to compare?
What kind of people will the specialty need in the future?	Many job descriptions look at the present position. This question will allow you to spot in more detail the critical skills, expertise and experience required for highly successful candidates of the future. It will give you a clear idea of what you need, to be employable in that sector.
Can you suggest 2 or 3 other people who could help?	You can tailor this question by identifying types of people, areas you need particular help with, or locations they are in e.g. "Can you recommend any Oncologists in the Nottingham area?" Try to get contact details. If the person seems really keen, ask them to make contact with them in advance for you.
Any other questions?	What else does it prompt you to ask?
Thanks very much for your time.	Follow up with some kind of 'thank you' - something memorable so that the person knows you have appreciated them giving you their time

Recording your Information Interview

Step 5

What next...

Look for key themes in your data – what does it tell you?

What have you learned as a result?

How does what you've found out match up to your:

- Skills?
- Attributes?
- Personality?
- Interests?
- Abilities?
- What else do you want from work and life?

What other questions do you need to explore as a result?

In terms of your career development, what do you intend to **do** next as a result? (Make your actions **SMART** – specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time bound)

When will you do this by? (Putting a date on an action will make you much more likely to achieve it)