

# SO, YOU SAY YOU WANT TO INTERVIEW PEOPLE?

An Informational Interview How-to.

- \* *What is it?*
- \* *Why should I do it?*
- \* *Where to start?*
- \* *What to ask?*
- \* *Scheduling Interviews 101*
- \* *Conducting the Interview.*
- \* *What to do after?*

HELLO THERE,  
THIS IS VY FROM  
THE CAREER  
DEVELOPMENT'S  
PCA\* TEAM!

\*PEER CAREER ADVISING

TODAY, I'LL BE  
GUIDING YOU  
THROUGH  
CONDUCTING  
INFORMATIONAL  
INTERVIEWS.



#1

BUT WHAT EXACTLY IS AN  
INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW?

?

It is an informal conversation with someone who is working in an area of your interest and is willing to give you advice or information.

It is a very effective research tool when it comes to jobs and career exploration - in addition to reading books, exploring the Internet, and examining job descriptions.

#2

AN IMPORTANT THING TO KEEP IN MIND:

IT IS NOT A JOB INTERVIEW, AND THE OBJECTIVE IS NOT TO GET A JOB.

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**IT IS NOT A JOB INTERVIEW, AND THE OBJECTIVE IS NOT TO GET A JOB.**

IT'S TO GET TO KNOW THAT PERSON, THE PROCESS,  
THE JOB, THE INDUSTRY, AND OF POSSIBLE OPEN OPPORTUNITIES.

THEN WHY SHOULD I EVEN BOTHER DOING THIS??

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This is a great way to get information that is not always readily-available online!

Some examples:

- \* How is the work environment or workplace relationship?
- \* Learn how professional artists got their career started.
- \* Find out about a career path you didn't know existed.
- \* Learn what it's like to work at a specific organization:
  - \* The process of working on a major project?
  - \* What does a day in the studios/workplace look like?



**MOST  
IMPORTANTLY,  
YOU CAN INITIATE  
A PROFESSIONAL  
RELATIONSHIP AND  
EXPAND YOUR  
NETWORK.**

# 3

### PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW: WHERE DO I START?

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**FIRST AND FOREMOST, A REMINDER:**  
BE GRACIOUS AND KEEP AN OPEN MIND.  
**SECONDLY: BE PREPARED!**



## Research, research, research!

Start with choosing the person (or people) to interview!

Find the position you want to have someday then see who's doing it. Or, maybe it's an illustrator you have followed since forever, maybe it's a photographer that you have always admired, or a curator at a gallery that you are curious about.

It could be anyone who is related to your interests.

**HINT:** LOOK AT [LINKEDIN](#), STUDIO/COMPANY WEBSITE, IMDB, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND ETC.

# 4

OH,  
SO WHAT  
QUESTIONS  
COULD I  
ASK?

?

## Now that you know who you would like to interview, do even more research!

DON'T ASK QUESTIONS YOU CAN EASILY FIND ON THEIR PUBLIC PROFILE, OR IN Q&A'S THAT THEY HAVE DONE MULTIPLE TIMES IN THE PAST. YOU DON'T WANT TO WASTE YOUR PRECIOUS TIME WITH THEM. TRY TO TAILOR THE QUESTIONS TO THE INFORMATION ABOUT THEM THAT YOU FIND IN YOUR RESEARCH OR IN THEIR PORTFOLIO.

**HINT:** LOOK INTO THEIR PORTFOLIO, LINKEDIN, POSITION, AND CAREER PATHS.

General questions (taken from our [introduction guide](#)) could be:

- \* *When you were in college, what did you think your career was going to be?*
- \* *Describe a typical work day (or week).*
- \* *What do you find most rewarding about the work? Biggest challenges?*
- \* *How is your staff organized?*
- \* *What is exciting about your position?*
- \* *How do you find out about jobs in your field?*
- \* *What other types of jobs could you apply to with your experience?*
- \* *How well suited is my background for my kind of career?*
- \* *If you could give me some advice about entering this field, what would it be?*
- \* *Based on our conversation, is there anyone else you would recommend I speak to?*
- \* *If so, may I use your name when I contact them?*
- \* *Are there any other organizations or companies you think I should check out?*

# 5



ONCE YOU HAVE QUESTIONS READY,  
IT'S TIME FOR "SCHEDULING INTERVIEWS 101"

Be gracious and understand that they might not want to for any reason. Everyone is also busy, so they might not be able to get back to you.

*SOME SOFT LIMIT FOR THE INTERVIEW LENGTH:*

\*Phone and In-person: 20-30 minutes max.

"I recognize you're a busy person, and I'd love 20 mins."

\*Email: 7 is a magic number for questions.

You can ask more, but gauge the flow of conversation and ask only if they are willing or able to give you more time. You wouldn't want to be intruding too much.

### SAMPLE STRUCTURE FOR REQUEST EMAIL

Dear \*insert name\*,

Introduce yourself (name, interest, schooling etc.)

How you know of them, why you like their work or admire them, what about them that intrigues you, this is where your research comes in.]

So, I wonder if you would be open to an informational interview? I'd love to hear more about your experience and your work.

I understand you're busy, so I'm open to doing it through email, phone/video call, or whichever that works for you.

Thank you,  
Your name.

BUT WHAT IF I DON'T HEAR BACK FROM THE REQUEST?



I would give a week and a half for the request's reply (or, at the very least, a solid week).

If there's nothing, you can try to send a check-in follow up to see if they have received your initial email. Give it five more days, and if they still don't get back then you should drop it.

**HINT:** AFTER THE CONVERSATION STARTED, VOLLEY BACK AND FORTH FOR MAYBE THREE DAYS. DROP IT AFTER 2 IF THEY DON'T GET BACK.

# 6

WOW, I GOT THE INTERVIEW SCHEDULED!! WHAT DO I DO??

## Congrats! It's time to conduct the interview!

- \* Restate that your objective is receiving information and advice. (*You're not looking for a job from them*)
- \* Give a brief overview of yourself and your education and/or work background.
- \* Encourage the interviewer to do most of the talking. (*"I have said a lot", and turn it back to them*)
- \* Take notes!! This is so important!
- \* *Respect their time. Keep to agreed-upon timeframe.*

# SOME TIPS FOR INTERVIEW ETIQUETTE:

## OVER EMAIL

Make sure to check your grammar and spelling, especially the name of the company, projects, or the name of the person you are talking to.

Try to reply as soon as possible.

Volley the conversation back and forth. If you want to send more questions, definitely ask if you can give follow up questions beforehand.

For more professional emailing etiquette tips, please check out our other how-to guide about "[SENDING PROFESSIONAL EMAILS](#)"

**IMPORTANT: PLEASE RESPECT THE INTERVIEWEE'S TIME!**

KEEP AN EYE ON THE CLOCK AND WHEN IT'S TIME, EVEN IF YOU STILL HAVE MORE QUESTIONS, YOU SHOULD SAY: "I have really enjoyed our talk, and I want to respect your time if you have to go."

IF THEY OFFER TO KEEP GOING, THEN FEEL FREE TO DO SO!

## SO, AT THE END, WHAT DO I DO?

? You could ask if you may stay in touch and contact them again in the future with other questions. Or, ask for suggestions of other people you could speak to to gain a different perspective.

# 7

WHAT ABOUT AFTER?

?

## SEND A THANK YOU NOTE!!

If you can, send a stationery paper thank you. If not, an email thank you note is still a must.

You can even send stickers, postcards, bookmarks you made along with the notes. It's nice and they might end up using it and remembering you! :)

If it went really well, keep them apprised of your progress in the field!! (especially if they mentioned to keep them updated.)

## IN PERSON

Dress nice and appropriate, as you would for a job interview. Casual clothes are fine, but you still want to make a good first impression.

Arrive on time or a few minutes early (10 max). If it's their house or office, don't come 30 minutes early. Find a place to hang out & come back closer to the time.

Treat it like a job interview, but a little less formal. For more more tips on interviews in general, check out our guide on "[MASTERING THE INTERVIEW](#)"

## ON THE PHONE

Wear headphones if you can for the best audio.

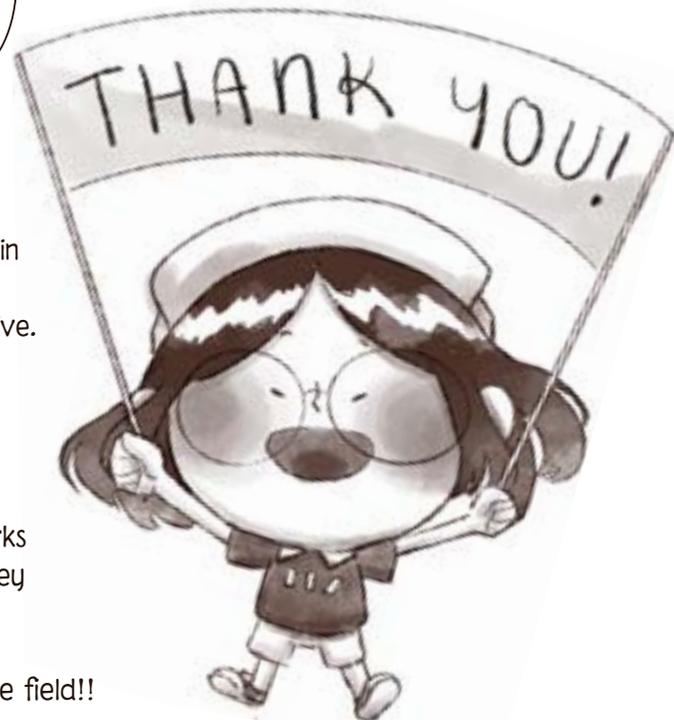
Be in a quiet space. You don't want unwanted noises on the phone.

Speak slowly, clearly. We tend to talk fast when we are nervous.

**HINT:** FOR IN-PERSON & ON-THE-CALL, YOU CAN TRY AND ASK IF IT IS OKAY TO RECORD THE CONVERSATION ALONG WITH NOTE-TAKING!

YOU COULD SAY: "WHEN I TAKE NOTE IT'S HELPFUL FOR ME TO HAVE THE AUDIO, IS IT OKAY IF I RECORD OUR TALK? I UNDERSTAND IF YOU'RE NOT COMFORTABLE WITH IT."

AGAIN, PLEASE UNDERSTAND THAT THEY MIGHT NOT BE OKAY WITH IT.



AND, THAT'S IT FOLKS!!! THE INFORMATION IN THIS GUIDE IS PULLED FROM MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE, OTHER GUIDES FROM OUR CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER, AND FROM ERINN HAGERTY'S PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CLASS. THANK YOU FOR STICKING WITH ME TO THE END, GOOD LUCK! (SIGNING OFF, VY R.)