

LESSON 3

Informational Interviews

Learning Objective

To help students learn how to conduct an informational interview

Materials Needed

handouts: "Informational Interview Guide" and "Informational Interview Log"

Vocabulary

interview, informational, personnel, qualifications, training, benefits, wages, entry-level, advancement

SCANS Competencies

Interpersonal: Participates as a member of a team

Personal Qualities: Sociability

Basic Skills: Speaking



Instructions for Conducting the Activity:

This activity will give students an opportunity to practice doing an informational interview.

Using the chart below, explain to the class that job seekers are likely to participate in one or both of two different types of interviews.

	Informational Interview	Job Interview
Why?	To learn more about jobs you might be interested in doing	To see if your skills match what the employer needs for a specific job opening
When?	In the early stages of your exploration of career options	After you have applied for a specific job opening
Who?	Friends, family, neighbors, someone who has worked in a particular industry or occupation for a long time, someone in the community who does the job	May be a human resources person from the company or a manager who is doing the hiring directly
Outcome?	You have more information about a job, you make a potentially valuable contact to add to your network	The employer decides whether to hire you or not

Brainstorm with students a list of questions that they might want to ask someone to find out more about a particular job. Record the list on the board.

Explain to students that they are going to have an opportunity to practice doing an informational interview with people working in the building or in the program. The students will conduct the informational interviews in groups of two or three. The interviews should take only about ten minutes unless the person being interviewed wants to continue talking.

Distribute and review the Informational Interview Log. For question #6, students can add in a question based on the list generated in class. Model how to approach people to ask for an interview. (Note for ESOL classes: In addition to role-playing the initial contact interview, the teacher may need to allow time to practice using role-plays to prepare for the actual informational interview.)

Each group of students will decide who to interview. The group can decide who will take notes during the interview and who will ask questions. Allow a half-hour for the groups to find someone and conduct the interview in the building. The groups should report back to class and complete their logs. Then all groups take turns sharing what they learned.

Large group discussion questions include:

- What was easiest about doing the interview? What was hardest?
- What would you do differently?
- What additional questions did you ask?
- Who would you like to interview in the community to learn more about jobs you are interested in?

Extension Activity

On the board, record the list of jobs students explored on the Internet in Occupational Exploration, Section III, Lesson 1. Divide the list into categories (e.g., manufacturing jobs, health care jobs, etc.) or by skill level or any other way they are interested in. Ask students to look at the jobs on the list that are in the category in which they were most interested. Each student should look over the list and decide on a small number of jobs they would like to know more about. Group students together who are interested in the same or related jobs.

This sets the stage for the groups to conduct informational interviews with people in the community who are knowledgeable about particular jobs areas. People to be interviewed might include a personnel officer from a particular company, a representative of the local Career Center, or Chamber of Commerce. S/he could be a worker who has held a variety of jobs or someone who has worked in the same industry for a long time and knows it well.

Through such interviews, participants can find out about job opportunities, changes in employment in this sector over time, and the skill and training requirements for jobs. The interviewing could be done by a small group or pairs (and several small groups could interview different people). The interviews could be done in class (with the interviewee invited to come) or in the person's own office. Either way, the interview should be planned in detail ahead of time – who to interview, what questions to ask, who will ask what, how will answers be recorded?

After the interview, the group should report back to the class on what they have learned.

For the report backs, develop a wall chart listing the questions and responses for each job. Discussion questions for comparing the answers might include:

- Which job has the highest entry-level wage?
- Which job has the highest educational requirement?
- Do the jobs with the higher educational/training requirements also have higher entry-level wages?
- Which jobs have the most advancement opportunities?
- Which field has the most job openings?

Note for ESOL: In addition to the report back questions on the job, allow students time to share how they did from a language perspective. For example, the students can do a journal writing to reflect on their ability to listen, understand, and respond during their interview experience.

Informational Interview Guide

Why?

1. To get information about places of work.
2. To help you make informed choices about where you want to work and what kind of job you want.
3. To create a network of contacts.

Where to go? Who to speak with?

1. With friends, family, neighbors, and acquaintances
2. People whose careers interest you or about which you are curious
3. Places where you would like to do an on-the-job training or job shadowing
4. People to whom you have been referred by your contacts

How?

Here's what to say to friends or family or anyone you want to interview:

1. I'm collecting information about various fields of work.
2. I'm really interested in the work that you do.
3. I'm not looking for a job right now.
4. I only need ten minutes of your time to ask you some questions.
5. Is it convenient now or later?

Interview Guidelines

1. You can write notes during the interview, although it is better to listen very carefully and then take notes as soon as you leave the interview.
2. After 10 minutes is over, thank them for their time and the meeting. If **they** want to continue, you may.
3. Before you leave:
 - a. Write down their Name, Job Title, Complete name of their company, Address, and Telephone NumberOR
 - b. Ask for their business card
4. Write them a thank-you note. Be sure your name, address, and phone number appear in the note.

The Questions

1. What do you do in a typical work day?
2. How did you get started in this job?
3. What experience, education, training, and skills did you need?
4. What would you most like to change about your work?
5. Who else do you know that I can talk to? (If they give you a name of someone, ask if you may use their name when contacting them.)

These questions should take no longer than 10 minutes to answer. Be professional, stay on topic, do not talk about yourself and what you can or cannot do.

If you have extra time, you may ask any of the following:

6. What types of training and qualifications does this company look for in their employees?
7. Does your company take interns or job shadows?
8. Who does the hiring here? What is the hiring process?

More Tips

1. Be sure to be well groomed and neatly dressed.
2. Make eye contact with the person to whom you are talking and smile when it is appropriate.
3. Extend your hand when you are being greeted and shake hands firmly.
4. Do not sit down until you have been invited to do so.
5. Look around and notice your surroundings. Notice what you like and don't like about what you see, and be sure to put these observations into your notes.
6. Try to relax and enjoy yourself!

Informational Interview Log

Name of Contact: _____ Business: _____

Job Title: _____

Address: _____ Telephone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Date of Meeting: _____

Questions to ask:

1. What do you do in a typical work day?

2. How did you get started in the job? What experience, education, training, and skills did you need?

3. What do you like most about your work?

4. What would you most like to change about your work?

5. Who else do you know that I can talk to? (If they give you a name of someone, ask if you may use their name when contacting them?)

6. Other question: _____

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