



Southern Cross  
University



# Job research information interviews

An information interview involves contacting people currently working in a chosen field, and asking them questions to gain real-life information to help you make informed decisions about your future career direction.

## Benefits of information interviews

- Gives you an opportunity to talk to people involved in a targeted role or organisation.
- Helps build professional contacts in your field of interest.
- Provides an opportunity to get insider information on how to break into a specific field or company.
- Enables you to learn about trends, growth potential, areas of expansion and important issues in the field.
- Uncovers areas of interest and career paths you may not have previously considered.
- Alerts you to potential gaps in your knowledge or experiences and provides you with an opportunity to identify some strategies for improving your skills.

## Finding people to interview

- Find industries, a specific field, a company, or an occupation to target from the internet, newspapers, trade magazines and job advertisements.
- Use your network of contacts to identify potential people to interview — your fellow students, co-workers, neighbours, friends and family, lecturers, professional associations, alumni, contacts from professional meetings and casual business invitations you may have received.
- Always thank people in your network if a person they suggest agrees to an information interview.
- Access LinkedIn to research people working in your preferred industry [linkedin.com](https://www.linkedin.com).
- It is usually easier to talk to an acquaintance or a referral than cold calling. However, if you do need to approach a company directly, do your research and know the position

you are targeting for the information interview, such as head marine biologist or events coordinator and ask how best to contact them.

## Setting up an information interview

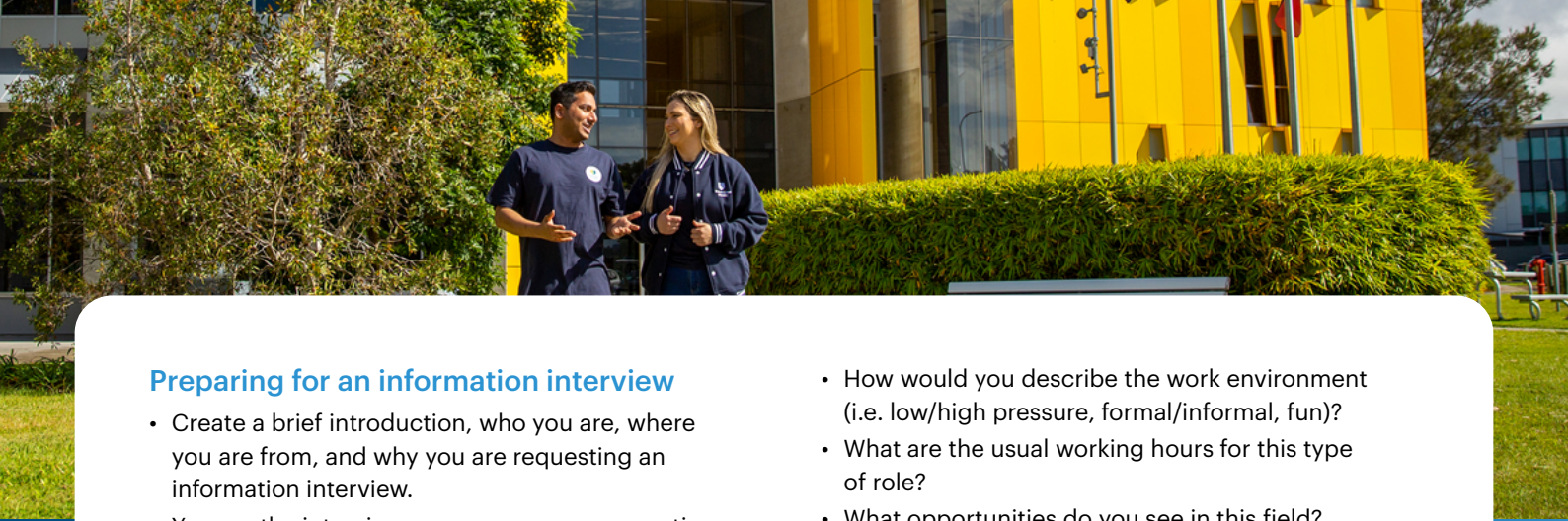
- Build a list of existing contacts and ask them to provide you with an introduction to key people in the industry.
- Call potential interviewees and use your contact's name as a way of building rapport e.g. "Hello, my name is [.....]. John Smith suggested I give you a call to see if you could spare 15 minutes to chat about the best way for a new graduate to gain experience in event management". You may prefer to email your request, followed up by a phone call.
- Think about how you want to conduct the information interview; a face-to-face interview or a 15-minute phone interview may be more convenient and appropriate. If you are ringing, then be prepared to conduct the information interview at the time of calling – just in case.
- When you get through to your contact person:
  1. Introduce yourself and state where you are from (e.g. a student at Southern Cross University).
  2. Explain you are conducting personal research about their career and would like to talk with them for 15–20 minutes to find out more about that field/occupation.
  3. Ask for a time that is convenient for them.

If your contact is unable to help you, ask whether they can suggest another contact for you.



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### Preparing for an information interview

- Create a brief introduction, who you are, where you are from, and why you are requesting an information interview.
- You are the interviewer, so prepare your questions in advance.
- Learn as much as you can about the company or field before the information interview.

### Example questions you can ask

- How did you get into this line of work?
- What changes are happening in your industry right now? Is it a growing field?
- What qualities and qualifications do you need for this type of job or industry?
- How did you acquire the necessary skills required for the role?
- What type of work experience/volunteer work would you suggest for someone wishing to enter the field?
- What are the great things about the job?
- What are the challenging aspects of the job/organisation/industry?
- What does a typical day look like for you?

- How would you describe the work environment (i.e. low/high pressure, formal/informal, fun)?
- What are the usual working hours for this type of role?
- What opportunities do you see in this field?
- What do you wish you had known when you were just starting your career?
- What advice would you give someone in my position?

### Helpful tips

- Always be polite and professional. Ask permission before you take notes. Stick to the agreed time limit.
- Ask open-ended questions (what, when, and how) to gather more information. While you may gain information about the hidden job market (unadvertised positions), never ask for a job or ask to be recommended for one in an information interview. You are not asking for a job; you are asking for information, advice and possibly further contacts!
- Have a spare copy of your resume available in case you are asked for it.

## Information interview checklist

- Have I thoroughly researched the company/industry/field?
- Did I learn something new? Positive or negative?
- Will this change or inform my job searching approach?
- Do I have further avenues to pursue?
- Would I change the way I conduct an interview next time?
- What did I learn from this experience?
- What other questions would have been useful to ask?
- Was the overall process beneficial? Do I need to conduct more interviews in other sectors e.g. corporate/private sector, with recent graduates or those mid-career?
- Did I stick to my time limit?
- Have I contacted the interviewee to thank them?
- Did the interviewee ask to be updated on my progress? If so, contact them with the results.



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