



KEY CONCEPTS

- Career network
- Contacts
- Field or industry
- Informational interviewing



CLASSROOM MATERIALS

- Handout 10.1
- Handout 10.2
- Handout 10.3



CAREER COACH WEBSITE LINKS

- Building a Network
- Your Network List
- Informational Interviews
- Questions to Ask

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Through the lesson and related assignments, students will:

- Learn how to develop a career network
- Understand how informational interviews can be used to research a career
- Prepare appropriate questions to use on an informational interview
- Practice professional behavior

LESSON SET-UP

For this lesson you will need:

ACTIVITY 1

- Enough copies of **Handout 10.1** for each student in the class

ACTIVITY 2

- Enough copies of **Handout 10.2** for each student in the class

ACTIVITY 3

- Enough copies of **Handout 10.3** for each student in the class

FYI

For more information on informational interviewing:

- <http://www.stetson.edu/careerservices/infointerview.php>
- <http://www.bls.gov/opub/ooq/2002/summer/art03.pdf>
- <http://www.ocs.fas.harvard.edu/students/resources/infointerviewing.htm>

Introduction (5 minutes)

1. Review the last module. Students looked at different ways that they could build their career skills.
2. The assignment had students answer two questions in their notebooks. Ask for two to three volunteers to read their answers. If more students want to read their answers, allow it.
 - *What are three new ways that I am going to build my career skills?*
 - *What starter jobs match the top two careers I'm interested in?*
3. Introduce the main point of the lesson. Students can get insider information about their interesting careers by
 - Building relationships with people in their interesting career areas
 - Conducting informational interviews
4. Ask students to write two questions in their notebooks. They will answer these at the end of the session.
 - *Who would I like to get into my career network?*
 - *How can I use informational interviewing to learn about my top two career choices?*

Build Your Career Network

Background (5 minutes)



Tell students that there are some facts they may want to know about their career choices that can't be answered by a book or website. For example, it may be difficult to find out about actual work conditions or what types of personalities do well in that career without talking to someone in that career.

One of the things students can do to research a target career is to establish a career network. Explain:

- A network is made up of all the people they know who can help them learn about the career they are interested in. Later, members of the network can help them to get the job they want.
- A network is important because many jobs are not filled through newspaper advertising; they are filled through "networking." Tell students it is important to make good contacts with people in their career field who can help them.

A career network is made up of contacts. A contact can:

- Provide information and advice about a career
- Refer you to other people who can help
- Supply information about available jobs
- Make recommendations for open jobs
- Provide support or mentorship for advancement

Tell students that a contact may have a career other than their interesting careers, but work in the same industry or field. For example, someone who works as a nurse could be a contact for a student whose target career is radiologic technologist.

Explain to students that they may not know people in that career now, but they may have friends, teachers, counselors, or family members who do know someone in that career or field.

ACTIVITY 1: Build Your Career Network (10 minutes)**BRAINSTORM** Pass out *Handout 10.1: My Career Networking List*.**Pass out one copy of Handout 10.1**

1. Tell students to fill in the top of the page with the name of their top choice from the careers that they researched in Module 8.
2. Ask them to brainstorm the names of people who may be able to help them find contacts in their top career area. These can be family members, friends, or someone that they know in work or school.

Example

A mutual friend or acquaintance (another mother at the same child care center, the person who cuts their hair, etc.) may be able to refer them to a professional who works in their top career field.

The career counselor or a professor at the local community college may have worked with professionals who work in their top career field.

3. Direct them to fill in any names of contacts that they know right now. They can fill in the names of companies and phone numbers later.
4. Tell students to keep working on adding to the list of people who can help them. Tell students that they can speak with the friends, acquaintances, or family members in their network on their own to add names to the list of contacts at the bottom of the page.
5. Explain to students that there may be people in the classroom with them now who have contacts in their interesting career fields. Ask two to three volunteers to share one example of a career or industry in which they have a contact. Tell volunteers the example doesn't need to be from their own top career field.

Example

I have a family member who works as a nurse in a hospital.

I have a friend who works as a real estate agent.

6. Ask students who are interested in one of the career fields mentioned to raise their hands. Suggest that students get to know other people in the classroom and share contacts over the next few classes. Tell students put *Handout 10.1* in their portfolios.

**Preparing for the Informational Interview****Background (5 minutes)**

1. Explain that students can use informational interviews to get detailed information about what it is like to work in that career. They can also use informational interviews to establish a network. The goals of informational interviews are to:

- Expand on the career research they have already done
- Gain knowledge and insights about a career field that can only be obtained from a someone working in that field
- Learn “the insider’s point of view” about how to prepare and advance in their target career

2. Explain to students that:
 - The purpose of an informational interview is to get advice and information only; they should not assume it is a way to get a job interview.
 - They should do their homework and already have researched their target career before they schedule an informational interview. (Information on researching their target career is discussed in detail in Module 8.) Students can also learn as much as possible about the company by searching the company website.
3. In Module 8, they researched two interesting careers. For the purpose of this activity, they should focus on the career they are most interested in.
4. Explain to students that professionals in their top career field who might be willing to give them an informational interview can be identified in several ways. They can:
 - Use a contact from **Handout 10.1: My Career Networking List**.
 - Contact a community college career center or a local CareerOneStop Center and ask if there is a listing of career professionals willing to participate in informational interviews.
 - Use the print version of the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* or the online version at <http://www.bls.gov/oco>. Tell students to review Sources for Additional Information to identify and contact professional associations in their top career.
 - Identify a company or organization that employs people in their top career by looking at websites that provide company information such as <http://www.hoovers.com/> and <http://www.vault.com/>, or have students ask their network if they know of a company that employs people in their career field.
5. If students have a the name of a company or organization that employs people in their top career field, but not a specific contact, they can identify a specific career professional that they would like to interview by:
 - Looking at the employee directory on the company website
 - Calling human resources or the specific department of interest to them and asking for the name of a person in their career field who might be willing to give them an informational interview
 - Asking people in their network if they know anyone who works at the company and could tell them more about their top career choice

Arranging for an Informational Interview

Background (5 minutes)



Pass out **Handout 10.2**

Pass out **Handout 10.2: Arranging for an Informational Interview**. Tell students that there are many ways to arrange for an informational interview, including phoning and sending a letter or business e-mail. Tell students that sending a letter or e-mail and following up with a call is an excellent way of arranging an interview.

Ask students to spend a few minutes looking over **Handout 10.2**. Make it clear that they will not have time to ask all the questions on **Handout 10.2**, but can use it to help them guide the conversation and take notes.

ACTIVITY 2: Arranging the Informational Interview (5 minutes)

Tell students that an informational interview is a chance to show their best side to someone in their field. The person they interview may someday have a chance to put in a good word for them at their own company or another, so the student should make sure their interactions are very professional. Getting a friend who is good at grammar to edit their letter is one way. Another way is by role-playing and getting feedback on their performance.

ROLE-PLAY Have students work in pairs. Explain to them that this activity gives them the opportunity to plan and practice a telephone conversation requesting an informational interview.

1. Have one student request the appointment and the other student plays the part of a professional.
2. Write the following on the board so that they can keep this in mind:
 - Identify yourself
 - Confirm you have reached the right person
 - Ask if it is a convenient time to talk
 - *If appropriate, explain how you were referred*
 - Explain your purpose for calling and that you are not looking for a job
 - Request an appointment and confirm the time, place, and location of the meeting
 - Thank the person
3. Ask students to give their partners feedback on:
 - What they did well
 - What they could improve

Planning the Informational Interview

Background



Explain to students that an informational interview is a formal business appointment. They should be on time, dress professionally, and be prepared!

Questions for the informational interview are always prepared prior to the appointment. They should also take a notebook so that they can take notes. Explain that it is courteous to ask permission to take notes before starting.

ACTIVITY 3: Planning the Informational Interview (10 minutes)

BRAINSTORMING Tell students that an informational interview allows them to get information about a career that isn't available anywhere else. Ask the class to imagine that they are preparing questions for an informational interview. Direct students to design questions to find out:

- Something about the person that they are talking to
- How long the person has worked in the field
- What the work is like
- What types of education or training are needed to get into the career
- What types of job-specific, employability, or transferable skills are helpful in the career
- What advice would the person give



**Pass out one copy of
*Handout 10.3***

1. Have students generate questions to get them thinking about this situation. Remind students that an informational interview gives them a chance to find out details about that career or field that they couldn't find out otherwise.
2. Once students have generated a list of informational interview questions, distribute ***Handout 10.3: My Informational Interview***, which provides additional sample questions. Students should read over the questions and add others that are important to them on the last page of the handout. Make sure students understand that ***Handout 10.3*** provides many more questions than they will have time to cover in an informational interview. Explain to students that they should select their top questions in advance, based on the time available and what they most wish to know.

After the Informational Interview**Background**

Explain to students that they can use ***Handout 10.3*** to take notes on their informational interviews. Encourage students to set up an informational interview in one of their top career areas. After the informational interview, they should:

- Evaluate their style of interviewing and think about how they can improve
- Review their notes and consider if the career information they received leaves them with positive and/or negative impressions and why
- Reflect on the job setting and general atmosphere
- Keep records of who they interviewed and their contact information—the person may be helpful to them in the future
- **ALWAYS** write a thank-you letter or e-mail right away

Note: If you offer extra credit, you may offer this to students who complete an informational interview before the end of the course.

Wrap-Up and Assignments (5 minutes)

1. End this session by emphasizing that students should continue to build their career networks—even when the class is over. Also review that informational interviews are specifically designed to obtain career information and remind students that if the informational interview is conducted well, it can provide:
 - Valuable knowledge about a career
 - An opportunity to establish a relationship with an important contact who may be able to guide and assist them in the future
2. Ask students to work on **Handout 10.1: My Career Networking List** this week. Suggest that students may want to complete an informational interview over the next few weeks.
3. Tell students that during the next class they will pick one target career and begin developing plans for how to reach that career goal. Remind them that informational interviews can help make that decision much easier.
4. Remind students that they wrote two questions in their notebooks. Have them write answers to the questions and bring the answers to the next class.
 - *Who would I like to get into my career network?*
 - *How can I use informational interviewing to learn about my top two career choices?*
5. For students who have access to the *Career Coach* website, encourage them to visit:
 - Building a Network
 - Your Network List
 - Informational Interviews
 - Questions to Ask



Additional Activities

You may choose to substitute one of these activities for an activity in the lesson or to use any of them as time permits.

Additional ACTIVITY 4: Class Discussion

Stress that it is important to dress and act professionally when conducting an effective informational interview. Have students discuss and create some guidelines for professional dress and behavior.

Additional ACTIVITY 5: Reflect and Write

Students who are introverted may be reluctant to approach an individual and ask for career information and advice. However, networking with a professional in their target career area will be helpful in many aspects of their career development, including job search.

1. Have students reflect and write about the following questions:
 - *What are your concerns about informational interviews?*
 - *What challenges do you anticipate when arranging and conducting informational interviews?*
 - *What can you do to address your concerns and overcome your challenges?*



Handout 10.1: My Career Networking List

Write your top career choice. Then write down the names of people who may be able to help you meet people in that career field.

1. Career title: _____

2. People who may be able to help me find contacts:

Family

Name: _____ Phone or e-mail: _____

Name: _____ Phone or e-mail: _____

Friends

Name: _____ Phone or e-mail: _____

Name: _____ Phone or e-mail: _____

Work or School

Name: _____ Phone or e-mail: _____

Name: _____ Phone or e-mail: _____

Community Group or Church

Name: _____ Phone or e-mail: _____

Name: _____ Phone or e-mail: _____

Write the names of people who can tell you more information about the career title you chose.

3. Contact Names and Contact Information

Name and Company	Referred by	Phone Number and E-mail Address

Handout 10.2: Arranging for an Informational Interview

Using a Personal Referral

The best way to find someone to interview is to have a personal referral. Use your network to find a person working in your target career. You can ask the person in your network to call or e-mail their contact to let him or her know of your interest. After you have found someone you want to interview, you can call, send a letter, or e-mail. See below for more information.

Contacting Someone You Want to Interview

You can make contact by letter, e-mail, or telephone. If you don't have a personal referral, you should send a letter or e-mail first, and then call. If you have a personal referral, you can call the person directly.

Letter or E-mail

You can get the company name and the address of the person you want to meet from:

- The yellow pages
- A company website
- Calling the company's human resources office
- Looking at company information at <http://www.hoovers.com/> **or** <http://www.vault.com/>

When you write a letter, you should:

- Address the person by name
- Say who you are
- If you have a personal referral, say who referred you
- Explain the reason for the interview. Tell the person that this is not a job-search call
- Say that you will call to arrange a time

Give the person some time to get your letter or e-mail. Then call. Say who you are, and ask if he or she has received your letter or e-mail. Then:

- If you have a personal referral, say who referred you.
- Say that you are doing career research. Tell the contact that you are looking for information to help you make a career decision. Make clear that this is not a job search.
- Request an appointment. Be flexible. Good times might be:
 - * before, during or after work hours
 - * during lunch (do not expect a free lunch)
- Meeting in person is best. But, if the contact is very busy, you can suggest a phone call.
- Be gracious if the person refuses. Whether the answer is "yes" or "no," be sure to thank the person.

Handout 10.3: My Informational Interview

This form includes many sample questions. Use this form to prepare for your informational interview. You may also use it to take notes.

Contact Name: _____

Company: _____

Job Title: _____

Use the following sample questions to help you prepare for your informational interview. **Important note:** you will not have time to cover all of these questions.

Select one to three questions from each section.

JOB DUTIES AND TASKS

- What are your duties and tasks?
- Please describe a typical day on the job.
- If you were asked to provide a “profile” of the ideal employee, what would you say? What personality types do well in this field?

EMPLOYMENT

- What are some of the different kinds of businesses that employ people in this career?
- How could I expect my career to advance if I entered this field?
- Where do you see this career going in the next three to five years?
 - * Are there more or fewer jobs open in this career?
 - * Is it hard to find a job in this city or county?

WORK CONDITIONS AND LIFESTYLE

- How many hours per week are employees expected to work?
 - * Is evening or weekend time required?
 - * Is there a regular schedule or not?
- Is travel required? How often and how long?
- What salary range can someone just starting in this field expect?
- What salary range can someone in my target career expect?

Handout 10.3: My Informational Interview

SKILLS AND EDUCATION

- What skills are most important for this kind of work? What might be some related careers in which the same types of skills are used?
- What type of education is needed for this job? Does a professional association certify training or degree programs?
- Is there a state or professional licensing examination?
- What kind of experience can I get to help me get into this work?
 - * Can you recommend internships, part-time, and/or volunteer work that would help me prepare for this career?

PERSONAL INFORMATION

- How did you get interested and involved in this type of work? Please describe your background and your career path thus far.
- Did you have a mentor?
- Why did you choose this kind of work?
- What do you like most about the job?
- What do you find frustrating in this career field? And in your daily work?
- How much pressure is there in this job?
- If you were starting out again, what might you do differently?
- What additional advice would you offer someone planning on entering this career?
- Could you recommend people or resources for additional information (special books, trade publications, professional journals)?

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Handout 10.3: My Informational Interview

Interview Notes