

Career and Academic Connections

A Division of  OKLAHOMA
CareerTech

GUIDE FOR
**Informational
Interviews**

WORK-BASED LEARNING
TOOLKIT

*This Guide is
Recommended
for Grades:*

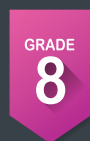




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OVERVIEW

for Developing Informational Interviews

What Are Informational Interviews?

An informational interview is a career exploration activity involving a structured interaction between a student and an employee, usually over the phone or by video with supervision. The interview is guided by the student's ICAP interest in learning more about a specific career and/or employer. The interviews can help students set career goals and focus future career exploration and education plans.

The skills developed through informational interviews are critical to learning how to seek information and interact professionally with employers. They are also a foundation for learning how to engage in a job interview. Because these skills are so important, informational interviews are often prerequisite activities for job shadows or internships. Significant preparation and guidance should be provided to students prior to their interviews.

The student's primary roles are to prepare for and request the interview, schedule a time for the interview, conduct the interview, thank the employee interviewed, reflect on the interview and share thoughts on the experience in the classroom.

Which Students Participate in Informational Interviews?

Informational interviews are conducted by students engaged in career exploration and are intended to help them further refine their ICAP career interests for subsequent exploration and preparation activities. Typically, this level of career exploration and interaction with employees involves early high school students who already have participated in some career awareness activities. As with other career awareness and exploration activities, informational interviews should reflect the student's desire to learn more about specific career fields and the education needed for entry and success in them.

How Are Informational Interviews Structured?

Typically, students identify employees in the careers in which they are interested and conduct interviews over the phone or by video. Informational interviews typically range from 15 to 30 minutes and may precede or be integrated into an activity such as job shadowing.

While there are no prescriptive guidelines, the usual components of an informational interview are the following:

- Introduction and purpose of the interview.
- Questions about the employer, industry and career of the employee interviewed as well as the education required for entry and success in a similar career.
- Conclusion with a recap of highlights of what the student learned and thank you for the employee's participation.

Unlike some other WBL activities, students play a leading role in scheduling and conducting informational interviews.



WORKPLACE PARTNER CHECKLIST

for Informational Interviews

Use this checklist as a quick reference to ensure you have completed all the steps needed to have a successful interview.

Before the Informational Interview

- Register on **Connect 2 Business** to promote informational interviews and more.
<https://okcg-c2b.kuder.com/>
- Let the teacher know the different positions available at your organization and who the contact person will be to arrange the interview.
- Inform employees doing interviews of the time commitment and benefit to student.

During the Informational Interview

- Provide a quiet place for employee to do video or phone call.

After the Informational Interview

- Complete and return the **Interviewee Evaluation**.



STUDENT CHECKLIST

for Informational Interviews

Use this checklist as a quick reference to ensure you have completed all the steps needed to have a successful interview.

Before the Informational Interview

- Research the company or organization with which you will do an informational interview.
- Assess how an informational interview can support your ICAP goals.
- Using the **Informational Interview Student Scheduling Phone Call Script** make contact with industry representative.
- Get **Teacher Permission Form for Class Absence** signed based on arranged date and time.
- Turn in signed **Teacher Permission Form for Class Absence**.
- Develop questions about the work, career opportunities and connections to academics at the workplace.
- Confirm with employer the interview time and date.

During the Informational Interview

- Arrive at the location for the video / phone call 10 minutes before call time.
- Review questions with observing instructor.
- Have your questions and additional paper to write your answers.
- When finish thank the person for his or her time and effort in helping determine your ICAP direction.

After the Informational Interview

- Use your notes for individual and group reflection exercises.
- Participate in classroom activities that will help you think about the value of the informational interview.
- Write thank-you notes to the workplace host. Electronic methods are acceptable.
- Discuss the next step in learning about careers.
- Complete the **Informational Interview Student Evaluation**.



TEACHER CHECKLIST

for Informational Interviews

Use this checklist as a quick reference to ensure you have completed all the steps needed to have a successful interview.

Before the Informational Interviews

- Using the **Sample Email to Employers** reach out to employers about participation.
- Work with staff and administration to determine who, what, where and how many informational interviews will take place during the year.
- Make sure students have completed steps of ICAP process that have identified career direction.
- Help prepare students for the informational interview.
- Help students to make contacts for informational interviews.
- Help students research the company and career.
- Help students write and revise interview questions and practice interview.
- Establish a quiet place for video/phone call.

During the Informational Interviews

- Have the student make the call using the questions and with paper to record responses.
- Be available if student needs assistance.

After the Informational Interviews

- Provide individual and group reflection exercises.
- Help students make the connection between academics and the workplace.
- Have students write thank-you notes to the workplace host.
- Support students in determining the next step in ICAP and learning about careers.
- Use interviewee and student feedback to make continuous improvement.
- This experience along with the documentation could be used to document ICAP Work-Based Learning activities. Make sure to forward documentation to the ICAP coordinator.



BEFORE

the Informational Interviews

Two to three months before the informational interviews

- Begin outreach to employers to make them aware that they may be hearing from students seeking informational interviews and encourage them to participate. This can be accomplished by asking chambers of commerce, other industry and trade associations, and service clubs to alert their members, placing an item in a local newspaper or school newsletter, asking school staff to reach out to their contacts and sending emails to the contacts in the WBL database. A sample email is provided in the resources section. While students are responsible for finding their own employees to interview, the WBL coordinator can help by compiling a list of people who have volunteered to participate, have participated in informational interviews in the past or have demonstrated their interest in working with students by participating in other WBL activities.
- **(School staff)** Identify which students or classes will conduct informational interviews.
- **(School staff)** Determine the time frame, typically one to two weeks, in which students will reach out to employers/employees and conduct interviews. Allow sufficient time for student preparation.
- **(School staff)** Determine how many informational interviews each student should be expected to conduct.
- **(School staff)** Determine how students should obtain permission to miss a class if interviews are scheduled during class time. A sample form for obtaining teacher permission to miss a class to conduct an interview is provided in the Resources section. Decide whether to send a notice to parents/guardians to let them know that some students may conduct their interviews from home.
- Play a facilitating role because informational interviews are student-led activities. Establish the process for students to use to reach out to employers or employees (via phone or email) to schedule and conduct interviews and ensure

that they have access to the tools (telephones and/or computers) to do so. If some students are struggling to schedule interviews, school staff or the WBL coordinator may assist them.

- **(Teachers/Counselor)** Begin to prepare students in class by introducing:
 - The purpose and benefits of informational interviews.
 - Strategies for listening effectively and asking appropriate questions.
 - What to include in questions for informational interviews.

One month before the informational interviews

- Mine the WBL database to help students who have trouble securing informational interviews.
- Send the employer checklist to the employees who will be interviewed by students to help them prepare.
- **(School staff)** Schedule computer lab time if needed for student research and outreach to employers.
- **(Students)** Begin outreach by calling the employers in which they are interested, using a script to determine which employees in the company might be available to interview. A sample phone call script for students is in the resources section. If a student or the WBL coordinator has already identified an individual employee who is likely to be willing to be interviewed, the student may call the employee directly. This can be accomplished in class if students use their own phones, or the school can make phones available to students for this purpose.
- **(Teachers/Counselors)** Have students practice interview techniques and begin to develop questions about the job, career, employer and industry of the employee to be interviewed. Additional questions might focus on skills required to enter the industry, work environment, salary ranges and what the person likes and dislikes about the job.



BEFORE *(continued)* the Informational Interviews

One week before the informational interviews

- **(Teachers/Counselors)** Continue student preparation by having them write and revise their interview questions and practice interviews in class.
- **(School staff)** Make sure students have appropriate quiet places to conduct their phone or video interviews.

One day before the informational interviews

- **(Students)** Send confirmation emails to the employees to be interviewed with the date, time and duration of the interviews as well as the telephone numbers to be used.
- **(Teachers/Counselors)** Make sure students have completed their interview questions and have pencil and paper or a computer handy for taking notes.



DURING the Informational Interviews

Day of the informational interviews

- **(Students)** Make their calls, conduct the interviews and take notes for later reflection.
- **(School staff)** Make sure there is an adult standing by to assist students during the interviews if necessary.



AFTER

the Informational Interviews

One day to one week after the informational interviews

- Collect and review **student and interviewee evaluations** and make note of any feedback that could be used to improve informational interview experiences in the future.
- Follow up with employers and their employees by sending thank-you emails, sharing some of the student comments that demonstrate the impact of their participation and soliciting informal feedback on the interviews.
- Recognize participating employers and their employees. Many districts and schools hold annual celebrations honoring employers who have participated in WBL activities.
- **(Students)** Send thank-you notes or notes to employees interviewed. Teachers should review the emails before they are sent.
- **(Students)** Complete evaluations of their experiences with the informational interviews and turn them in to their teachers. A sample evaluation form is provided in the resources section.
- **(Teachers)** Conduct student reflection activities in class and compile written reflections for dissemination to all participating students (and their other teachers).



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Personalization of Tools Instructions

The tools are designed so that your school or organization can insert your logo and contact information into the header and footer. The tools themselves are fillable forms that are separate documents that can be uploaded to other sources to be filled out by students and workplace partners.



TOOLS

Workplace Partner Checklist for Informational Interview

Use this checklist as a quick reference to ensure you have completed all the steps needed to have a successful interview.

Before the Informational Interview

- Register on **Connect 2 Business** to promote informational interviews and more.
<https://okcg-c2b.kuder.com/>
- Let the teacher know the different positions available at your organization and who the contact person will be to arrange the interview.
- Inform employees doing interviews of the time commitment and benefit to student.

During the Informational Interview

- Provide a quiet place for employee to do video or phone call.

After the Informational Interview

- Complete and return the **Interviewee Evaluation**.



TOOLS

Student Checklist for Informational Interview

Use this checklist as a quick reference to ensure you have completed all the steps needed to have a successful interview.

Before the Informational Interview

- Research the company or organization with which you will do an informational interview.
- Assess how an informational interview can support your ICAP goals.
- Using the **Informational Interview Student Scheduling Phone Call Script** make contact with industry representative.
- Get **Teacher Permission Form for Class Absence** signed based on arranged date and time.
- Turn in signed **Teacher Permission Form for Class Absence**.
- Develop questions about the work, career opportunities and connections to academics at the workplace.
- Confirm with employer the interview time and date.

During the Informational Interview

- Arrive at the location for the video / phone call 10 minutes before call time.
- Review questions with observing instructor.
- Have your questions and additional paper to write your answers.
- When finish thank the person for his or her time and effort in helping determine your ICAP direction.

After the Informational Interview

- Use your notes for individual and group reflection exercises.
- Participate in classroom activities that will help you think about the value of the informational interview.
- Write thank-you notes to the workplace host. Electronic methods are acceptable.
- Discuss the next step in learning about careers.
- Complete the **Informational Interview Student Evaluation**.



TOOLS

Teacher Checklist for Informational Interview

Use this checklist as a quick reference to ensure you have completed all the steps needed to have a successful interview.

Before the Informational Interview

- Using the **Sample Email to Employers** reach out to employers about participation.
- Work with staff and administration to determine who, what, where and how many informational interviews will take place during the year.
- Make sure the student has completed steps of ICAP process that have identified career direction.
- Help prepare the student for the informational interview.
- Help the student make contacts for informational interviews.
- Help the student research the company and career.
- Help the student write and revise interview questions and practice interview.
- Establish a quiet place for video/phone call.

During the Informational Interview

- Have the student make the call using the questions and with paper to record responses.
- Be available if student needs assistance.

After the Informational Interview

- Provide individual and group reflection exercises.
- Help students make the connection between academics and the workplace.
- Have students write thank-you notes to their workplace hosts.
- Support students in determining the next step in ICAP and learning about careers.
- Use interviewee and student feedback to make continuous improvement.
- This experience along with the documentation could be used to document ICAP Work- Based Learning activities. Make sure to forward documentation to the ICAP coordinator.



TOOLS

Email to Employers from WBL Coordinator – *SAMPLE*

(Note: This email could be adapted to be sent to an employer association such as a chamber of commerce.)

Good Morning,

My name is John Doe, and I work for the XYZ (district or school). We have ## #th grade students from (school) who would like to schedule informational interviews with employees who work in the careers in which they are interested. We hope you will be willing to have one or more students interview you or a colleague at your organization.

Informational interviews are part of a larger continuum of work-based learning opportunities that help students learn about careers and set goals for further career exploration and education. Typically taking 15-30 minutes, informational interviews are a small investment of time that can have a positive impact on a student's career planning. Interviews will take place between (date) and (date). To help them learn how to do so, students will make contact to schedule the interviews. Please feel free to contact me at (phone number) or (email) with questions or comments.

If your organization is willing to participate in one or more informational interviews, please reply to this email so that I can provide your contact information to a student who is interested in your industry. If there are other employees who can provide more detailed information about specific career in your organization, please provide their names, positions, and contact information. If you would like to learn more about other opportunities to work with students, such as being a guest speaker or hosting a workplace tour or job shadow, please contact me at any time.

Thank you,

John Doe

John Doe, Title
XYZ District or School
Contact information



TOOLS

Employer Informational Interview Expectations

(Top part to be completed by WBL coordinator)

To help you prepare for your informational interview with (student name), we have created the following checklist of what you can expect. Please contact the work-based learning coordinator with any questions. Thank you for your participation.

Time period during which interview may be scheduled:	
Student name(s):	
School:	
School contact name and title:	
School contact phone: ()	School contact email:
WBL coordinator name and contact information:	

Expectations:	Check:
Students will reconfirm the interview time shortly before it is scheduled to take place.	
Before the interview, please have up-to-date information about your organization, industry and the careers that are available. Any information about industry trends and the skills required for careers is beneficial to students, as are websites they can use to obtain more information.	
Students will likely ask about your own education, training, and career path.	
Allow the student to conduct the 15- to 30-minute interview.	
If you would like, provide feedback to the school contact or the work-based learning coordinator noted above.	



TOOLS

Employer Informational Interview Expectations

Mentor's Name: _____ Title: _____

Company Address: _____

Telephone: () _____ Date: _____

Student's Name: _____

School: _____ Email: _____

Has the interview experience been beneficial to you and the student assigned to you? Yes No Explain how. _____

Do you feel that the student assigned to you has made the most of the opportunities provided by the interview experience? Yes No

List types of interview questions the student used during the sessions. _____

List any suggestions you have to make the Informational Interview program more successful. _____

Are you willing to continue with the interview program? Yes No

Your participation in the mentoring program is crucial to the program's success and is greatly appreciated.

Thanks for your help!



TOOLS

Teacher Permission Form for Class Absence

(Only include periods that students will miss)

You are excused from (which period or periods) on (date) to conduct an informational interview with an employer. There are certain procedures that must be followed for this to happen. Any teachers whose classes you will miss must be informed, and you must obtain class assignments for the day of the interview. It is up to your individual teachers to decide when the assignments you miss will be due.

This form must be completed with all teacher signatures and turned in to (whom) by the established deadline in order for you to be excused from classes.

Student name:	Date and time of informational interview:
Period # teacher signature:	Assignment:
Period # teacher signature:	Assignment:



TOOLS

Informational Interview Student Scheduling Phone Call Script

(Adapted from *Roads To Success*¹)

Directions: Use the script below to schedule your informational interview. Fill in the blanks for the first item before you make your call. The lines in bold indicate where you should be taking notes during the call. Make sure to record all of this information before you finish the call.

1. Hi, my name is _____, and I am a (what year) at _____ High School. Participating in an informational interview is an important part of my career education. I would like to interview someone at your organization for 15 to 30 minutes to learn about careers in (occupation/department/field). May I speak with someone who might help me identify the right person for me to contact to schedule an interview?

If person is unavailable or out for the day, get his or her name and the name of the person with whom you spoke.

- a. **Name of person with whom you spoke:**
- b. **Name and phone number of informational interview contact person:**

2. Repeat step 1 if transferred to another individual.

3. May I schedule an informational interview with one of your employees?

- a. If the answer is yes, go on to the next question. If the answer is no, thank this person for his/her time and politely end the phone call.

- b. Ask for the name, phone number, and e-mail address of your contact person.

- i. **Name:**

- ii. **Phone Number:**

- iii. **Email:**

4. Confirm that you have the name, phone number, and email recorded correctly. Thank the person who has helped you identify the contact.

5. Call or email the contact person. Introduce yourself and indicate who gave you his or her name and why you are calling.

- a. Would it be possible to schedule my informational interview during the week of _____ [as by teacher or school]? Is there a day or time that is best for you? (Or suggest a day and time.) How would you prefer I conduct the interview by telephone or by video?

- i. **Date and time of informational interview:**

- ii. **Method of interview: (phone or video)**

- b. Repeat date and time you scheduled. Send an email confirmation promptly.

- c. Thank you very much for your time. I look forward to our interview and will confirm it with you the day before. If your schedule changes, please let me know by contacting (school contact, phone and email), and I will get in touch to reschedule.

¹ <https://www.roadstosuccess.org/ourcurriculum>

TOOLS

Informational Interview Student Evaluation

Thank you for completing your informational interview. Your feedback is important! Please complete the form and return it to your teacher.

Student name:	Name of employee interviewed:
Employer or organization of employee interviewed:	Title of employee interviewed:
Date of interview:	Phone/email of employee interviewed:

Please evaluate the experience in each of the following areas.

INTERVIEWEE				
Employee was helpful.	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Below Expectations	Not Applicable
Employee was available at scheduled time.	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Below Expectations	Not Applicable
INFORMATION				
The information is useful.	Yes		No	
I became better informed about careers.	Yes	No	Somewhat	Not Applicable
OVERALL EVALUATION				
Informational interview experience	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Below Expectations	Not Applicable

Would you recommend this employee to be interviewed by other students? Explain why or why not.

Did the informational interview help you identify career(s) you would like to explore further or careers in which you have no interest? Explain.

What did you find most interesting about the interview and why?

What did you find least interesting about the interview and why?

Please provide additional comments below.