



Virginia Tech Postdoc Essential Skills Series

Informational Interviews

Wednesday, June 8th, 12-1 PM



RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
VIRGINIA TECH.

Networking & relationship building make job searches more effective

Most jobs (~70-85%) are never advertised



YOUR PRESENT JOB SEARCH

THE HIDDEN JOB MARKET

Informational Interviews & Career Exploration

Someone is out there living your future...

By talking with people in careers of potential interest to you, you get a window into a potential future for you.

Informational interviews allow you to, in a way, have a conversation with a future version of you.

- You can ask questions that matter to you about a career path and focus on your key values and interests.
 - Good work-life balance?
 - High level of autonomy?
 - Work from home?
 - Ability to grow and advance at the organization?

[Learn more about career exploration](#)

What is an informational interview?

A chance to speak with a professional in a career that interests you to learn more about:

- **How they made a career transition**
- **A typical “day in the life” in their career**
- **The work environment and culture of their employer**
- **Key skills and abilities required to excel in the role**
- **Etc....**

Your Goal: Learn more about a career, its pros/cons, how to transition.

Don't ask for a job!!!

This is a fact-finding mission.

Info interviews can work for faculty jobs as well!

Practical advice for informational interviews

Outreach:

Dr. X, I see you received your Ph.D. in Electrical Engineering at Virginia Tech and now work at Meta as a user experience researcher. I have been looking into user experience research as a potential career path after my postdoctoral training at VT. I would love to hear about your experience working in the space. Are you available for a 30-minute call in the coming weeks to talk with me further? Thanks for considering.

- Set up a call, zoom, or in-person meeting (coffee is good) with someone in a career that interests you
 - Ask them:
 - How did you get into your career?
 - What does a typical day look like for you?
 - What do you like and not like about your current job?

Be sure to follow-up with them via email/LinkedIn. Thank them for their time, mention something specific you got out of the conversation, & ideally provide them some useful resource/contact.

Identifying people for informational interviews

■ LinkedIn

– Alumni Tool

- Former trainees in your lab, department, college
- At conferences you attend
 - Break away from you local group
 - Strategically go to posters & talks - who do you want to meet?
- Join National societies or organizations you are interested in pursuing careers in....most have job boards!
- At local networking events

Activity – Identify Someone for an Informational Interview

- Leverage the LinkedIn Alumni tool, an online search, or your network to identify someone to reach out to for an informational interview.
- Draft outreach email/message to them.
 - Consider how you might frame your connection with this individual AND the types of questions you might ask at the info interview based on their background.



10 Minutes - Work individually
10 Minutes - Share with breakout room group



Informational Interviewing Resources

- [University of Pennsylvania Info Interview Guide](#)
- [ImaginePhD Info Interview Guide](#)
- Consult list of [informational interview questions & tips](#).
- For further preparation: [Informational Interview Worksheet](#)
- And see [this piece outlining the Informational Interview Process](#)



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<https://bit.ly/VT-postdoc-linkedin>

Wed, July 13th, 12-1 PM via ZOOM