

Establishing a Mentoring Relationship

Initial interview/meeting

It's a good idea to have an informational interview early in the relationship. This gives both the mentor and student the opportunity to determine how to make the mentoring relationship valuable for both parties. Informational interviews are a great way to obtain insight in areas that interest you and to develop contacts that may be useful in the future. A list of possible discussion questions can be found below:

Sample Questions

- How did you decide to work in this field? For this company?
- What is a typical workday like? A typical week? Year?
- Do you work under a lot of pressure? Is it expected?
- How many hours per week do you usually work? Is it common to take work home?
- Do you travel a lot?
- Will you be expected to relocate?
- Are there other responsibilities (such as civic or social obligations) that come with the territory?
- What is the best training or education to acquire?
- What was your background?
- What skills do you typically use? Is there an opportunity to develop more skills or take on additional responsibilities?
- Do you have an area of specialization? What?
- How did you decide in which area to specialize? What are the other areas?
- What are the most difficult problems/decisions/challenges you must face?
- Is the field growing? What are the various types of employers?
- How secure is employment?
- Do your skills and experience translate well into self-employment opportunities?
- Do you find that certain personality traits make it easier to do this work well? Which traits?
- What is it like to work here?
- What is the hiring process? Is that process standard procedure within the industry?
- What is the best way to find a job?
- If you could do it all over again, what would you do differently?
- Are there professional trade journals I should read? Which ones?
- Do you belong to any professional associations? Can non-members attend meeting?
- Would you mind reviewing my resume and making comments or suggestions?
- Can you recommend other people I might talk to?