

Discovery interviews – Get over the glamour of the job. What is it really like?

Objectives:

- The student will understand what a discovery interview is.
- The student will be able to craft interview questions that can be generalized for a variety of interviewees.
- The student will be able to generate a request for a discovery interview.
- The student will be able to write a thank you note for the discovery interview.
- The student will be able to demonstrate effective communication and determine appropriate venues for discovery interviews (i.e. at place of work, via phone, via online chat, or through a platform such as Zoom, Skype, Google meetings).
- The student will be able to reflect on the interview and determine if the requirements of the career or the career itself are still of interest.

What is a discovery interview and why should I do them?

A discovery interview is usually a one to one interview with someone who has a job or works for a company that you are interested in. They are a valuable tool and experience to gain insight about the job or company.

What should I ask?

It is very important to have a list of questions ready before your interview. Some basic questions that can work for any job or career are:

- What is a typical career path for your job?
- What type of education is required? Do I need a college degree? Is there an area of specialization I should focus on? To progress in my career, will I need a Masters or PhD or other types of continuing education or certifications?
- What does your typical day look like at your job?
- What do you find most rewarding about your job?
- What do you find challenging or would change about your job?
- Why did you go into this career? Did you transition from another career path? If so, what caused you to make the change? How did your skills and knowledge transfer to your current role?
- What is the interview process like at the company you currently work for?
- How would you describe the workplace culture?

It is always recommended that you do your research first! Before you request the interview, you should have a basic understanding of the job or career path and/ or company. The

discovery interview will allow you to get additional information so you can make an informed decision on if this the pathway or company that is right for you.

Discovery interviews are real life! It is important to remember that most of the time what you see on TV, in the movies, or on social media is the “glamorous” part of the job.

How do I request an interview?

Again, this might require some research. What is it that you want to do?

- Do you have a family member or family friend that works in this field and you can interview or help you find someone to interview?
- Check with your local businesses to request an interview.
- Check with your local colleges and universities to request an interview.
- Can your teacher help you find someone to interview?

Based on who you are interviewing and how you are connected may impact how the interview is requested.

If someone else is setting it up you won't have to worry about the request.

You can make a face-to-face request at a local business. It is probably best to ask to speak with a Manager or the owner if possible.

Hello, my name is _____ and I am interested in working as a _____ when I graduate. I would like to set up a discovery interview to learn more about what it is like to be a _____ and work for (insert company name). Are you able to help me with this or recommend someone who can? I understand if it can't happen now; however, let's find a time that will work for both of us. Thanks!

You can also send a request via email. It will look similar to the face – to – face request.

Hello, my name is _____ and I am interested in working as a _____ when I graduate. I would like to set up a discovery interview to learn more about what it is like to be a _____ and work for (insert company name). Are you able to help me with this or recommend someone who can?

If you are able, based on your availability and location, please let me know which format works best for you: in person, by phone, or by Zoom (or another preferred platform) and some preferred days and times you are available so I can schedule. I know you are busy; so, I can also send over a list of questions via email for your response if necessary.

Best regards,

In person, by phone, or online? It depends...

Where you live and where they live may decide this for you! If you live in Austin, TX and they live in Houston, TX or another state, chances are pretty good that you will have to meet by phone or online.

If you are able to meet in person, it is beneficial to meet at their place of work; however, don't be disappointed if that isn't a possibility. Their employer may have to follow security guidelines or confidentiality rules.

Can't be there in person? That's ok!

Provide options that work well for you and them. You could meet by phone or a virtual platform like Zoom, Skype, Google Meetings, or FaceTime. Make sure to provide at least 2 options you are comfortable with and able to host.

Other things to consider...

- Do they live in a different time zone? This may determine how you meet or how flexible you have to be with scheduling.*
- Do you have a quiet space for a phone or virtual interview?*
- Do you require any reasonable accommodations to participate? Will they?*

Always provide the option to respond to questions via email or chat.

Showtime! The interview...

- Make sure to practice first! You can read over your questions with a family member or teacher.
- If you are meeting in person or virtually, remember to dress in interview appropriate attire.
- Have a copy of your interview questions with space underneath the questions to write or type answers. If you will need support to write or type answers, make sure you ask in advance so someone is available.
- Be on time!
- Thank them for taking the time to meet with you.
- Ask your questions and actively listen to their answers. Make sure to write or type them so you don't forget the information.
- Other questions may come up. Ask those too as long as they are on topic.
- Ask them if they have anything else they would like to share or career advice.
- Thank them for taking the time to meet with you and exit/ leave meeting/ hang up phone.

Who still writes Thank You notes? You do!

A Thank you note can be handwritten/ typed and mailed or sent via email. If you are sending the Thank you note by mail, make sure to send it to their place of business and that you have the correct address.

Template/ Example:

Dear _____,

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule on (insert date) for the discovery interview. It was a valuable experience and will help me determine my career options. I really liked learning about (insert something you found really interesting about their job or workplace here). I would like to stay in contact for future networking opportunities.

Best regards,

Signature line

Envelope Example:

Your name

Your Address

Name of the company

Attention: Name of person interviewed

Address with PO Box/street, city, state, and zip code

Time to reflect!

- Am I still interested in the career or company? Why or why not?
 - What if the job was at a different company? Would that make a difference?
 - Do I think it will be helpful to do another discovery interview in the same industry or career field to make a decision?
- Was there something about the job that I didn't expect?
 - Was it a good surprise or a bad surprise?
 - How do I feel about that?
- How do I feel about the education requirements for the job or career path?
- Are my skills and abilities a good fit for this job/ career path/ company?
- What will I need to work on if I still want to pursue this job/ career path/ company?