

A photograph of two young women, one with curly hair and one with long hair and glasses, both smiling and looking at a tablet held by the woman on the left. They are in a classroom or office setting with other people blurred in the background.

**FUTURELAB+**

**COLLEGE AND CAREER COACHING**

*Student Guide*

# Two-Way Informational Interview

Developed in partnership with:  
**Discovery Education and JFF**

**STUDENT GUIDE**

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# Two-Way Informational Interview

**OVERVIEW**

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As you build your skills and knowledge around careers in biotech, a great next step to extend both learning and pathways to a future career is to foster connections with professionals in the industry. This guide provides sample steps and questions to help you prepare for a successful informational interview. Here, you will find areas that you can research in advance in order to ask effective questions. You will also be provided with a list of sample questions that might be asked so that you can think about your responses ahead of time.

**WHAT IS AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW?**

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A two-way informational interview is an introductory engagement activity for employees and students who are connecting for the first time. An informational interview is a great starting point to become comfortable with the interview process and sharing your background and interests. It can serve as an opportunity for you to learn and ask questions about the employee's career journey, what drives them, their current job, and what it's like to work at a biotech company. In addition to providing practice around being interviewed, informational interviews are a great way to build your network and make connections in industries and companies where you might want to work one day.

**HOW IT WORKS**

Take a look at the interview prep worksheet. This worksheet takes about 30 minutes to complete. Here, you will be asked to research some basic questions about the biotech company where the employee works to familiarize yourself with some of the core features of the business. You will also see an interview protocol that includes questions that you should prepare to ask the employee during the interview, as well as space to write your own questions.

**TIPS**

After you have completed all of your interview prep, ask a friend, teacher or other adult if they will practice with you, playing the role of “interviewer.” The more you practice, the more comfortable you will feel when you sit down for your scheduled interview.

At the end of your interview, thank your interviewer for thier time. If you are interested in their career or industry after speaking with them, ask if you could keep in touch when you start looking for opportunities. Lastly, send them a thank you note. You can provide it to your teacher to pass along!

**SUGGESTED FORMAT AND TIMING FOR YOUR INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW**

5 minutes  
Introductions

15 minutes  
Employees asks students questions

15 minutes  
Students asks employees questions

5–10 minutes  
Open discussion

***What You Will Need*****Computer****Internet Access****Head Phones and/or Quiet Space**

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## Interview Protocol: Prep Worksheet and Questions STUDENTS

### Interview Prep

*If this is the first time that you're interviewing an employee from Genentech or another biotech company, please do some research online and complete the following questions below.*

1. Employee's company:
2. Company's website address:
3. Company's physical address:
4. Company's mission statement:
5. What is the company's primary business?
6. What does the name of the company make you think of?
7. What departments exist within the company?
8. What companies do you think are in competition with the interviewee's company?
9. If you know the interviewee's job title, list and define below:
10. After researching the company, what are some questions that you will ask the person you're interviewing?
11. Based on your research, what do you think you will like most about the informational interview?

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## Interview Protocol: Prep Worksheet and Questions STUDENTS

*Continued*

12. Based on your research, what is your biggest concern about the informational interview?

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13. If you could come away from the informational interview having learned one thing, what would that be?

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14. Anything else you learned while doing your research that you'd like to share with your teacher or the class?

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## Interview Protocol: Prep Worksheet and Questions STUDENTS

### EXAMPLE

#### Interview Prep

Use this filled-out example to see sample answers that might help guide your research process.

1. Interviewee's company:

Genentech

2. Company's website address:

<https://www.gene.com>

3. Company location(s):

South San Francisco, CA, Oceanside, CA, Vacaville, CA, Hillsboro, OR, Louisville, KY

4. Company's mission statement:

Genentech is a biotechnology company dedicated to pursuing groundbreaking science to discover and develop medicines for people with serious and life-threatening diseases. Our transformational discoveries include the first targeted antibody for cancer and the first medicine for primary progressive multiple sclerosis.

5. What is the company's primary business?:

Biotechnology/Healthcare

6. What does the name of the company make you think of?

DNA, Genes

7. What departments exist within the company?

Oncology, Infectious Diseases, Patient Advocacy, Diversity & Inclusion, Clinical Trial Information

8. What companies do you think are in competition with the interviewee's company?

Gilead, Illumina

9. If you know the interviewee's job title, list and define below:

Answers will vary.

10. After researching the company, what are some questions that you would like to ask the person you're interviewing?

How did you get your job? What's the hardest part of your job?

11. Based on your research, what do you think you will like most about the informational interview?

Answers will vary.

12. Based on your research, what is your biggest concern about the informational interview?

Answers will vary.

13. If you could come away from the informational interview having learned one thing, what would that be?

What the person studied in college.

14. Anything else you learned while doing your research that you'd like to share with your teacher or the class?

Answers will vary.

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## Interview Protocol: Questions STUDENTS

### General Tips:

- *Start by introducing yourself. Say your name, grade level, the name of the course you're enrolled in where you heard about this opportunity, and what led you to sign up for the course.*
- *It's okay if you don't get through each question and/or you talk about other questions/topics that come up.*
- *Try to jot down responses, but don't worry if you don't capture their word-for-word answers.*
- *It's okay to be a little nervous! Know that employees are excited to talk to you and learn from you too!*

### Interview Questions:

1. What is your name/job title?
2. Could you please describe your path to your present job?
3. What was your favorite class in high school? College?
4. Do you like working alone or collaborating on a team?
5. Can you remember any experiences or skills you developed that got you interested in STEM, like a summer job, class, or particular person or mentor?
6. What classes or non-academic activities could have/did prepare you to be successful in the job you have now?
7. What jobs did you have before this one?
8. What do you spend most of your time doing each day?
9. What are "clues" or objects in your office, on your computer, or desk that reflect your job?
10. What wouldn't you find in your job description, but is part of your daily professional life?
11. What's something you've been excited to work long hours on or stay up late working on?
12. What's a new or exciting thing taking place in your world?
13. What are some "everyday examples" of your work showing up in the world?
14. Did you ever think biotech was not for you?
15. What's something you failed at? What did you learn from that failure?
16. What's something about who you are that's helped you or presented a challenge as you've navigated your career?

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## Two-Way Informational Interview Student Reflection

### Directions

*Now that the informational interview is over, take some time to reflect on what you learned and how the experience might inform your college and career plans in the future.*

Student Name:

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School:

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Interviewee's Company:

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Date of Interview:

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1. What aspects of the informational interview were interesting? Which were not? Why?

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2. What did you like about the informational interview? What would you change?

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3. Would you consider a career in the interviewee's field? Why or why not?

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4. What was the most memorable aspect of the informational interview? Why?

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5. What did you learn about the interviewee's company and its employees? Please explain.

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## Two-Way Informational Interview Student Reflection

*Continued*

6. What knowledge and skills are you learning in school that are likely to be used at the interviewee's workplace? Please explain.

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7. What knowledge or skills do you need to strengthen to be successful at a workplace like the interviewee's? Please explain.

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8. Would you recommend that other students take part in an informational interview? Explain.

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9. Anything else you'd like to say about the informational interview?

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