

A photograph of two young women with dark hair, one with curly hair and the other with straight hair and glasses, both smiling and looking at a tablet held by the woman on the left. They are in a bright, modern setting, possibly a classroom or office. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people and large windows.

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COLLEGE AND CAREER COACHING

Educator and Volunteer Guide

Two-Way Informational Interview

Developed in partnership with:
Discovery Education and JFF

EDUCATOR AND VOLUNTEER GUIDE

Two-Way Informational Interview

OVERVIEW

As students build their 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 that industry. This guide provides sample steps and questions for both interviewers and interviewees, as they prepare for a successful informational interview. This guide can be used flexibly by educators and employee volunteers working with students. A student version of this guide can be accessed in the “Extension Resources” section of the Futurelab+ Career Finder.

WHAT THE ACTIVITY IS

A two-way informational interview is an introductory engagement activity for employees and students who are connecting for the first time. The purpose is to prompt students and employees to share facts about themselves and their background and interests, and provide an opportunity for students 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.

HOW IT WORKS

Students receive an interview worksheet that takes about 30 minutes to complete. They're asked to research some basic questions about the biotech company where the employee works to familiarize themselves with some of the core features of the business. The worksheet will also include questions that students should prepare to ask the employee during the interview, as well as space to write in their own questions.

Employees will also receive an interview worksheet that prompts them to do some **advance research** about the students' school and student population. They will also have questions to ask students focused on learning more about their general interests and knowledge of careers.

Teachers can present these interview worksheets to the class beforehand and walk through the goals of the activity, so students understand what to expect before signing up. As a prep activity, teachers could use class time to help students brainstorm additional questions they want to ask employees that are not included in the worksheet.

IN-PERSON IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

Small Groups:

6–7 employees would come one day to interview small groups of 4–6 students, or interview timeslots could be spread out over a number of weeks depending on scheduling, employees' availability, or available classroom space if a subset will be interviewing elsewhere. Students would take turns asking and answering questions from the worksheet.

1-on-1:

Depending on interest/demand, employees could come to the classroom and interview students 1-on-1.

VIRTUAL IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

Small Groups:

6–7 employees would be spread across virtual breakout rooms, and students would take turns asking and answering questions from the worksheet. Teachers could choose to use class time to do this or students could sign up during after-school hours.

1-on-1:

Students and employees would be matched and receive a link to a virtual meeting platform. Students could use class time or schedule after-school meetings with employees.

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Interview Prep and Questions: FOR STUDENTS

Directions

This series of questions can be provided to students in advance (either by their educator or their interviewer) to allow them to prepare for a productive and successful informational interview. A student version of this document is provided in the Futurelab+ Career Finder "Extensions" section.

Interview Prep

Students should be asked to research the following items in preparation for their informational interview.

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 Prep and Questions: FOR STUDENTS

Continued

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

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

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 Prep and Questions: FOR STUDENTS

Continued

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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Interview Prep, Questions, and Sample Answers: FOR EMPLOYEES

Directions

Teachers, feel free to provide this to volunteer employees visiting your classroom. You can also use this as a tool to practice role-playing the informational interview process with your students.

General Tips

- *Start by introducing yourself. Say your name, and what led you to sign up for this opportunity.*
- *You are the timekeeper.*
- *Emphasize how eager you are to learn from the student.*
- *Assume the student has relevant skills, experiences and assets that could translate to a work setting—help them make those connections!*
- *Remind them there is no right or wrong answer.*

Interview Prep:

1. What school does the student attend?
2. Where is the school located?
3. What are the demographics of the student population?
4. What specialized programs (if any) do they offer at the school?
5. List anything you find interesting about the school (history, news articles, events) from a brief internet search.

Interview Questions:

1. What's something you've taught yourself or someone else has taught you? Could be a hobby, specific skill, or program. (ICE BREAKER)
2. If you had the whole day free, how would you spend it?
3. Do you like working independently or in groups?
4. Have you ever had a job (paid or unpaid). Helping friends and family counts too!
5. How do you feel about public speaking?
6. Who do you admire and why?
7. What's your favorite class?
8. Have you visited workplaces before?
9. Have you thought about your ideal job before? If not your ideal job, what about your ideal workplace?
10. What would you say your superpower is?

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Interview Prep, Questions, and Sample Answers: FOR EMPLOYEES

EXAMPLE

Interview Prep:

1. What school does the student attend?

Pinole Valley High School

2. Where is the school located?

Pinole, CA (East Bay)

3. What are the demographics of the student population?

Aprox. 22% Asian, 44% Hispanic, 16% Black, 15% White,
1% Hawaiian, 2% Two or more races

4. What specialized programs (if any) do they offer at the school?

Engineering, Law & Justice, Health Academies, AP,
Regional Occupational Program

5. List anything you find interesting about the school (history, news articles, events) from a brief internet search.

Construction on the new school building was completed in 2019, the school has a forensics team that competes (and wins) in local tournaments.