Information interviewing – Top 10 tips

This is when you meet with someone in the industry that you’d like to work in, and find out as much as possible from them.

1. Do your research first, so that you have specific questions to ask.
2. Gather information about various careers by speaking to a range of professionals in those fields. Enhance your confidence and improve your interview skills by doing so. Visit people in a variety of work settings to gain insight into different working environments, and learn what types of job opportunities exist in a given field/organisation.
3. Develop contacts with key people who either do the hiring or who know those who do. Remember, you are not asking the person for a job: you are gathering information on which to base decisions. Make sure your contacts understand this. Explain how you obtained the person’s name, e.g. a friend who works at the same company.
4. Take a notebook in which you have written the questions you want to ask and also use it to take notes.
5. Be prepared to take the lead in the conversation, if necessary. Remember, you are interviewing him/her.
6. Respect the person’s time. Be appreciative without being apologetic and plan a manageable agenda. Do not wear out your welcome.
7. Recognise that everyone has his/her own attitudes, biases and feelings which must be evaluated. By talking to several people, you will gain a variety of opinions.
8. At the end of the interview, ask if there is anyone else that they can recommend you to see, thus extending your network.
9. Send a thank you email immediately following the interview. You can also use this to tactfully remind your contact of anything they promised to do.
10. It’s perfectly possible to conduct an information interview over the phone or via Skype if you can’t get to visit an organisation because it’s too far away.