

Field Research & Field Trip

FIELD RESEARCH: Take inspired action to learn more and evaluate possibilities

To explore your priority possibilities and notice even more clues in your Intentional Exploration, we recommend taking the inspired action of conducting Field Research meetings, sometimes called Information Interviews. Talking to people who know about your areas of interest, or who have relevant experience in an organization, work or volunteer area or training opportunity, is an effective way to tell if you'll like it or not. These are not job interviews and it is inappropriate to ask for a job or to hand over your resume unless requested to do so.

Five Keys to Successful Field Research Meetings. You'll remember them because they spell **FIELD**: 1. **FIND** good people. 2. **INSIGHTS** you can get. 3. **EASY** for them to say 'yes.' 4. **LIST** your questions & **LISTEN!** 5. **DOs** and **Don'ts**.

FIND good people. Consider asking people such as your:

- Personal network
- LinkedIn 2nds
- Parents' contacts
- Professors, Teachers
- Co-workers past or present
- Volunteer contacts
- Contacts you don't know but want to

INSIGHTS you can get. Why do Field Research meetings? Because you can:

- Explore possibilities & notice clues
- Build professional relationships
- Connect with employers
- Find out about un-posted jobs
- Gain confidence
- Make choices or rule out possibilities

EASY for them to say 'yes.' People sometimes get stuck because they don't know how to ask for a Field Research meeting. Here are key tips and a sample script.

- Use Email, phone, LinkedIn, or ask a friend or contact to introduce you
- Briefly introduce yourself
- Ask for advice
- Make it easy; ask for 15-20 minutes
- Suggest time and place
- Ask for another lead if they decline

Sample Script or Email, edit as required:

*"Hi _____. My name is _____. Your acquaintance/friend/co-worker, ___[name]___, suggested I contact you. I'm interested in learning more about what you're doing in the area of _____. **I'd like your advice.** Could we meet for 15 or 20 minutes?"*

Listen and respond to questions. If it's a yes:

"Wonderful! Thank you. I suggest Tuesday at 3pm and I can send you a Zoom link / come by your office. How's that?"

Be flexible with scheduling and location. If they can't meet in person, they may be willing to talk to you over the phone, and they may want to do so right then and there. So be prepared! If they decline for any reason, be gracious and accept, though you can still ask for the name of someone else to contact.

LIST your questions & LISTEN!

- Be prepared – research your contact and their organization
- Prepare what you want to say as your own introduction
- List your questions. Use or edit the list of questions below.
- Be professional in dress and manner
- Take notes during the meeting; use Worksheet on last page of handout
- Thank your contact for their time and follow up with a card or email

DOs and Don'ts

- DO Offer to buy your contact a coffee or something if you're at a café
- DO Make it conversational – good listening required!
- DO Ask for referrals
- DO Follow up afterward
- DON'T Talk more than you listen
- DON'T Eat too much!
- DON'T Push your resume unless asked

Use or edit these sample Field Research questions:

To find out more about any possibility such as a career, company, organization or training opportunity, you can ask for a field research meeting with someone knowledgeable about it : an insider. Some call these meetings "information interviews" or "coffee chats," however Field Research expands the concept and guides you to a successful meeting. Note that Field Research is not a job interview and it is inappropriate to ask for a job or to hand over your resume, unless requested to do so. It is also not a feedback meeting with someone you know well.

To conduct a field research interview:

1. Identify the areas, companies, organizations or training opportunities you want to explore.
2. Try to find an appropriate contact person within your network, or, you can simply call an organization and try to identify a suitable contact through reception.
3. Be courteous when requesting the interview, e.g. "My name is ____ and I was given your name by _____. I'm interested in exploring the area of _____ and wondered if I could ask for your advice, perhaps over a coffee, for 15-20 minutes." If they can't meet in person, they may be willing to talk to you over the phone. And if not, they still may be helpful and offer you the name of someone else to contact.
4. Schedule a meeting at the interviewee's convenience.
5. Be prepared and be professional. See below for sample questions.
6. Take notes during the interview.
7. Thank the interviewee for their time, and follow up with a thank-you card or email.



Use these sample field research questions:

1. On a typical day in this position, what do you do?
2. What do you like most / least about your work?
3. How did you get into this work?
4. Would you make the same career choices again?
5. What skills and knowledge are necessary for this work?
6. What training or experience would be important for someone getting into this field?
7. What advice would you give someone entering this work area?
8. What are the problems, frustrations you face regularly?
9. What related fields do you think I can explore?
10. Given my skills and experience, is it realistic that I could enter this field?
11. Could you tell me a bit about the work environment?
12. What's the management style in this organization?
13. What's the career path when enter at this level? What opportunities for advancement are there in this field?
14. What are the salary ranges for various levels in this field?
15. Is there a demand for people in this occupation?
16. Which professional journals and organizations would help me learn more about this field?
17. How do you see jobs in this field changing in the future?
18. What is best way to apply for positions like this in terms of cover letter and resume or CV length and detail?
19. Do you use an Employee Referral Program to hire?
20. Who else do you think I could speak to about my interest in this area?

FIELD TRIP

To find out more about one or more of your Priority Possibilities, you can also conduct a Field Trip. This is a chance for you to go somewhere new. Have an adventure! Test drive a career.

For your Field Trip...

1. Find people who are doing what you love to do!
2. Find out if you would like to move your career in this direction.
3. Learn more about the people, activities, organizations that are doing things in this arena.
4. Create lucky breaks!

To set up your Field Trip...

1. Identify the Priority Possibility areas, companies, organizations or training opportunities you want to explore.
2. Write a list of what you want. For example, you might want to learn how they do what they do, or meet someone, or feel confident while there.
3. Who do you know now, in your network, who is involved in these Priority Possibilities, or might know someone there? If you know someone, give them a call to ask for advice about setting up your Field Trip. If not, don't worry proceed to next step.
4. Pick the one place or field trip destination that you feel fits with your Priority Possibilities. You may choose to get "warmed up" with a field trip destination where you're most at ease. Or you may choose to start with the one that blows your socks off.
5. Prepare for your Field Trip by picking a date and scheduling it if that works for you or your contact there. Or, play it more spontaneously if that suits you.
6. GO! Go anyway!

Packing List for your Field Trip

- Field Research questions. Notebook. Pens. Business cards. Resume, just in case. Your curiosity, enthusiasm and genuine interest in them and their place.

The Art of Friendly Persistence

Those are magic words in Intentional Exploration. It's really what separates people who do just OK from people who do well. It's an attitude or mindset that embodies the following:

1. I have something of value to offer. I'm proud of that. I'm not ashamed to talk about myself.
2. I will build the communication skills to convey this value to others. They may not see this value unless I show them.
3. If someone shows interest, I'll engage with them and find out about their needs and see if what I have fits for them.
4. If they are uncertain, I'll educate them, tell them stories, show them proof of value.
5. If they are not ready now, I'll follow up with them later.
6. I'll find a way that is win-win. I'm willing to negotiate and find a solution that works for all.
7. If someone doesn't wish to talk with me, I'll remember that you can't connect with everyone and I'll move on.

This mindset of friendly persistence may be the most important thing you can cultivate in your Intentional Exploration. *Adapted from Robert Middleton, <http://www.actionplan.com>*