



EnvironMentors[®] Expert Interviews

Teacher and Mentor Summary

All EnvironMentors students must include at least one Expert Interview in their projects. The Expert Interview is an interview with an expert in a field related to the project topic. Expert interviews are extremely valuable to students' research, because they add an expert's perspective to the project topic. They can inspire the student to think differently about the topic or direct the student in a more productive or interesting direction. Also, experts are great resources for finding source literature for projects. Conducting more than one expert interview is even more valuable because this provides students different and undoubtedly varying perspectives on the topic.

Expert interviews are best conducted in person. This gives your student an opportunity to actually meet and talk with an expert in his or her field. If a face-to-face interview is not possible, students may conduct the interview over the phone. E-mail interviews are less valuable, but are acceptable if an in person or phone interview simply can not be arranged.

Make sure to discuss the significance of being able to interview with some of the nation's leading scientists and environmental experts on a wide variety of topics and issues who work in and around the District of Columbia. Remind students that they have a unique opportunity to obtain first-hand information from some of the nation's, and therefore the world's, an opportunity not available to students anywhere else.

Objectives

- Schedule and prepare for an interview with an expert in their topic's field.
- Conduct an in-person interview with the expert and write up a summary of the event.

Activities

- Identify and contact an Expert
- Develop a list of questions for the interview
- Conduct the in-person interview
- Write up a summary of the interview
- Write a thank you to the interviewee

Suggested Rubric

Total Value = 10 points

To what extent does the student:

- Research field experts
- Identify, contact and set up an interview with an expert
- Develop a thoughtful list of questions for the interview
- Conduct the in-person interview
- Write up a summary of the interview
- Write a thank you to the interviewee



Expert Interview Student Worksheet

Now that you have a topic in mind, it's a great time to utilize a unique and valuable resource: subject experts. Your task is to find an expert on your topic and interview him or her about your topic. Work with your mentor for suggestions or to help you research possible local experts online.

Instructions

1) **Identify Experts.** Work with your mentor to identify potential experts working in the field of your project topic. Do Google searches (www.google.com) using key words related to your project topic to help identify scientific and environmental organizations and agencies located in the DC area that might have possible "experts."

Previous experts have included:

- College professors
- People in your mentor's office
- People who work at government agencies.

2) **Make Contact.** Once you have identified two or three individuals whom you could interview, e-mail or call to introduce yourself as conducting an EnvironMentors Project and request a date and time for an interview. Make sure to first request a date/time for an "in person" interview. If an in person interview is not possible, set up a telephone interview at a designated time. **Set a date, time, and location.**

3) **Develop questions in advance** that indicate you have already looked into your project topic beforehand. In other words, you don't want to come across as knowing nothing about the topic and leaving your expert with the impression that you are using his or her time unwisely.

Use the interview as an opportunity to:

- 1) learn something new and useful about your topic
- 2) let your expert feel as though he/she is contributing something of value to you.

Questions:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____
- 7) _____
- 8) _____

4) Gather Materials. Make sure to bring your “What You Know” chart, a notepad and pen for taking notes, and a list of questions about the topic that you prepared ahead of time.

5) Send your questions in advance via email. If possible, it is nice to give the interviewee a chance to prepare.

6) Dress appropriately for an interview, have your materials organized, and SHOW UP ON TIME! In the past, people who volunteer as Experts have been incredibly impressed with EnvironMentors students. One University of Maryland professor serving as an Expert Interviewer was so impressed with a young EnvironMentors student from Anacostia HS, he hired the student for a summer job in his research lab!

7) Get your Expert’s Postal Address, because you will want and need to send him or her a brief thank you note.

8) Write up a quick summary of what you learned from your Expert Interview and type it. Add it to the introduction you have already written.

CONGRATULATIONS! You have completed the Expert Interview! Write them up in paragraph form and SAVE them to a disk. Print a copy and turn it in to your teacher or coordinator.

Due _____