



Informational Interviewing

What is Informational Interviewing?

An informational interview is an informal conversation with someone working in a field, industry, or specific job that is of interest to you.

What is an informational interview used for?

- Gathering information about a field you are interested in going to school for or gaining additional training or certifications for.
 - Ex. You're a freshman in college and are not sure if you want to major in Business or Communications. You set up informational interviews with a person working in Business and someone working in Communications to help determine which career path seems like the right fit for you.
- Researching a specific company you are interested in working for someday.
 - Ex. You're graduating soon with a degree in Biokinetics and you're interested in working for Tria Orthopedics. You reach out to people working at Tria to learn more about the company, their values, and how you could someday be a good candidate for working there.
- Networking and developing professional relationships to help you prepare for a specific career path or position.
 - Ex. You are still in college, but with graduation coming up you'd like to expand your professional network. You reach out to some people working professionally in your future field and ask if they'd be willing to meet with you so you can get advice and ask some general questions about their career journey and how they got to where they are today.

Who to ask and how to ask

Figuring out who you would like to connect with for an informational interview will require some reflection to determine your top goals you hope to achieve from the connection. After you think through if you'd like to connect with people in your intended field, a specific company, or with a specific job title, you can use your current network to find connections (asking professors, friends, former coworkers, etc) or a platform like LinkedIn to find people to connect with.

Once you've determined who you'd like to connect with, send them a polite email/message asking if they would be willing to sit down with you so you can gather information and get advice. Be clear that you are looking to network and create a professional connection and that you are not asking for a job.

Example:

Hello Christina,

My name is Sally Carter and I got your contact information from my professor, Dr. Carver. I am a junior at Bethel University, studying Biology. Graduation is coming up soon and I'm wanting to gather more information about what it is like to work in a lab full time. I am wondering if you would be willing to have a 30 minute phone call with me so I could ask you some questions about your company, job, and how you've developed your career? Thank you so much for your time and I hope we can connect soon so I can learn more about ways I can use my Biology degree when I graduate.

Sincerely,
Sally Carter

Things to make sure you include in your email:

- State your name and objective for the meeting
- Include how you found out about them as a potential professional contact
- Approximately how long a phone call or meeting would be

The Informational Interview

Things to do before and during the interview:

- Show up early if meeting in person or call on time if you scheduled a phone call
- Carefully prepare questions before the meeting to ensure that you can keep the conversation going
- Actively listen and be engaged when the person answers your questions
- Ask if they have additional referrals for you in the field or industry of interest that would be good for you to connect with

Things to remember:

- You are not asking for a job! Informational interviewing is a way to gather information about potential fields/industries, learn about a specific job, network, or ask for general career advice from someone further along in their professional career
- Do your research about relevant fields, companies, etc before the interview
- Always send a thank you note after a meeting thanking your new contact for their time, advice, and useful information
- Plan how you will maintain your newly attained contacts. Start by connecting with them on LinkedIn and potentially setting up follow up meetings if applicable

Things to remember when writing a follow-up thank you note:

- Be professional in language and format.
- List specifics. Include how your conversation with them was helpful and what you learned about through your conversation.
- Include how you plan to connect with them in the future (LinkedIn, email, etc.)

- Show genuine gratitude in thanking them.

Example:

Dear [insert name of contact],

Thank you so much for the time you took last week to talk with me on the phone about [Insert job title, company name, field/industry, or whatever specific thing you were discussing with the contact]. I appreciated hearing your insights about the industry and learning from your career journey. I plan on using the job boards that you told me would be beneficial as I look for jobs after I graduate.

I would like to stay connected with you on LinkedIn and will follow up with you on my progress as I continue towards [list intended industry or job]

I look forward to staying connected!

Sincerely,
Your name

Example Questions for Informational Interviewing

Career Path

- Tell me more about your career path. How did each job lead to your next position?
- Why did you pursue this specific career?
- If you could do it all over again is there anything you would do differently or change about your career path?
- What was your undergraduate major? How did it help prepare you for your career?
- Have you had additional training or certifications outside of your undergrad degree?
- What are some other related jobs and industries I could explore? If you made a career change what are some fields you would consider?
- Where can a person in an entry-level position in this industry expect to be in two years? Five years?

Work Specifics

- What is a typical workday like for you? What is a typical workday like for someone in a lower level position?
- What skills are required in your position on a daily basis?
- What parts of your job do you like the best?
- What parts of your job are most challenging?
- What motivates you to remain in this job despite some of the challenges?
- What is the most fulfilling aspect of your job?
- Describe your work environment?
- What are the responsibilities of other people you work with?
- How often do you work outside of regular work hours?
- Which season(s) of the year is toughest in your job?

- How has your work affected your lifestyle?
- Would it be possible for me to shadow you or someone else at work sometime?

Profession Outlook

- Are there too many or too few people in your industry/field currently?
- Are there any changes or developments in the future that could affect future opportunities in this industry/job/company?
- Why do people leave this field/company/industry?
- What is the employment outlook in your field?

Money and Advancement

- What are entry-level salaries typically set at?
- What would be my earning potential in this company/field/industry?
- What is the background of most senior-level executives?
- What additional training or schooling is needed to achieve promotions and advancements?

Education and Experience

- What qualifications do you look for in a new hire?
- How do most people enter into this profession?
- What do you think of my resume and experiences so far? What types of positions do you think I could qualify for in this industry in the future?
- What types of organizations or companies would be interested in hiring someone with qualifications like mine?
- What preparation could I do while in school to help me advance in this field?
- Are there any specific courses or training you recommend I should take?
- Is further schooling after undergrad important to advance in this field/industry?

Work Culture

- Considering my background, how well do you think I would fit in at this company/organization?
- What personal attributes do you think are most necessary for someone to be relationally successful in this industry/company?
- Based on my skills, education, and experiences, what are other careers you would suggest I explore further?
- Is this work environment formal or informal in this profession?

General Career Preparation

- What abilities are important for success and enjoyment in this profession?
- What values are important to be successful in this profession?
- What personality traits are important to have in order to be successful in this profession?
- What do you recommend students do to find an internship or summer job in this field/industry/company?
- What are other ways of gaining experience you would recommend to students?
- What general advice do you have for someone wanting to prepare/get into this industry/field/company/position?
- Do you have any recommendations for networking within this field?