



Informational Interviewing

What Is It?

An informational interview is an interview with the purpose of gaining information about an industry, company, or career path.

Why Do It?

An informational interview allows you to gain information and advice from an experienced professional. It also allows you to create a positive impression and establish a good relationship with someone who may be able to help you in your career pursuits.

Informational Interviewing Guidelines

- **You are not asking for a job**
You are gathering information on which to base future decisions (i.e., what career to pursue, how to effectively obtain a job in your field, whether to make a career change, etc.). When you contact someone to arrange an informational interview, be clear about your intent.
 - **Always make an appointment**
Face-to-face interviews are best, but if distance or scheduling is an issue, you can also conduct an informational interview by phone or Skype.
 - **Do your homework**
Before meeting with your contact, take the time to learn about them, their organization, and their industry.
 - **Prepare questions and take the lead**
Because you have requested the interview, you will need to take the lead in the conversation. You should also have a list of 10-15 questions you wish to ask. You may not ask them all, but being prepared will make a positive impression and will keep the conversation flowing.
 - **Dress professionally**
Even though this is not a job interview, you should dress as if it is.
 - **Respect your contact's time**
Don't ask questions about information you can easily discover on your own. Also, if you requested a 20-minute meeting, do not go over your time. Make sure that your agenda for the meeting can be accomplished in that time frame.
 - **Ask for referrals**
Your contact may be willing to refer you to others in the field or in a different part of the company, and can suggest professional organizations related to his/her industry.
 - **Thank them**
Send a thank you note after the informational interview. A handwritten note or card that you mail can make a good impression, but an email thank you note is acceptable, too.
 - **Keep in touch**
Follow up with your contact regarding any referrals he or she gave you. It is also a good idea to update your contact periodically on your job search progress/career plans. Another way to keep in touch is to send them an article or a resource that you think they might find interesting. If possible, connect with the person on LinkedIn.
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Sample Questions

Questions can be about your contact's background, current position, career growth, the industry or company, lifestyle associated with his or her work, advice for you, suggestions for other resources and contacts, etc. You will want to tailor these questions to your individual needs. You may also ask more specific questions based on the research you conduct prior to the informational interview.

- What education and credentials are required to enter this type of work?
- What skills do you consider crucial for this work?
- What personal qualities do you think are important for this work?
- Describe your career path and how you got to your current position.
- Describe a typical day or week in your job.
- What do you consider the most challenging aspects of your work? What do you consider the most rewarding aspects?
- What kinds of decisions do you make? What kinds of problem do you encounter?
- How much flexibility do you have in terms of work hours, dress, work location, etc.?
- What is the typical career path for someone in this field?
- How important is a graduate degree in this field?
- What do you see as the new developments on the horizon for this field?
- What professional associations or journals would you recommend for someone interested in this field?
- What is the typical starting position in this field?
- What opportunities does this company provide for professional development?
- Describe the corporate culture of your organization.
- How would you describe the work atmosphere within this organization?
- How is success measured (or rewarded) in this company?
- What advice do you have for someone who would like to start their career in this field (or at this company)?
- Can you suggest other people whom I should contact for more information?
- Based on what I have told you about my background and interests, do you think they are a good fit for this field?