



Informational Interview

An informational interview is an informal conversation with someone working in an area that interests you and who will give you information and advice. It is an effective research tool in addition to reading books, exploring the Internet and examining job descriptions. **It is not a job interview and the objective is not to find job openings.**

Benefits of Informational Interviewing

- Get firsthand, relevant information about the realities of working within a particular field, industry or position. This kind of information is not always available online or in print.
- Find out about career paths you did not know existed.
- Get tips about how to prepare for and enter a given career.
- Learn what it is like to work at a specific organization.
- Gain knowledge that can help you in writing your resume, interviewing and more.
- Initiate a professional relationship and expand your network of contacts in a specific career field, meet people who may forward job leads to you in the future.

Preparing for the informational interview

Develop a short (15-30 second) overview of yourself, including your reasons for contacting this person, as a way to introduce yourself and define the context of the meeting.

Plan open-ended questions to ask

- Initiate contact.
- Contact the person by phone or email.
- Mention how you got his or her name.
- Ask whether it is a good time to talk for a few minutes.
- Emphasize that you are looking for information and not a job.
- Ask for a convenient time to speak with the person. Short interview. Be mindful of the person's time.
- Be ready to ask questions on the spot if the person says it is a good time for him or her.

Sample questions to ask during the informational interview

- What do you like most/least about your job?
- How did you decide to get into this field and what steps did you take to enter this field?
- What personal qualities do you feel are most important in your work and why?
- What are the tasks you do in a typical workday?

Conducting the informational interview in person

- Dress neatly and appropriately as you would for a job interview.
- Arrive on time or a few minutes early.
- Restate that your objective is to get information and advice, not a job.
- Give a brief overview of yourself and your education and/or work background.
- Be prepared to direct the interview, but also let the conversation flow naturally and encourage the interviewee to do most of the talking.
- Listen well and show genuine interest in what the person has to say.
- Take notes.
- Respect the person's time. Keep the meeting length within the agreed-upon timeframe.
- Ask the person if you may contact them again in the future with other questions.

Note: You can bring a resume, but do not take it out right away. This may lead the interviewee to think you are actually fishing for a job.

Follow-up

- Keep records. Right after the interview write down what you learned, what more you would like to know and your impressions of this industry, field or position and how it would fit with your lifestyle, interest, skills and future plans.
- Send a thank-you note with 1-2 days to express your appreciation for the time and information given.
- Keep in touch with the person, especially if you had a particularly nice interaction. Let him or her know that you followed up on their advice and how things are going as a result of your informational interview. This relationship could become as important part of your network.