

Informational Interviewing

Purpose of Informational Interviewing

This is an informal conversation with a person who works in the career or at the company that interests you. It's a kind of research opportunity to ask questions about their real-life experience and career path. The focus is on learning information to help you make a career decision, not about getting a job offer.

Setting Up an Informational Interview

Focus and find contacts. Start by identifying the type of job or company you want to learn about, then look for people in your network who may have contacts in that field or who work at the company. You can also call your local Chamber of Commerce to explore contacts in an industry or company.

Either call or e-mail to make contact. Start by introducing yourself and your current situation such as student, new graduate or exploring a career change. Explain the purpose of your call, and why you chose them to reach out to. Ask for a brief informational interview, suggest some dates and times, and close with a thank you. When you hear back from them, be sure to confirm the date and time you will meet, meeting format (in person, phone, or video call), and send a meeting invitation.

Examples:

"Mrs. Garcia, hello, I am (YOUR NAME). I just finished a programming certificate at the community college and exploring options in the IT industry. Mary White on faculty there suggested I speak with you. I would really appreciate the chance to learn from someone who is in this industry.

Do you have time in the next two weeks for a 20-minute informational interview? I'd like to learn more about career path, and the IT industry. If that works, would it work to meet by video call on Tuesday, February 11 between 1-4 pm, or any time Friday, February 14? Thank you for considering my request."

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Questions to Ask

Take time to develop specific, personalized questions that will help you decide on your career focus. You could start with some of these:

- What is a typical day like on your job? Is your job typical of work in this field?
- What is most and least rewarding about working in this career?
- Please describe your career path, how you got to this point in your career.
- How do you stay current in your knowledge? Could you recommend any books/websites/other resources to learn about the field?
- What skills and experience are employers looking for?
- Where are current job prospects strongest in this field? What's the best way to find out about jobs in this field?
- What trends are influencing the industry, career field or company? Future changes?
- What advice would you give someone starting in this career? What would you recommend I do at this point to get into this field?
- Are my skills and interests a good fit for this occupation? Or are there related fields I might want to look into?
- Is there anyone else you recommend I talk to in this field?

Questions to learn more about a specific company:

- What's the corporate culture here like?
- Which firms do you think are your toughest competitors, and how do they differ from your company?
- How do you normally hire for this occupation?
- What is the average turnover in this type of job?

Be professional Be on time Dress like for an interview

Show interest Listen Take notes Follow-up questions

Keep it short - limit to 15 to 30 minutes

End the interview stating any follow-up actions

Thank you for their time - Send a thank you note