



Informational Interviewing

Talk to real people before you apply for your next job.

Informational interviews help you get information about a type of job, field or work culture before you invest your time and money in something that isn't a good fit. Unlike job interviews, the meeting is not about a specific job opening and you are the one asking most of the questions. These informal conversations are one of the most important strategies to ensure a focused, effective job search or a career transition.

Who to contact

- Friends, relatives and neighbors
- Former and current co-workers
- Employees at companies that interest to you
- Faculty and administration
- Alumni from your schools
- Community or civic leaders
- Professional association members
- People you read about
- Contacts from community activities
- Anyone in your network!

How to get an informational interview

A lot of people are open to talking about their work or place of employment. They just need to understand why you want to talk to them. Research who you want to talk to and email them to explain the purpose of your meeting. Here's an example of what you might write:

"I am in the process of (a job search, or a career transition or doing research to learn about my field) and I'm gathering information to help me determine my focus. One of my areas of interest is..... I understand from (what I've read about you, or what my contact told me) that you could provide me with insight about this (type of work or type of work environment or field). Would you be open to meeting for an informational interview, so I can explore some of my questions with you?"

Although people are often happy to meet, they are also busy; you may not hear back after your first email. It's okay to follow up with an email one week later. Here's an example of what you might write:

"Is this something you'd be open to? If not, is there another person in your office or department that you might suggest I speak with instead?"

How to prepare for the meeting

- Before the meeting, research the person and/or company and come up with 3-5 questions to ask
- At the meeting, thank the person for their time, give a brief introduction about yourself and remind them why you are there
- State a fact you've learned from your research and then start asking your questions



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Examples of questions

The best questions for an informational interview come from your research and your own, genuine curiosity. So think about: What are you trying to figure out? What do you wish you could know? Here are some categories of questions to get you started:

Understanding the job and work culture:

- Why did you decide to get into this type of work?
- Would you describe a typical day in your job?
- What do you find most challenging and most rewarding about your job?
- How many hours do you work in an average week?
- How does this job affect family and personal time?
- How would you describe the work culture of your employer? The industry in general?
- Is there anything you wished you had known before you entered this field/type of job?

Understanding the industry:

- What are some titles of typical entry-level/mid-level or senior jobs in this field?
- Is there a definite career path once you are in the industry?
- How is technology impacting your industry?
- What trends do you foresee in this field?
- Who in the field do you most admire and why?
- What is a typical salary range for this type of work?
- What benefits and perks are typical in this field/position?

Understanding the experience needed:

- What skills, education and experience are required to get hired in this work?
- How has this industry/job changed and what skills will be required to succeed in the future?
- What skills and strengths make you good at what you do?

Closing questions:

- What would be important for me to consider if I decide to pursue this work?
- Is there anything else you think I should know?
- Would you know of any other jobs or industries I might research that are like this one?
- Are there any professional associations or publications you would suggest for me?
- Who else do you suggest I talk to for an informational interview, and could I use your name in reaching out to them?

Thank them for their time and build your network

Be sure to email the people you meet to thank them, again, for their time. It's helpful to state something you learned from them and let them know if you plan to reach out to one of their contacts for another informational interview. Over time, all these contacts can become part of your network.