

Informational Interview Guide

Informational interviews are a great way to learn about a job, occupation, field, and/or workplace you are interested in. Do *not* ask for a job or internship during an informational interview. Only use this strategy to learn and expand your professional network.

The many benefits to informational interviews:

- Way less challenging than job interviews. In fact, they can be fun and interesting!
- Gain valuable insights that can't be found online about a profession, industry, and workplace.
- Face-to-face contact and relationship development expands your professional network.
- If possible and safe to do so, meet in the person's workplace (if there will be other people there) to learn about an occupation and workplace through more of your senses.
- Expand your professional network, which increases your chances of getting interviews, job shadows, internships, and jobs *in the future*.

How to Set-up Informational Interviews:

- Start by listing the types of businesses or professions you would like to learn about - in order of priority.**
- Refer to your Networking Contact Sheet (or [create one](#)).**
- Determine if anyone that you know is doing the same or similar to an occupation you would like to learn more about.
- (If not) Ask people you know if they know someone who is doing the same or similar work that you want to learn more about.
- (If not) **Research professionals and businesses online** - especially those who live in your area and/or are affiliated with GCC.
- Organize your contact list** in order of relevance and priority for an informational interview.
- Before you call to request an informational interview, create a 10-30 second introduction** (which is a variation of a networking pitch or elevator speech).
 - Example: "*Hello, my name is (insert full name here). (Insert the name of the person who recommended that you contact this person, if applicable) suggested that I contact you. (If you were not referred to this person, explain how you got their name and phone number or email address: I live in the area and have heard about you or your business, etc.) I'm a student (or _____ major) at Greenfield Community College, and I'm interested in learning more about (insert name/s of field or occupation/s here). I am reaching out, because I am hoping to speak to a _____ professional in order to learn more about your*

field (or line of work). Are you by chance available to meet for 15-30 minutes sometime - or is there anyone else in your workplace (or in the community) that you would recommend that I speak to?

If you are nervous about calling a lead or making a cold call about an informational interview, ask a friend or professional, who you trust, if you can practice with them first.

When calling to request an informational interview, refer to the introduction you created.

If you get a “yes” in response, make sure that you schedule a time that is convenient for them, which you will *absolutely* be able to show up for on time. Also, get clear about how much time they can be available for, so you can track and respect their time, when you meet with them.

For safety's sake, meet at their workplace (if others work there too and it is not a home business) or a public place. (If you are under 18, make sure that your guardian knows who you are meeting with as well as the time and location of the meeting.)

Offer to buy them coffee, tea, and/or lunch when you meet for the informational interview, as a way of saying thank you for their time. If they decline this offer or not, consider bringing a (small and inexpensive) token of your appreciation – ideally one that will help them remember you and perhaps ties in with their business.

If you get a “no” in response, but they seem friendly, ask if there is anyone else that they would recommend you contact.

If so, make sure you get the correct spelling, phone number and/or email address of the lead they have given you.

Either way, thank them for their time and consideration.

When you contact anyone that someone else recommended (aka “a lead”), mention who you got their name and contact information from.

Getting Yourself “Together”

- **Pull a nice outfit together** in advance, so you can “[dress for success](#).”
- On the day of, do something “intentional” with **your hair**.
- Use *every* strategy necessary to **remember your appointment and arrive on time**. Add it to your calendar, create notifications, set alarms, and/or write yourself a big note and put it where you will definitely see it, etc.

Questions for informational interviews

Don’t ask questions that you can research online, during informational interviews.

- Before you conduct an informational interview**, research the professional, the place they work, and the occupation you will be asking them about. Save information found, so you can review it again before the informational interview, if need be.
- Organize the questions below, for yourself, in order of priority. That way, you will be more likely to ask the questions that are most important and relevant to you during the informational interview.**
 - How did you find your career path or get to this point in your career?
 - Have you found that people with certain characteristics, interests, or values are more likely to persist and succeed in your line of work? If so, please explain.
 - What do you love about your work?
 - Are there things about the culture of your workplace and/or industry that you especially respect, enjoy, and/or value?
 - Are there things about your work or the industry you are a part of that you don't like or find more challenging to deal with?
 - What is the typical work day or week like? How does your work change during the year?
 - As you look back, is there anything you wish you'd known or done differently?
 - Is there any other advice you would give to someone who is interested in or starting out in this field?
 - What do you consider to be essential skills, when it comes to this work?
 - Do you have any recommendations about how to gain the skills that are not taught in school?
 - What are future trends for this field?
 - What training certifications (aka. "industry recognized credentials") or education credentials are most respected by employers in this field or industry - i.e. in this region or state?
 - How would you characterize the local or state job market? Are there a good amount of employment opportunities in your line of work?
 - What is the best way to find jobs in this field?
 - What do you do or read to keep your skills and knowledge current and competitive?
 - Do people in your field belong to professional associations or organizations?
 - Is there a local chapter, state chapter, and/or national association that you would recommend?
 - Do you think it would make sense for me to attend a meeting or networking event sooner than later?
 - Are there any other resources (events, organizations, businesses, websites, journals, websites, people) that would be good for me to be aware of, explore, or follow up on?
 - **(Be sure to ask this one!!)** Are there any other professionals that you would recommend I reach out to, in order to learn more? Can you suggest two or three other people I might contact? May I use your name if I contact them, just to explain how I got their name? (Be sure to spell names, email addresses, and phone numbers correctly.) Why bother?: People are more likely to talk to you when the request/introduction comes from someone they know and/or trust.

Start the interview by:

- Expressing gratitude** for their time
- Reiterating why you requested this time to meet with them.** The latter could include a variation of the networking pitch that you used, when calling or emailing them.

At the beginning and throughout the informational interview, look for common ground.

- Are you from the same area, town/city, etc.?
- Do you both know the same people?
- Did you go to the same school?
- Are you focused on earning an education credential that they already have?
- Do you both love the same things about this line of work?
- Can you notice any other common interests or goals?

If they don't have any initial questions for you:

- You can start asking them questions.
- Listen carefully and take some brief notes, if you need to, in order to remember what they shared and go after the answers for questions that surface while speaking to them.

Goal of Informational Interviews

..is to gather more perspective about an occupation or field you are interested in. It *is* okay to mention what kind of opportunities you are seeking, but **don't ask them for a job or internship**. You *can* ask if they know the best way to find out about opportunities at their business or organization. If you get some leads (aka. contact information for other relevant professionals) or tips about when positions will be posted (etc.), that is a bonus (vs. an expectation).

As mentioned previously, it is important that you **be conscientious of their time**. Don't use more time than they offered, since any time offered is a gift to you.

Express Gratitude

Thank the person you interviewed before leaving. Additionally, follow up with a professional [thank you note](#) (within 24-48 hours of the interview).

For [more tips on information interviewing](#), visit the [Informational Interviewing web page](#) in the GCC Career Readiness & Internships website.