

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

Choosing a career path can be complicated. Informational Interviewing is a tool to help you understand the pros and cons of various careers and to make a sound decision.

What is Informational Interviewing?

Informational Interviewing is a meeting that the job seeker initiates with an individual who is working in a career that you would like to learn more about. The primary purpose of the meeting is to ask for advice – **not** employment. The job seeker uses the interview to gather information on the field, occupation or organization and to expand their professional network. The job seeker hopes to discover what the job is like, what responsibilities they have, and what it's like to work at their company. This differs from a job interview because the job seeker asks the questions!

As a result of conducting Informational Interviews, you will:

- Gain valuable information about a career field, a particular job within that field or a certain employer
- Learn from people who work directly in your area of interest
- Explore careers and clarify your career goals
- Broaden your network of contacts for future reference
- Build confidence for job interviews
- Access the most up-to-date career information
- Create a strategy for entering your field of interest
- Better understand a specific work environment

How to request an Informational Interview:

1. **Introduce yourself.** *"Hello, my name is _____. I'm in career transition and exploring new career directions. I am interested in learning more about _____ as a career."*
2. **Tell the other person who referred you.** *"Jane Smith suggested I speak with you about this career because of your experience and knowledge."*
3. **State the purpose of your call.** *"It would be really valuable to me if we could spend a short amount of time together so that I can learn more about the highlights and challenges in this line of work, the demand for jobs in our region, and your suggestions for how to become well qualified in this field..."* Complete this statement with your primary objective for the informational interview.



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Preparing for the Informational Interview:

- Learn as much as you can about the person with whom you will be interviewing in advance so you can quickly build rapport and use the short amount of time in a productive manner.
- Research everything you can about your area of interest before the interview to gain a basic understanding of the occupation. Develop questions for the informational interview that will provide you more specific information.
- Decide what information you would like to learn during the interview and prepare a list of questions.
- Dress professionally.
- Bring your resume and only provide it *if requested*.

After the Informational Interview:

- Send a personal thank you note.
- Review your notes and evaluate what you learned. Analyze the information you gathered. What kinds of adjustments do you need to make to your job search, career goals, and/or resume?
- Keep in touch with your contact person to let them know the results of their referrals and specific ways it was helpful.
- Keep in touch during your transition with people you have interviewed and ask if there's anything you can do for them in return for their assistance.

Sample Questions to Ask:

Choose several questions from the following list that are geared towards your objectives for the interview. This list isn't comprehensive so brainstorm some of your own questions to ask!

1. What are your roles and responsibilities within the organization?
2. What are some of the different types of professional roles within your organization?
3. What education or training is most valued? Is a degree necessary?
4. What types of skills, aptitudes, or personality traits are needed for success in this type of work?
5. What areas of knowledge are most important to advancement in this field?
6. Are people needed in this field?
7. What trends or issues do you see shaping the direction of this field in five to ten years?
8. How did you get into this field or job?
9. What do you like best about the job?
10. What is the starting salary range? How does the range change at different levels of advancement?



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11. Where can a person interested in this occupation find further information?
12. What is the best advice you can give a person interested in this occupation?
13. What are some of the things you dislike about this occupation?
14. **ALWAYS ASK:** Who else do you know who would be helpful for me to talk to? When I call him/her, may I use your name?