

Preparing for an Informational Interview

Informational interviews are unique, and they aren't part of everybody's job search. Their purpose is to get information - not to get a job. That said, they can set you up very well for future interviews in the industry. They can help you expand your network, build confidence, identify what looks best and worst about your resume, and decide whether the industry really is for you.

Remember that in an informational interview, *you* are going to be the one leading the conversation, not the interviewer. Have a plan going in, and make a list of questions that you keep with you. Let the conversation stray if it's helpful - just make sure you're getting the most out of the time you get to spend with the interviewer.

- Start by identifying the person you want to interview with. Your friends, family, and their coworkers can be good resources for this. This is the easiest way to get appointments.
- Learn about the industry:
 - What qualifications do people usually have who get the kinds of jobs you want?
 - What other industries does it work closely with?
 - How many people are there out there with the interviewer's job?
- Decide what information you want. What would be most helpful for you to know?
- Arrange the interview. Contact the person by phone, by a letter, an email, or through a mutual acquaintance to set up a time that works for you. Attach a resume, if possible.
- Print copies of your resume to take with you.
- Dress and present yourself the same as you would for any other interview: calm, composed, and well-groomed.

Questions you can ask

If you have specific questions, those are the most important! You know best about what you need to know. Here are some important other questions to ask, though, that will help you get the most out of your interview:

- On a typical day in this position, what do you do?
- What training or education is required for this type of work? Am I situated to get it?
- What personal qualities are important to success in this job?
- How did you get your job?
- What entry-level jobs should I look for to learn as much as possible?
- How do you see jobs in this field changing in the future?
- What advice would you give a person entering this field?
- What do you think of my experience so far in terms of entering this field?
- What do you think of my resume? How would you suggest I change it?
- Can you suggest other people I should talk to? May I use your name?

Stay humble and respect the person's time. Send a thank-you letter afterwards (feel free to use the thank-you letter template we provide). Who knows - this could be a good opportunity to expand your network!

Example letter/email of inquiry

Dear [name of interviewer],

Hello! My name is [your name]. I'm trying to get into the field of [industry], and when I heard from [name of referral/place you found out about interviewer] that you were so successful I decided to reach out to see whether you would be willing to conduct an informational interview so I could get some advice.

I really admire [organization for which the interviewer works] because of [industry-specific quality measure], and I would be extremely grateful for the opportunity to learn more about how you operate and how you got where you are today. I've included my resume for your convenience. Please let me know if you are willing to arrange an appointment; you can contact me at [preferred method of communication].

Thanks so much for your time.

Sincerely,
[your name]

Example thank-you letter

Dear [name of interviewer],

Hello! I just wanted to write to thank you once again for your time the other day, and say you've been a huge help to me - I really appreciated our conversation about [topic you discussed], and I feel like it helped me learn a lot about my potential in [industry] and for my future.

I hope you're having a great week.

Sincerely,
[your name]