

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

WHAT IS INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING?

An informational interview offers you the opportunity to meet with an important contact that can be helpful in the future. The focus of an informational interview is collecting information, *not* asking for or interviewing for a job/internship. The goal of these conversations is to build your industry knowledge and grow your network. These connections could be alumni, family friends, professors, hiring managers from relevant organizations, or people in your LinkedIn network.

WHAT CAN I LEARN FROM AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW?

Participating actively in informational interviewing will allow you to gain a wealth of information about organizations, work environments, and career opportunities. You will gather up-to-date, first-hand information on day-to-day tasks and workplace cultures. Reflecting on your informational interviews can help you determine if an occupation or industry is a good fit.

HOW DO I SET UP AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW?

1. **Assess your network.** Do you know anyone within your field of interest? Ask for contact recommendations from friends, family, faculty, staff, classmates, neighbors, and alumni.
2. **Request an introduction.** Use phone, email, LinkedIn, or other messaging to make the request. Mutual connections can break the ice and expand your network.
3. **Ask for a meeting.** Invite the person for a cup of coffee or arrange an in-person meeting at the individual's workplace. Alternatively, conduct the informational interview over Skype, phone, email, or LinkedIn. Ask for 30 minutes; if that is not possible, request 15 minutes.
4. **Confirm the date, time, and location.** Secure contact information and check with the professional 24 hours in advance to make sure they're still available to meet with you.
5. **Be prepared.** This professional is taking time out of a busy schedule to meet with you, so be sure to look and act professionally. Check your internet connection if you plan to use Skype. Prepare your questions ahead of time and listen intently.

WHAT DO I ASK?

- As you prepare your questions, consider including the following:
- How do you spend your time at work? Can you describe a “typical” day or week?
- What do you like best about your work and/or your field? Least?
- How did you learn how to do your work? On the job? At a previous job? Formal training? If you were starting out in your field now, would you train in the same way?
- What makes someone successful in your work?
- As you look back on your experiences, is there anything you wish you’d known? Anything you would do differently?
- Do people in your field belong to professional associations or organizations? Is there a local chapter? Do you think it would make sense for me to attend a meeting?
- How do you keep up on your field? What should I be reading?
- Can you suggest other people I might talk with? May I mention your name when I contact them?

HOW DO I CONCLUDE THE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW?

Leave a positive impression by ending the informational interview politely.

- Thank the person for meeting with you.
- Summarize 1 or 2 main points you’re taking away from the meeting.
- Restate interest and include a request for recommendations.

For example: “After talking with you today, I’m really interested in learning more about what an event planner does. Do you have any additional recommendations for someone entering this field? Would you be willing to connect with me on LinkedIn?”

DO I SEND A “THANK YOU” NOTE AFTERWARD?

Yes! Follow your informational interview with a thank you email or LinkedIn message. Interviewees are doing you a favor by giving their time to help with your career planning. They also may be helpful in your job search, so use proper etiquette and thank them, using the same content recommended above from the conclusion of the informational interview.

