



Information Interviewing

Information interviews are person-to-person conversations that help you gain information, insight and advice from people who are working in a career or company you are interested in.

Information interviewing is an invaluable career management tool. It can help you grow and develop in your current work role or explore your options. Not only does information interviewing often give you the most reliable insight and data you can get, it also gives you the opportunity to connect with others.

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Focus the conversation. A variation on your 30-second introduction is a good way to open the conversation. Ask your most critical questions first and take notes.

If you happen to get an information interview with someone who is a hiring manager, it's a good idea to reiterate your intentions for the interview. Say something like: *"Thank you for meeting with me. I want to emphasize that I'm a student researching my career. I'm not here for a job. At this point, I'm just looking for information about (the role, company, industry, etc.). If you know of any openings here or at other organizations I'd of course appreciate hearing about them, but that is not my purpose."* Making this distinction takes the pressure off both of you.

Ask for other referrals. Ask for additional contacts during the last five minutes of your interview. You'll find you get good results if you ask for specific kinds of contacts. For example: *"Do you have any associates you'd recommend I talk with about my field/major?"*

Ask for feedback. An information interview is a great chance to assess how you're coming across. Save the last minute or two of your interview for feedback. Ask questions such as:

"What questions did I fail to ask that are key to getting the information I need? What problem areas do you see that may cause me particular difficulty? What do you see as my best assets for success in this field? What suggestions do you have for me (on any aspect of the information interview process)?"

Offer something in return. Your contact has just given you a gift of time, information and resources. You can do the same. Most people who agree to do information interviews recognize it is good for them too. It allows them to build their connections – one of the most valuable strategies in career management. Think how you can contribute to them. Save time to ask your contact where they see their career headed. Keep this in mind and over time, provide resources and information to them that may help them meet their goals.

After the Information Interview

Follow-up with thanks. After your meeting, write a note of thanks. This one-page letter should: thank the person for their time and contacts they offered you; express your enthusiasm for their time and assistance.

Build your connections. If you feel like you've made a good connection, stay in touch over time. Send copies of articles you find interesting or let them know about websites you find valuable. Offer to return the favor for them or a friend. Building connections is key to work-life success because it enriches the growth and learning process. Again, you never know when a job or internship may come along. If you presented yourself as a clean, articulate, interesting student – you may get the job!



INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW WORKSHEET

- 1) How did you decide to work in this field? For this company?
- 2) What is a typical workday like? A typical week? Year?
- 3) How many hours per week do you usually work? It is common to take work home?
- 4) Do you travel a lot?
- 5) What is the best training or education to acquire?
- 6) What is your background and education?
- 7) Do you have an area of specialization? If so, what?
- 8) How did you decide in which area to specialize? What are other areas?
- 9) What are the most difficult problems/decisions/challenges you face?

- 10) Is the field growing? What are the various types of employers?
- 11) How secure is employment?
- 12) Do you find certain personality traits make it easier to do this work well? Which traits?
- 13) What is it like to work here?
- 14) What is the hiring process? Is that process standard procedure within the industry?
- 15) What is the best way to find a job in this field?
- 16) If you could do it all over again, what would you do differently?
- 17) What is a typical starting salary?
- 18) Are there professional trade journals I should read? Which ones?
- 19) Do you belong to any professional associations? Can nonmembers attend meetings?
- 20) Would you mind reviewing my resume and making comments or suggestions?
- 21) Can you recommend other people I might talk to?

Example Informational Interview Questions

- What is your job like?
 - A typical day?
 - What do you do? What are the duties/functions/responsibilities of your job?
 - What kinds of problems do you deal with?
 - What kinds of decisions do you make?
 - What percentage of your time is spent doing what?
 - How does the time use vary? Are there busy and slow times or is the work activity fairly constant?
- How did this type of work interest you and how did you get started?
- How did you get your job? What jobs and experiences have led you to your present position?
- Can you suggest some ways a student could obtain this necessary experience?
- What are the most important personal satisfactions and dissatisfactions connected with your occupation? What part of this job do you personally

- How did you prepare for this work? If you were entering this career today, would you change your preparati