



How to conduct an Informational Interview

What is an Informational Interview?

Do you want to learn more about a job or career? Are you unsure on what you want to do in your future? Have no fear have an informational interview! What is an informational interview you may ask? An informational interview is a conversation in which a person seeks insight on a career path, an industry, a company and/or general career advice from someone with experience and knowledge in the areas of interest. During this informal interview you will learn about real-life experience from someone working in an industry in which you are interested. When setting up an informational interview there are a few steps to consider when getting started:

- 1. What are my goals for an interview?** – What are you trying to accomplish from having an informational interview? Are you interested in finding out about the company, the experiences and skills needed for a certain position, or more information about the industry? Its important to know what your goals are when going into an informational interview, so that you get all the knowledge that you want from the person you are interviewing.

- 2. Who should I interview?** – This is a good question to ask yourself before having an interview. This informational interview should be with someone that you are either interested in, someone who works in a position you are interested in, or someone who works at a company you are interested in. Ideally, you want to have this interview with someone that is working in your dream role. Some people you can reach out to are:
 - Someone who has a similar education background as you
 - Someone who has experience in your career path or an industry you want to work in
 - A teacher who teaches programs/classes related to your career interests
 - A family member that you know that works in an industry that interests you
 - A friend who has similar career path as you

Once you find the person you want to interview, it is now time to come up with interview questions to ask them.

- 3. How to ask for an informational interview** – To ask for an informational interview there are a couple of ways to go about it. The first way that you can do is asking a person either through email and or LinkedIn. This should be done privately and not on someone's profile or a mass email chain. The message should be professional and courteous and letting them know what you are seeking from the informational interview. Another way is by giving the person a phone call and explaining to them what you are looking for and what you are looking to get out of the interview. If you know the person you can always ask them in-person. This should still be done professionally, so that they know that you are interested in learning more about what they do.



Attached below is a template you can use to help when asking for an informational interview via email.

Subject: [Your name]—informational interview request

Dear [Name of recipient],

[Write how you heard about the company or recipient]. I find the work you perform incredibly interesting and would like to know more about what you do.

I would greatly appreciate learning about [insert what you want to know].

I know you're probably busy, but would you be available for an informational interview [suggest at least one date and time]? Let me know if you can meet at one of those times or if there's a better time for you.

I appreciate your time and thank you in advance.

Sincerely,

[Your name]

[Your contact information]

Usually, people are extremely excited to participate in an informational interview, because then they can talk about what they do daily and how they got to where they are in their career. One thing to consider is to be courteous and to appreciate the time the person is giving you. The person may ask you if they can meet with you at a later date due to their workload or not having time to meet at the moment. If that is the case, try to work around their schedule that works best for them. **Remember** they are doing this on their free time to help you!

4. What can I do to learn as much as I can during an Informational Interview? –

- a. To get the most out of the informational interview make sure to research the company that you are going to. This will help you with asking certain questions about how the company is ran or what the company culture is like. Another option to do is to research the industry in which you are interested. Learn about the career path, industry trends, terminology, and important people in your industry. By doing this you will sound prepared, and the person will be able to give you the information that you are seeking.
- b. Prepare a list of questions that you really want to find an answer to. Make sure that most of your questions are open-ended where the person can add content to their answer instead of giving you one worded response. When conducting the interview, you want to make sure that the conversational flows. The interview should be more of a



conversation then an actual interview. By organizing your questions in groups, you can make sure that the conversation goes smoothly. You can start the conversation by talking about what they do at the company and how the company is. Then you can talk about how they got into their role and what steps they took. By doing this you will get as much information as possible and it will keep you and the person on track and organized. Some examples of questions that you can ask are:

- What are the most vital steps someone should take to prepare for a role like yours?
 - What accomplishments do you feel set you apart in this industry?
 - Did you have any professional experiences unrelated to this industry that allowed you to excel in your current position?
 - Can you tell me what it is like to work for your company?
 - What's your favorite thing about your job?
 - Can you tell me about the most difficult or frequent challenges you face in the role?
- c. Be professional once you arrive to your informational interview. Make sure to arrive early to respect the interviewees time. Remember this quote "Early is on time, where on time late." Make sure you are actively listening to what the person is saying. Bring a notepad with you and take notes on what questions you are asking him. This will come off that you are interested and eager to hear what they have to say. Something else that you can do is be open to sharing your own experiences. By sharing your own experiences, the interviewee can help guide you on next steps that you should take. They can help by relating to your experiences by the experiences that they took to get to where they are in their career.
5. **Do not ask for a job!** – The informational interview isn't a real interview. It is a conversation to find out information that you need to know about a career. Asking for a job is very unprofessional and can put the interviewee in an awkward spot. Make sure to never ask for a job or an internship.
6. **Make sure to network!** – This is a perfect opportunity to meet other people within the industry as you are doing the informational interview. Ask the person you are interviewing if there is anyone else in the industry that may help you find opportunities or is willing to share more information on what they do. Asking about specific areas can help the interviewee find someone that may be able to help you in your search for another informational interview.
7. **Send a thank you letter/email** – This is one of the most important steps to this process. Letting the person know that you are thankful for their time shows the appreciation that you have for



the person. This can also open the door for you for continuous communication and potential job opportunities in the future. When writing a thank you email you want to make sure that you start out by thanking the person for their time since you know it is valuable. Talk about any interesting facts about the industry that stuck with you and let them know that you learned a lot by talking to them. Make sure to add your contact information in the email for further communication. You can find many templates online for a sample thank you letter. Just type into Google "Informational Interview Thank You Email Example."

Informational Interviews can be beneficial if you prepare and organize yourself. Make sure when you set up an informational interview to always be courteous and respectful to the interviewee. They are taking time out of their day to help assist you with questions that you have. **Good luck and Happy Interviewing!**