

RDC Career Services for students

Informational Interview

What is an Informational Interview?

An **Informational Interview** is a meeting in which a potential job seeker seeks advice on their career, the industry, and the culture of a potential future workplace.

In an informational interview, job seekers can be students, unemployed, or else employed and considering new options. They use the interview to gather information on the field and on specific companies where they might want to work. They can find employment leads, and expand their professional network. The employed professional from whom the potential candidate seeks advice and information also learns about a new potential colleague or hire and builds their own network through the conversation.

How to Ask for an Interview

Do your research and narrow down who the most appropriate person might be to request an **Informational Interview**. Once you've decided, contact that person by either email or telephone.

- Introduce yourself in a few short lines
- Explain how you found the person's contact information
- Be specific about what you're looking for. Use the words "informational interview" and say how long you want to meet (e.g., 15-30 minutes).
- If the person can't meet with you, ask them to refer you to other people or places to go for more information
- Offer to provide a resume so the person will know more about you
- Expect to meet them at their work place or near their work place during business hours

Questions to Ask

- What are some tasks or projects you work on?
- What skills can help you excel in this field?
- What would entry-level work in this field look like? How do you advance? What does the typical career path look like?
- How would the experience from this kind of job transfer to other related roles?
- What is the work culture like in your industry?
- What kinds of people are you in contact with regularly?
- Who else should I talk to?
- What resources (like websites, industry associations or organizations) should I look into?
- What is the most effective way to stay connected to current events and news particular to your industry?
- Was graduate school necessary to prepare for or advance in this career? If so, which programs do you recommend?

Tips For Success

- ✓ **Don't be afraid to ask.**
Most people are open to talking about their careers/positions. You may think people aren't interested in talking with you, but people will be supportive if you show genuine interest in what they do.
- ✓ **Don't confuse it with a job interview.**
Be clear with the interviewee – and yourself – that you're only looking for information. Don't be afraid to mention skills or experiences that led you to this field, but don't fish for opportunities.
- ✓ **Keep it short.**
Be respectful of time. You have been invited in to the interviewee's space, so go in with prepared questions that will help you find out the most information for your needs and development.
- ✓ **Meet your goals.**
Leave with two ideas to move forward, examples: two people to talk to next, or two organizations to volunteer with, or two websites you hadn't seen before.
- ✓ **Cement the connection.**
Send a thank you note right away! If you take nothing else from this advice, remember this: Always send a thank you note. Always. Your interviewee should never wonder how much you appreciated the time he/she took to share their hard-earned knowledge with you. Remember, you never know what doors could open for you one day.

Sources:

<https://students.ubc.ca/career/career-resources/informational-interviews>

<https://www.themuse.com/advice/5-tips-for-nonawkward-informational-interviews>