



INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

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INTERVIEW PREPARATION RESOURCE

WHAT IS AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW?

An informational interview is an approach to networking that involves one-on-one conversations with professionals who work in an area you are interested in. Whether you are actively applying for roles or are curious about exploring a different area of work, informational interviews can provide valuable information about a particular job, organization, career field or industry. By conducting informational interviews, you will expand your network and learn more about a role or field (beyond a job description or research online); you can and then apply what you've learned to improve and update your application documents and interview prep.

Identify a Contact



While it can be useful to learn from individuals who are in a more senior role and can play a role in hiring, don't overlook peers or new professionals who may have recently been in your position as a job seeker. They can provide valuable advice and share strategies that worked for them. Review the "[Finding Networking Connections and Events](#)" resource to learn more about how to identify individuals and spaces to connect.

Clarify your Goals



Prepare some notes on what you hope to share with and learn from individuals you are networking with. "[Developing an Elevator Pitch](#)" provides more details and tips on crafting a compelling story. It's helpful to have specific learning goals for the conversation or questions that you would like to ask, as this will help you in drafting a request to connect.

Reach out



People frequently reach out via email or through messages on LinkedIn. When you reach out, share a little bit about yourself, and why you are reaching out. Be mindful of how much time you're asking of the other person and be clear about what your expectations are. For example, you might say that you're hoping to chat with them for 15-20 minutes.

What if they say no? Don't be discouraged! More often than not, a 'no' is more about their personal capacity to connect at the time, rather than a reflection on you. Ask them if there might be a better time to reach out, and whether they might be comfortable recommending someone else to connect with. If neither of those options work, simply thank them for their time, and redirect your efforts towards someone else.



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Set up a Meeting



Schedule the appointment at their convenience, so that it is easier for them to accommodate your request. Balance being specific and flexible when trying to find a time that works; for example, you might say you're free for a call any afternoon next week (be sure to specify your time zone). Ask them if they have a preference for how to meet – it may be via a phone call, video call (such as Zoom or Teams), or even in-person – and be clear on details; for instance, you might say that you will be the one to call them, or that you will prepare and send the invitation.



Research the role and/or organization

Research the organization or role and prepare a list of questions to ask. Try to tailor the questions to be relevant to the individual you are speaking with, so that they understand why you have reached out to connect with them. It can sometimes be helpful to email them a few questions in advance so that they can think about and prepare their response.



Send a Confirmation

Confirm your appointment the day before by contacting them via the platform you initially used to communicate with them. If there are any changes on your end or their end (for example, platform and/or meeting time) try your best to be accommodating, whether by offering an alternative meeting time or setting up the meeting on another preferred platform.



Dress Well

While an informational interview is not as formal as a job interview, consider every networking contact as a potential future colleague, and dress in accordance with industry standards.



Come Prepared

Aside from a copy of the questions you're hoping to ask, be prepared to take notes (on paper or digitally), and bring job-related documents such as a resume or portfolio. They may not ask to see your job application documents, but if they do ask, it's important to have a copy on hand.



SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

Whenever you conduct an informational interview, remember that the goal is not to receive a job offer. The best outcome from an informational interview is the facilitation of a professional relationship. The questions you ask should come from an intention to learn and connect.

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PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

- How did you get into this field? Why did you choose it?
- Tell me about the positive and negative aspects of this career...
- What preparation would you suggest for someone entering the field?
- Tell me about your experience working on this project...

INDUSTRY RELATED

- What are the opportunities for growth from an entry-level position?
- What other career areas are related to your work?
- What are anticipated trends for this industry over the next few years?
- How do you stay current with industry trends?

CAREER ADVICE

- Is there any advice you might give someone who is starting in this field?
- What personal attributes do you think are essential to success?
- Would you critique my resume and give me suggestions for improvement?
- What are some of the problems, issues, or barriers I may encounter in trying to reach my goals?

TOOLS TO FINDING PROFESSIONALS

LinkedIn

LinkedIn has many features that connect you to professionals such as the “Get Introduced” feature. Take a look at our [“Finding Connections”](#) resource for more details.

Ten Thousand Coffees - humber.tenthousandcoffees.com/signin

This online platform lets you connect with a large number of established professionals over the phone, Skype, or a cup of coffee.

Referrals

Know someone who knows someone? Kindly ask for the person’s contact information and permission to contact them for an informational interview.