

Informational Interviews 101

An informational interview is an opportunity to spend time with a professional in a career field of interest. They may also be useful in a graduate school search as you seek to find the best program of study. Informational interviews can help you build your network, tap into the hidden job market, and learn unpublished details about a specific company, organization, or school. Follow the guidelines below to ensure that you show respect for the time and energy put forth by the professional you contact.

Preparation

Identify a professional to contact in a career field of interest to you Research the professional and their organization/industry

Reach out via phone or in writing, such as email, to schedule

Prepare for the informational interview using some of our sample questions

When arranging an informational interview, plan for the interview to take 30 minutes or less

Pay close attention to the time so that you can respect the professional's schedule

Sample Questions to ask

How did you get started in this field?

What is your educational background?

What are your major responsibilities?

What is the most/least rewarding aspect of your career?

What is a typical day like?

What is the most common career path to end where you are?

What obligations does your work put on you outside of your actual job?

What are some lifestyle considerations for the career field?

What are some common entry-level positions (or graduate programs) in the field of _____?

What kind of individual (skills/personality) would be best-suited for these entry-level positions?

What are the most important factors used when hiring?

What is the future outlook of this career?

What is the best educational preparation for a career in this field?

Which classes and experience would be most helpful to obtain while still in college?

How high is turnover? How does one move within the organization?

How do people find out about open positions in this field?

What are areas for potential growth/decline?

How do you see jobs like yours changing in the future?

Which professional journals/organizations would be most helpful in evaluating the field?

Who else do you recommend I talk with, and may I have permission to use your name?

Can you recommend other types of organizations I might investigate or contact?

Sample Script

"Hello, my name is _____. I was given your name/ found your name by _____. I am a (classification/class year) at ULM and am interested in arranging an informational interview to learn more about your journey to _____. Please let me know when would be a good time for me to meet with you over the phone, in person, or via online video for a half hour conversation. I am happy to provide dates and times that are suitable for my schedule should you find this more convenient.