

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW guide

Did you know that 70-80% of job seekers find their next job through a professional contact or someone they know?

Below you will find information on how to begin building your professional network through informational interviews.

What is an informational interview?

- Informational interviews are about connecting with professionals in your field to learn more about their industry and/or their employer
- An informational interview is NOT a request for a job and should never be approached that way; sometimes an informational interview may lead to a job opportunity, but not always
- It is a chance for you to make more contacts in your field and gain valuable information



How do I conduct an informational interview?

- Make a list of employers and job titles that are relevant and interesting to you
- Seek connections in and through your personal network (friends, family) and via LinkedIn
- Introduce yourself and your career interests, and request a 30-minute conversation
- Research your contact's employer or industry to guide your questions about their work
- If the individual is in a specific role that interests you, ask questions related to their job
- If the individual is in an industry that interests you, ask questions about their career field

What should I do after an informational interview?

- Follow up with an e-mail or a handwritten thank you note within 24 hours
- Connect on LinkedIn
- Call or e-mail additional contacts within 48 hours to set up other informational interviews
- Regularly e-mail or call your contacts every couple of months to update them on your job search, get advice about certain prospects, or facilitate an introduction, and tell them how helpful their conversations and contacts have been

Following up can feel awkward or intimidating since it requires you to reach out to individuals whom you have only met once. However, Americans are used to this format and will enjoy hearing from you. Networking in this way is key to finding a job in your field!

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

sample questions



Ask yourself what you want to learn from this professional contact, then do your research and create a list of specific questions related to their job, skills, place of work, or career field:

Job & Experience

- What are your major responsibilities in this position?
- How long have you been in this position?
- How did you enter this professional field? What steps did you have to take?
- How did you reach your current position in the organization/company?
- What do you do in a typical workday?
- What kinds of challenges do you deal with in your work?
- What do you find most satisfying about your job? Most frustrating?
- What kinds of decisions do you have to make?
- How does your job fit into the organization, company, or department?
- What social or other obligations outside of normal work hours, are part of your job?

Skills Necessary

- What skills, education and experience are required to succeed in this field?
- What certifications or licenses are required or suggested?
- What courses or work experience would you recommend for me?
- Looking at my resume and experience, do you see any gaps in my skills or experience?
- What else do I need to be competitive for this type of role?
- What are typical entry-level jobs in your field?
- What positions are most appropriate for my experience level?
- Looking at my background, what do you think my salary range would be for this type of role?

Specific Employers

- Can you tell me about your experience working for XYZ company/organization?
- What are the goals of the company/organization for the next year or two years?
- What are the opportunities for professional growth within the company/organization?
- Can you describe the company/organizational culture?

Career Field & Industry

- Is there a definite or expected career path in your field? Can you describe it?
- What sort of professional publications or associations do you recommend?
- If I decide to pursue this type of work, what suggestions do you have for my job search?
- How is the current job market in your field?
- What kinds of changes are occurring in your field?
- What trends or patterns do you foresee in this field over the next 5-10 years?
- What kind of growth or job outlook do you anticipate during the next 5 years?

At the end of every informational interview, ask:
Can you recommend anyone else I can speak with for additional information?

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW sample emails

Hi Nancy,

My name is Belinda. I am a former teacher and nonprofit professional from Burkina Faso. I moved to the U.S. about 4 years ago and I'm trying to break into the nonprofit sector in Chicago. I am specifically interested in women's and girls' empowerment, which is how I came across your organization, Boundless Brilliance. I was wondering if it would be possible to speak with you for 20-30 minutes to talk about your professional experience. I would greatly appreciate it. Please let me know if this would be possible.

I look forward to hearing from you!

Best,
Belinda Johnson
555-123-1234

Hello

Thank you for your willingness to meet with me for an informational interview to share your rich work experience in . I am particularly interested in gaining your advice and learning more about your successful career path and your work at . I would like to better understand how I can leverage my past professional experience and education to enter the competitive field of in the area.

When would be a convenient time for us to meet or chat?
I'm available on . For your review I am attaching my recent resume so that you could be more familiar with my professional background. Once again, many thanks in advance, and I look forward to hearing from you!

Best Regards,



INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW checklist

When contacting someone for an informational interview, check for the following:

Briefly **introduced** myself and my background

Explained my professional **field and interest**

Stated how I **found** the individual

Asked if they have 30 minutes to talk about their professional experience

Provided available **date and time** windows

Included **contact information**

During an informational interview, check for the following:

Asked relevant **questions**

Did **NOT** ask for a job

Requested additional **referrals** or contacts

After an informational interview, check for the following:

Sent a **thank you** email within 24 hours

Connected on **LinkedIn**

Contacted referrals

