

Informational Interviews

What’s an informational interview? *An informational interview is not a job interview.* It’s a “career research conversation” with someone in your desired career to get information or advice. They can help you understand what a career is really like. Here’s how to get started.

Step 1: Identify careers you want to explore

An informational interview starts with understanding what you want to learn about. Identify the career(s) you are considering at this time.

Things to consider:	The careers I want to explore are:
<p>You don’t need to be 100% sure about what you’d like to pursue. Remember, informational interviews can help you gather more information to determine if a specific career is right for you.</p>	<p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p>

Step 2: Identify industry preferences

If you aren’t sure which occupation(s) you want to explore, identify your industry preferences using the table below. For more industries, visit www.bls.gov/iaq/tgs/iaq_index_naics.htm

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accommodation & Food Services | <input type="checkbox"/> Legal Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aerospace & Defense | <input type="checkbox"/> Law Enforcement & Security |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advertising/Marketing/PR Agencies | <input type="checkbox"/> Management, Scientific, & Technical Consulting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture, Engineering, & Design | <input type="checkbox"/> Manufacturing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accounting, Tax, & Payroll Services | <input type="checkbox"/> Media & Publishing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation | <input type="checkbox"/> Mining, Oil & Gas Extraction |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation (Environmental/Wildlife) | <input type="checkbox"/> Nonprofit / Social Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Construction | <input type="checkbox"/> Pharma & Biotech |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education/Educational Services | <input type="checkbox"/> Real Estate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Energy/Utilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Retail Trade |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Finance & Insurance | <input type="checkbox"/> Software Development |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Government / Public Administration | <input type="checkbox"/> Telecommunications |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health Care | <input type="checkbox"/> Travel Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Information Technology | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation & Warehousing |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Step 3: Target specific companies

In the area below, list up to 10 companies you are interested in exploring. You can use your local chamber of commerce <https://www.chamberofcommerce.com/chambers> or this business finder tool www.careeronestop.org/Toolkit/Jobs/find-businesses.aspx to find companies in your preferred industries and locations.

1.	6.
2.	7.
3.	8.
4.	9.
5.	10.

Step 4: Find contacts

The next step is to identify contacts. The following is a list of suggested channels to source the names of those contacts.

Personal referrals

Make a list of all the people you know who already work in your desired career field or at a company you're interested in. Schedule a time to speak with them about their experiences.

Use your network's network

If you don't know anyone in your desired career field or at a company you are interested in, ask your network who they know and see if they can facilitate an introduction.

Professional associations

Consider joining a professional association related to your career interests (e.g. SHRM, PMI, ACHE). The website may have a directory of members contacts or you could attend a local chapter meeting.

Introduction on the LinkedIn® network

Ask an existing LinkedIn contact to facilitate an introduction or connect with people at the companies you are targeting.

Organization websites

Small to mid-sized companies, government agencies, and nonprofits will typically have employee contact information posted.

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Step 5: Request a meeting

Once you find a new contact, you are ready to reach out. It is recommended that you lead your outreach with an email, as phone calls from an unknown person can fall at bad times and promote awkwardness. Refer to the samples below for ideas.

Sample email request for an informational interview

Dear Mr. Smith,

My name is Charles Hubbard, and I am a business management student from University of Phoenix. I am currently investigating [insert desired career field], and Stan Jones mentioned that you might be a great person to talk with given your current role at ABC organization.

I'm interested in getting your perspective on [industry/company] and learning about your career background. If you are open to a face-to-face meeting, I would gladly come to your office, or maybe we could meet for coffee.

If a phone meeting works better, just let me know a time that works best, and I will give you a call. I can be reached at 555.555.5555, typically around 5:30pm. Thank you so much for your time.

Sincerely,
Charles Hubbard

Sample voicemail

Hello, this is Charles Hubbard.

Amy Johnson suggested I contact you. I am researching agencies for a possible field placement as part of my BSSW program and would love to talk with you for 15 - 20 minutes about your experiences at [agency]. Your perspective on the field of social work would be helpful because I am considering [insert area of practice] where I can apply newly acquired skills in [insert a few skills you want to use].

I can be reached at 555.555.5555 and appreciate your time. Thank you.

Questions to ask for an informational interview

When preparing for informational interviews, consider asking questions in the following categories to keep the discussion well-rounded and to help you gain deeper insights about the career opportunities you are researching. These questions are suggestions. Feel free to come up with your own.

Category	Sample questions
About the contact with whom you are speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why did this work interest you, and how did you get started? • What motivates you to do this type of work? • Has your experience in this career field differed very much from what you imagined it would be? How?
Industry specific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What current issues and trends do you see in the field? • What are some of the pros and cons of being in this industry? • What do you wish you knew about this industry before you started?
Position/Company specific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What's it like working for (company)? • What activities do you spend most of your time doing? • What specific skills and personal qualities are most essential to be effective in your job? • How would you describe the work culture at your organization? • Are there any specific challenges or changes happening in the industry or company that are impacting your role? • What are the biggest challenges or frustrations you're currently facing as an organization and in your role? • Is there anything you would like to change or improve about your role or the way the company does business? • What do these issues cost you in terms of lost time, money, productivity, or aggravation? • What has slowed down or prevented a resolution to these challenges?
Career preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well did your college experience prepare you for this job? • Aside from schooling, how did you prepare for this work? • Would you recommend any additional training for new professionals? • What kind of advice do you have for someone trying to transition into this industry/occupation with no prior experience?
Advice / Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What advice do you have for someone entering the field? • What do you wish you'd known before you got started? • Are there other people you suggest I contact? May I use your name in contacting them? • Are there any organizations in the area you think would be a good fit for me given my interests in xxx?"

Step 6: Follow Up

After a conversation has concluded, make sure you follow up to build the relationship. Follow these simple principles:

- Send a thank-you note to your contact within 24 hours or the next business day. See a sample thank-you note below for ideas.
- Stay in touch and find ways to add value to the relationship. The article below outlines a recommended follow-up strategy:
 - <http://www.vault.com/blog/networking/how-to-network-effectively-even-if-you-hate-talking-to-people>
- Invite the contact to be part of your LinkedIn network. Personalize the invitation note to your contact.

Sample follow-up email

Dear Mr. Smith,

It was great talking with you yesterday about how you got your start in [career field], and what things I should be thinking about in my career planning. You also really helped me solidify my thinking on the types of companies I am most interested in exploring right now.

Your advice was very helpful, and I wanted you to know how much I appreciated our conversation. I am continuing to research other areas of [career field], so if you think of other professionals who might be a good fit for me to speak with, I would be most appreciative of any referrals you could provide. I will be plugging into the professional association you suggested and hope our paths will cross again in the future.

Sincerely,
Charles Hubbard

Step 7: Reflect on what you learned

As you go through the process of conducting informational interviews, write down what you learned. Use the space below to take notes.

THINGS THAT I LIKED

What did I learn about this career that I liked?

THINGS THAT I DISLIKED

What did I learn about this career that I disliked?

THINGS THAT I STILL HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT

Did any other questions arise as a result of my conversation?

NEW IDEAS TO CONSIDER:

Did any new ideas emerge as a result of my conversation?