

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

Informational Interviews are opportunities to meet with someone (in-person or virtually) in a particular career path, organization, industry or graduate school that interests you, to ask questions and learn more. Although these meetings are usually informal, it is recommended you represent yourself professionally and come prepared with questions to ask and participate in discussion.

Making Contact


Draft an Email

Send an email, introducing yourself and how you learned of them, why you're reaching out, what you hope to learn, and make the request for a brief conversation. Remember, be courteous and thank them in advance for their time.

What if they don't respond?

If you haven't received a response within a week, you can send a quick follow-up email (see an example below). If you still don't receive a response, leave it at that and don't take it personally; they may have missed it completely or forgot to follow up. Remember, you haven't lost anything by taking this step!

EXAMPLE FOLLOW-UP EMAIL

 Send	To...	samantha.smith@bigred.com
	Cc...	
	Subject	Follow up on chance to connect

Dear Ms. Smith,

My name is David and I am following up regarding the email I sent last week on Tuesday, October 27. I'm sure you are busy, but I'd love the chance to connect and learn more about your profession. If you have even 20 minutes (at your convenience), I would greatly appreciate the opportunity.

Thank you,
David Alexson
alexson_d0@denison.edu
(740) 587-6656

You Get a Meeting

STEP 1: Prepare

- ▶ Come prepared with questions to ask. Don't ask questions you can find the answer to online and do your research on the company and the individual you're interviewing.
- ▶ Think about what you are trying to better understand. Differentiate between industry or career field, job function or role, organization or company and the individual person's experience.
- ▶ Questions can be broad or more specific.
 - ▷ Example: *What are the various career path areas within this field?*
 - ▷ Example: *To what extent do you interact with customers/clients?*

start early.
start now.

Austin E.
Knowlton Center
for career exploration

Informational Interviews

STEP 2: Make a good impression

- ▶ Dress appropriately for the culture of the individual's company. You don't need to be as formal as an interview but be sure to dress up a bit.
- ▶ Practice good etiquette: offer to pay for coffee (they'll likely treat, but it's good to offer), firm handshake, and good eye contact.
- ▶ Have your elevator pitch ready to go (who are you, why did you set up the interview, what do you hope to learn, and what do you want to do, in about 90 seconds).
- ▶ Take plenty of notes—ideally in a padfolio or notebook.
- ▶ Be aware of time. Clarify the amount of time you have before you begin so you can ensure you have your questions answered.

STEP 3: The interview

Here are some example questions you might ask during your interview.

- ▶ *I am interested in learning more about your career path. I know that you (insert something that shows you did your research - i.e., graduated from Denison in 2009), but how did you start out in this industry?*
- ▶ *As (insert their job title), what does a typical day look like? What are your primary responsibilities and/or goals?*
- ▶ *What is the best part of your job?*
- ▶ *What is your least favorite aspect of your job?*
- ▶ *What is the culture like at this (insert company or organization)? How does this compare to other organizations/companies for which you have worked?*
- ▶ *What particular skills or personalities are most essential to be successful in this (industry, role, organization)?*
- ▶ *What skill or experience (or further education) would be essential to have if I'm interested in entering this field?*
- ▶ *Is there anything you wish you had done differently starting out?*
- ▶ *What are typical entry level job types and titles within both the industry and this organization?*
- ▶ *How might an entry-level marketing position vary from a small non-profit to a large global company?*

NOTE: *If you're actively searching for a job or internship, it's okay to mention it; just don't ask them to get you a job.*

Example: *As someone who is hoping to get a job/internship in this field, what advice do you have for me?*

Or, are there questions I should be asking that I'm not.

Before leaving, always ask, "Is there anyone else you think I would benefit from talking with? Might you be willing to facilitate an introduction or pass along contact information?" The more people you connect to, the better.

STEP 4: Follow up and say Thank You

- ▶ Always follow up to say thank you and how much you appreciated their time and insight – even if it did not go as well as you hoped (and remember, they may know someone who can help you more).
- ▶ Do this promptly! Also, if someone recommended you to connect with that person and/or introduced you, follow up and thank them as well. You can always email follow up questions including:
 - ▶ *Would you mind if we stayed connected?*
 - ▶ *Do you have thoughts of anyone else I might benefit talking with? (If you didn't ask this already.)*
 - ▶ *Might you have time or a willingness to look over my resume if I were to send it your way?*
- ▶ Be sure to keep your contacts updated; if they assisted you, let them know your progress—we like to celebrate the success of others!

Connect with the Knowlton Center for Career Exploration

 @denisoncareer

 facebook.com/denisoncareer

 @denisoncareer

BURTON MORGAN 205

CAREER@DENISON.EDU

DENISON.EDU/CAREER

(740) 587-6656