



# Informational Interviews

## What is an Informational Interview?

You interview professionals to gain insight and information, versus you being interviewed by an employer to get a job. It is important to distinguish between an informational interview and an interview to discuss employment opportunities with an organization.

Informational interviewing is for building trusting relationships. For this reason, many professionals are willing to grant these types of interviews because there is no pressure regarding your employment status. You should NOT ask about jobs within their organization unless the professional you are speaking with brings it up first.

See Steve Dalton's [The Two-Hour Job Search](#) for a great resource on how to ask for and conduct informational interviews.

## Opportunities:

- Helps start the process of converting contacts to advocates
- Leads to additional contacts and building your network
- Helps you evaluate fields and positions in relation to your interests/skills/goals; improves decision making
- Gives you practice talking to professionals
- Provides information on an organization's operations and structure
- Puts you in an interviewer role and can lessen anxiety—you get to define the focus and structure
- Increases self confidence

## Challenges:

- Takes time and effort to make contacts, set up interviews, etc.
- Can be difficult if you're shy or nervous meeting new people
- Benefits may not be immediately obvious

## Where to Find Contacts:

- Referrals by faculty and staff
- Family, friends, and their contacts
- Membership directories of relevant professional associations
- Alumni
- During an informational interview
- Individuals you have already met through classroom presentations, past jobs, career fairs, company information nights, etc.
- Connections found through LinkedIn

### Email Request:

When requesting an informational interview, keep your email short and to the point.

- Identify yourself and how you're connected to the professional.  
"I'm a fellow Duck."
- Let them know what you want to know.  
"I'm interested in finding out about what it's like to work in \_\_\_\_ field"
- Make the ask.  
"Would you be willing to chat with me for 20 minute about your experience?"
- Give yourself permission to follow up.  
I'm sure you're busy, so if I don't hear from you by \_\_\_\_, I'll follow up with you."

### During the Interview

- Be on time, look professional, have a firm handshake, smile and make good eye contact.
- Listen for challenges to which you may be able to apply your skills and abilities to solve.
- Stay with their energy—if they're excited to talk about macro issues, keep asking questions there; if they're excited to talk about their insights, stay there.
- Ask for referrals at the end of the interview.
- Follow up—send thank you notes to all involved.
- Find ways you can stay in touch and add value to the organization you are interested in.

### Sample Informational Interview Questions

- What major changes do you see coming in your industry?
- What do you like/dislike about this position/company?
- Why did you choose this career field?
- Looking back, if you had it to do over again, is there anything you would do differently?
- If you were in my shoes, what would you be doing? E.g., classes to take? Experience?
- What are the essential skills or personality traits required to do this job well?
- Is there anyone you can suggest who would have a different perspective on this occupation?  
May I use your name as a referral?
- What are the most important problems your position/company will face in the coming year?

### Other Questions:

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People I want to request informational interviews with:

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Companies I want to request information interviews with:

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