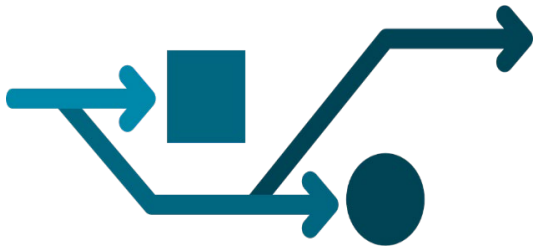


Informational Interviewing Guide

An informational interview is like asking for directions

An informational interview is the act of having a conversation with someone in a field or company you're interested in. It's an exploratory conversation that gets you closer to something you're considering in your career.



Are you...

- Trying to **choose a concentration or major** and curious about related career paths?
- Searching for an **internship or job** and desiring meaningful guidance from people in your field of interest?
- Considering a **career transition** based on new skills or values?

Prototype or test out your options through a conversation!

People currently working in jobs, companies, and industries you are curious about hold valuable information that can help you find your way.

An informational interview *IS...*

- ✓ **A conversation that can be requested of anyone!** Consider people you know, mutual connections, professors, fellow students, CSU alumni, professionals you find on LinkedIn, even people you admire!
- ✓ **Focused on gaining insight and advice.** Opportunities may present themselves organically through building a new relationship.
- ✓ **People love sharing their stories.** You might be surprised how willing (perhaps eager) someone might be to speak with you.
- ✓ **An opportunity to meet potential advocates for your career.** Unfortunately, not all requests for a conversation will be answered, however those who make time for you tend to be especially helpful.
- ✓ **Could take place in-person (over coffee?), phone, or video call.**

An informational interview is *NOT...*

- ✗ Limited to people you already know.
- ✗ Asking for a job.
- ✗ A burdensome request.
- ✗ A request that will always be answered.
- ✗ Always done in-person.

How informational interviews could be helpful

Believe it or not, informational interviews are one of the most powerful tools in your career planning toolbox. No matter where you are along your career journey, there could be a way it helps you move forward.

CAREER EXPLORERS

Gain insight and clarity into career possibilities
Identify skills and technical abilities needed for a field
Make connections in careers you are curious about

CAREER CHANGERS

Gain insight into an unfamiliar or new industry
Identify possibilities based on your interests
Make connections inside a new field or industry

INTERNSHIP & JOB SEEKERS

Gain insight to help you market yourself for a role
Identify if a company matches your values
Make connections inside a company of interest

CAREER ADVANCERS

Gain advice on advancement opportunities
Identify possibilities/challenges through GAP Analysis
Make connections for potential mentorship

How to find people to ask for an informational interview

LinkedIn | Use *all filters* to search people based on location, industry, company, job title, and more!

Tip: Search for CSU alumni at [linkedin.com/school/colorado-state-university/people](https://www.linkedin.com/school/colorado-state-university/people)

College of Business Events | Career Fairs, Industry Meet Ups, and Employer Information Tables throughout the year are helpful to meet alumni and recruiters for future informational conversations.

Existing Network | Do you know someone working in a field or company you're curious about? Perhaps someone you know has someone in *their* network that could be helpful to speak with? Consider your faculty and classmates.

Flash Mentoring Program | Use the platform through the Career Management Center to identify and request one-time informational interviews from a directory of willing alumni and friends of the College of Business.

How to ask someone for an informational interview

You might be in a job search but presenting yourself as a *job seeker* could raise apprehension since some people might not be sure how to help you get a job. Everyone, however, can share their story. Consider using one of these options to make your ask for a conversation that seeks information and insight from the person's experience.

Email | Try the website [Hunter.io/email-finder](https://hunter.io/email-finder) to find a likely email address when you don't have one for your contact.

LinkedIn | Send a *customized* message that includes your request for a conversation to a connection or new contact.

Get Introduced | If you have a mutual connection, ask them the best way to get introduced to the contact.

Sample message requesting an informational interview

Reaching out to someone you don't know? It is important for your communication to be clear, concise, and professional. As a guide, try using the **Six-Point Email** approach to efficiently draft your outreach.

Six-Point Email Guidelines

- 1) Fewer than 75 words.
- 2) Ask for insight and advice, not job leads.
- 3) State your connection first.
- 4) Make your request in the form of a question (ending in "?")
- 5) Define your interest both narrowly and broadly.
- 6) Keep over half the word count about the contact, not about you.

Source: Dalton, Steve. 2-Hour Job Search: Using Technology to Get the Right Job Faster. Ten Speed, 2020.

Hi Alex,

I am a fellow CSU Ram currently exploring career options within accounting. May I chat with you for a few minutes about your career path?

Since you have worked in both audit and tax, your insights would be greatly appreciated as I look into my future career.

Best regards,

Riley

Questions to ask during an informational interview

Your questions help you gain insight and clarity. Develop questions that uncover industry trends, insights from their career journey, advice toward your situation, skills and experiences to develop, and suggested next steps.

What **trends are emerging** in this field/industry?

How did you **choose your career** field?

With hindsight, **what would you do differently**?

If you were in college and considering this field, what would you do to **explore**? To build **experience**? **Skills**?

What **skills or knowledge** are critical in your role?

Could you **describe a recent day or week** in this role?

What did it entail?

How might I **stay current** on this industry/field?

I saw an **opening I'm interested in** with this company.

What would you do next **if you were in my shoes**?

Can I follow up if I have more questions? In what way?

Staying in touch with new contacts nurtures the relationship

Think long term! You now have a contact for the future. Send an immediate thank you. Follow up in a month or a semester with an update on your situation. Let them know you followed their advice. Ask for new advice as needed!