



INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW:

An informal conversation with someone working in an area of interest, and an effective research tool for exploring careers and industries. Best done after preliminary career research. It is not a job interview, and the objective is not to find job openings.

SIX STEPS OF INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

1 Conduct Career Research.

Identify areas that you are interested in. Some great resources include What Can I do With This Major?, MSU Destination Survey Information, O*Net, Handshake's Job Role Function, and Candid Careers (all accessible on the Career Services Website).

2 Identify People to Connect With.

Friends, family members, professors, supervisors, alumni, people you meet at career fairs and events, and people who work for companies you are interested in.. LinkedIn and MSU Connect are great ways to find Alumni to interview.

3 Reach out and Ask for an Interview.

Connect on LinkedIn, MSU Connect or via email. Mention how you found them, that you are interested in information on their career and path, and that you'd like to schedule a time to meet to get some advice and learn about their experience. Include specific dates and times and mediums (virtual, phone, in person) for connecting.

4 Prepare for the Meeting.

Develop an introduction and list a few things you're looking to accomplish. Prepare a list of open ended questions to ask your interviewee and conduct some basic research on their position and employer.

5 Conduct the Interview.

Bring your list of questions and take notes. Restate that your objective is to get information and advice, not a job, then give a brief overview of yourself and your education and/or background. Ask your prepared questions, and be sure to limit the meeting to the agreed-upon timeframe. Consider asking for the names of other people to meet to learn more.

6 Follow Up.

Be sure to send an email thank you after your meeting, and keep in touch with them to let them know if you took their advice and the outcome. This person could become a part of your professional network.

Sample Interview Questions

What are your main responsibilities as a...?

What is a typical day (or week) like for you?

What do you like most about your work? Least?

How does your position fit within the organization?

How does your job affect your general lifestyle?

What current issues and trends should I be aware of?

How did you become interested in this field?

How did you begin your career?

What skills, abilities, and personal attributes are essential to success in your job/this field?

What advice could you give me to help me prepare for my career?



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HOW DO I CONNECT WITH PEOPLE TO INTERVIEW THEM?

Talk to professors, your friends, family and the career center. LinkedIn and MSU Connect are also great ways to find people in careers that are interesting to you.

HOW DO I PREPARE FOR AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW?

Research the Contact/Industry, View their LinkedIn profile, review their company website and develop a list of questions to ask during the interview.

WHAT QUESTIONS SHOULD I ASK DURING THE INTERVIEW?

- What are your main responsibilities as a...?
- What is a typical day (or week) like for you?
- What do you like most about your work? Least?
- How does your position fit within the organization?
- How does your job affect your general lifestyle?
- What current issues and trends should I be aware of?
- How did you become interested in this field?
- How did you begin your career?
- What skills, abilities, and personal attributes are essential to success in your job/this field?
- What advice could you give me to help me prepare for my career?
- Are there any questions I'm not asking that I should be?
- How would you describe the perfect person for this job?
- How Would You Describe Somebody Who Would Excel in This Career?
- What past work experiences help you most?
- What would surprise people about your daily work?

SAMPLE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW REQUEST

Subject: Michigan State University Student - Informational Interview Request

Dear Mr./Ms. [LAST NAME],

My name is [NAME], and I am a [YEAR IN SCHOOL] majoring in [MAJOR] at Michigan State University. I [RECEIVED/DISCOVERED] your contact information through LinkedIn.

I am writing to you today because I would like to schedule an informational interview with you. Your background in [INDUSTRY] is one I would like to learn more about because I want to learn more about your field. Specifically, I would also like to gain a better understanding of what qualifications and experiences I will need as I begin my career as a [JOB].

I would welcome the opportunity to connect for 20-30 minutes over the phone to discuss these topics as well as a few questions about your industry/career path. Please let me know what dates/times work best for your schedule. Thank you for your time, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
[YOUR NAME]



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SAMPLE QUESTIONS

POSITION

How does your position fit within the organization/career field/industry?
What current issues and trends in the field should I know about/be aware of?
What are some common career paths in this field?
What kinds of accomplishments tend to be valued and rewarded in this field?
What related fields do you think I should consider looking into?
How do most people get into this field?
What are common entry-level jobs?
I've read that the entry-level salary range for this field is usually in the range of _____?
Does this fit with what you've seen? (Don't ask about the person's actual salary.)
How will this job change over the next 10 years?
What's it like to work at your company?

JOYS

What do you like most about your work?
What do you enjoy most about the work you do?
Least?
What aspect of your work are you most excited about right now?
What Are Some of the Biggest Rewards of Your Position?

CHALLENGES

What are some of the biggest challenges you face day-to-day?
What's the biggest downside of your job?
What's the biggest challenge for your job?

PREPARATION

What steps would you recommend I take to prepare to enter this field?
What kind of education, training, or background does your job require?
What skills, abilities, and personal attributes are essential to success in your job/this field?
What advice would you give someone who is considering this type of job (or field)?
What skills do you think are most important for someone interested in a job like yours?
What's Most Important to Prepare for a Role Like Yours?
What's One Thing You Wish Somebody Would've Told You Before Going Into This Field?

Preparation con't,,,
What's the most important preparation for a role like yours?
What are the most effective strategies for seeking a position in this field?
Can you recommend trade journals, magazines or professional associations which would be helpful for my professional development?

RESPONSIBILITIES

What are your main responsibilities as a...?
What current projects are you working on?
How does your job affect your general lifestyle?
What is a typical day (or week) like for you?What kinds of problems do you deal with?
What kinds of decisions do you make?
What does a work day look like for you?
What are some big projects you're working on now or that you've finished up in the last few months?What's Something That Would Surprise People About Your Day-to-Day?

CAREER PATH

How did you begin your career?
How did you become interested in this field?
Can you tell me a bit about your career path and what led you to the role you're in today?
What were some of your early roles in the field?
What Attracted You to This Career Path?
What Previous Professional Experiences Have Helped You Most in This Role?
If you could do it all over again, would you choose the same path for yourself?
If not, what would you change?
did you choose this career?How did you get into this job?
Where do you see yourself in 5 or 10 years?
What do you wish you'd known when you were starting out in this career/role?
How relevant to your work is your undergraduate major?I
f you could go back in time, what would you do differently?

FUTURE COMMUNICATION

Would it be alright for us to stay in touch?
Do you have any recommendations for other people I should talk to or other resources I should explore? Are there any questions I'm not asking that I should be?