



INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

What is an Informational Interview?

An informational interview is a pressure-free conversation you conduct with people working in a target field to gain insight into a field or employer and advice on job search strategies.

An informational interview is not a job interview, and this sets a relaxed stage for open and honest communication (neither you nor your contact is *selling* anything). When you conduct an informational interview, you will ask questions, gather information, and make contact with someone who is knowledgeable about his or her field and connected with other professionals. People – not company websites and job postings – are the best sources of information about what their work is really like.

Benefits of Informational Interviewing:

- Gaining a better understanding of a particular field/job/employer.
- Narrowing your target.
- Learning how to apply for a position most effectively.
- Learning how best to present yourself.
- Making professional connections.
- Tapping into the hidden market.
- Showing your interest and enhancing your chances of getting a job.
- Becoming fluent in the language of the industry.
- Gathering inside information that will impress an employer.
- Building confidence in your career plan and ability to discuss your interests, which will help you in job interviews.

How to Prepare for an Informational Interview:

- Have your resume/CV ready to share.
- Prepare questions in advance; do research and customize questions. Good questions begin with who, what, when, where, why, and how. Beginning with these words leads to open-ended responses.
- If you get no response to your initial request, try again. Do not to read too much into silence.
- If, for some reason, your target declines, ask for the name of someone else with whom you could speak.
- You may contact your target by email or phone, but only conduct the informational interview by phone, video chat, or (preferably) in person.
- Make the informational interview as easy on the interviewee as possible – he or she will be impressed.
- Be prompt for both virtual and face-to-face interviews.
- Take notes during the interview.
- Keep to the time limit agreed upon in conducting the informational interview.
- Ask for suggestions of additional contacts.
- Keep records.
- Keep the connection going by asking for permission to follow up with additional questions, etc.

Common Informational Interviewing Questions:

- What credentials or degrees are required for entry into this kind of work?
- What types of prior experience are absolutely essential?
- How did you prepare yourself for this work?
- How do you occupy your time during a typical workweek?
- What skills or talents are most essential for effective job performance in this job?
- What are the toughest problems you must deal with? Apart from external motivators such as salary and fringe benefits, what do you find most rewarding about your job?
- What do you enjoy the least?
- What obligation does your work place upon your personal time?
- How much flexibility do you have in terms of dress, hours of work, vacation schedule, place of residence?
- How often do people in your line of work change jobs?
- How rapidly is your present career field growing?
- How would you describe or estimate future prospects? Where do future personnel needs lie?
- If the work you do was suddenly eliminated, what different types of work do you feel that you could do?
- What types of employers hire people with your background; what are some representative job titles?
- Which related fields would you explore if you were in my shoes?
- How do people find out about these jobs? Are they advertised at online job sites (which ones?), by word-of-mouth (who spreads the word?), by the personnel department?
- How does one move from position to position? Do people normally move to another agency (company, division), or do they move up in the agency (company, division)?
- If you were to hire someone to work with you today, what factors would be most important in your hiring decision and why (education, work experience, personal attributes, specific skills, etc.)?
- How well suited is my background for this type of work? Would you look at my resume/CV and offer me feedback?
- Would you suggest other related fields?
- What types of experiences (e.g. volunteer work, part-time jobs) would you most strongly recommend?
- If you were in my position, how would you pursue this line of work?

Follow-up:

Following the informational interview, always send a thank-you note to your contact. Keep records of your conversation to refer to at a later date. Finally, keep your contacts informed of your progress and let them know when you accept a position.