



## Learning through Informational Interviewing Career Planning for Employees

### **What is an informational interview?**

An informational interview is a meeting between you and a professional in a career or job that you find interesting. Often, the most current information about a career field comes from the people who are working in the field themselves. An informational interview is not a job interview. The objective is not to get a job offer—it is to learn about a new job and expand your professional network.

### **Why would you conduct an informational interview?**

Informational interviews are a great opportunity to get to know a specific industry, field, organization, and/or position so you can determine if it would be a good fit for your skills, personality, and goals. Informational interviewing also will give you:

- A feel for different work environments from a first-hand professional
- Tips about how to prepare for, enter, and/or progress in a given career
- Knowledge that can help you better write your resume or interview for jobs in the field
- A professional relationship to expand your network

### **How do you conduct an informational interview?**

- Research career fields beforehand. Research the potential jobs you're interested in at websites like [careers.org](https://careers.org) and [www.onetonline.org](https://www.onetonline.org).
- Identify people to interview. Ask people you know for potential contacts in the field(s), company or job(s) that piques your interest. People are usually very willing to talk to you.
- Prepare for the interview. Prepare plenty of open-ended questions to keep the conversation moving, such as:
  - What skills are necessary for your job/field?
  - What makes a person successful in your line of work?
  - Do you enjoy your work?
  - How do you spend your day?
  - How did you get into the field?
  - What are some challenges of your job?
- Initiate contact. Pick up the phone and make contact. Here are some suggested phone scripts to draw from during the conversation:
  - "Dr. Smith, Pat Johnson suggested I speak with you. My name is Alex Olson and I am interested in the \_\_\_\_\_ field. I could use advice from someone who is in this field. Do you have any time this week when I could meet with you?"

I would really like to learn more about your company and the \_\_\_\_\_ field from someone like you."

- "Hello Ms. Olmos. My name is Lee Douglas and I received your name from Chris Jones. I'm doing some career research in the field of \_\_\_\_\_. I'm hoping you could meet with me for 20 or 30 minutes for an informational interview to discuss the field. If that would be possible, please let me know when that might be convenient for you. My name again is Lee Douglas, and I can be reached at \_\_\_\_\_."
- Conduct the interview. Use these tips below to successfully conduct an informational interview:
  - Be flexible. Work around your contact's busy schedule when arranging a date and time to meet.
  - Dress and act professionally
  - Make a good impression. This person may provide additional leads or referrals that could lead to a job down the line.
  - Take notes
  - Watch the clock. Limit your initial interview to 15 to 30 minutes based on how the conversation is going. If you forget to keep your eyes on the clock, watch for social cues so you know when to wrap it up.
  - Ask the interviewee for additional names of people you can contact
  - End the interview with an action plan. Ask the interviewee if you can contact him or her again.
- Follow-up. Remember to send a thank-you note after the interview. Maintain a consistent relationship with your new contact to keep up your network.

### Resources and Links

- [What is an informational interview anyway ?](#)

#### *myLearn Books:*

- *Self-Promotion for Introverts: The Quiet Guide to Getting Ahead* by Nancy Ancowitz
  - Authored by business communication coach and introvert Nancy Ancowitz, this book helps introverts tap into their quiet strengths, articulate their accomplishments, and launch an action plan for gaining career advancement