

Informational Interviewing 101

Informational Interviews

Informational interviewing is one of the easiest and most impactful ways to explore careers, companies, or particular jobs that you are interested in. It is also a great way to network.

Informational interviews are not job interviews. In a job interview, the other person interviews you. In an informational interview, you choose the person and questions you have of someone who is working in a certain industry, field, or company. While the goal is for you to learn from their personal and professional experience and insight, they'll also be getting to know your character, skills, and ambitions. With this opportunity in mind, it is important to prepare ahead to make a great first impression and to make the most of the time your interviewee has given you.

How to Prepare

Before asking for an interview is important to think about how you will introduce yourself and what you are interested in learning. This should be explicit in your initial outreach request. It is also not a time to ask for a job. Select professionals and questions that are appropriate for your target career field and stage of decision-making. Feel free to use some of the following questions or come up with your own. Preparation is critical to a successful informational interview.

Sample request

Subject: Hartwick student interested in a 20 min. career conversation

Hi Jennifer,

My name is Jake Smith and I am a third-year marketing student at Hartwick College. I am interested in pursuing a career in social media marketing. I came across your alumni career profile on TrueBlue Connect and would love to ask you a few questions about your career path and current job as a Social Media Manager at LinkedIn. Would you have 20 minutes for a phone call or video chat in the next week?

Thank you,
Jake Smith

Sample Questions:

- Can you tell me a little about your current position working for...?
- How did you become interested in this field?
- How did you begin your career?
- 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?
- What do you like least about your work?
- What kinds of problems do you deal with?
- What kinds of decisions do you make?
- How does your position fit within the organization/career field/industry?
- How does your job affect your general lifestyle?
- 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 would you recommend I also look into?
- How do most people get into this field? What are common entry-level jobs?
- What steps would you recommend I take to prepare to enter this field?
- How relevant is your undergraduate major to your work?
- 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?
- Can you recommend trade journals, magazines, or professional associations which would be helpful for my professional development?
- If you could do it all over again, would you choose the same path for yourself? If not, what would you change?
- 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.)
- What advice would you give someone who is considering this type of job (or field)?
- Can you suggest anyone else I could contact for additional information?
- **IMPORTANT – After an Informational Interview, always thank them (verbally) for their time, and also send a thank you note (email or handwritten) within 24 hours.**