

CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER

RESUME REVIEW

INDIVIDUAL ADVISING

INTERVIEW ADVICE

EXPLORE CAREER DIRECTIONS



Informational Interviewing Guide

An Informational Interview *IS*:

- A chance to learn about a field from an insider's perspective
- A way to enhance the career research you're already doing
- A way to build contacts in your field that could lead to a job

An Informational Interview *IS NOT*:

- A job interview
- A lengthy conversation (more than 30 minutes)
- A casual, unguided discussion
- A time to ask "So what do you/your company do?"

An informational interview is a professional, informal conversation between an expert in a field and someone who is looking to learn more about that field or organization. It's the best way to learn about the day-to-day activities, organizational culture, and other questions you can't glean from a company's website. It's an important step in the career exploration and job search process, and it can even help you get your foot in the door.

So what's the first step?

Many career questions can (and **should**) be answered before you begin formal informational interviews with professionals. So before you make your first phone or email contact, consult the resources at your fingertips: [The Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook](#) and [O*NET online](#) have information about industries, related occupations, educational requirements, skills, salary, and more. Your unanswered questions can be supplemented by the informational interview.

Who should I contact?

Begin with who you already know – check with friends, family, fellow students, co-workers, and professors to see if they know anyone who could speak to your career interests. Join the [Loyola University Chicago Career Development Center LinkedIn group](#); you already have a connection with them through Loyola to help start the conversation.

What should I say?

Whether with a phone call, email, or LinkedIn message, this is a professional request. Here's an example:

Dear Ms. Silver,

I see that you graduated from Loyola University Chicago and I wondered if you had time for a 20-minute call or meeting with a current student? I'm a junior social work major and I'm interested in learning about your experience at Lutheran Social Services. Please let me know if there is a day and time that would work best for you.

Thank you,
Jenna Smith, Class of '16
(312) 555-1212/jsmith@luc.edu
Jenna.Hewitt@gmail.com

Prepare a List of Questions

Write a list of questions, keeping in mind the conversation will be short – what do you *most* want to know?

Continue your research – look at your contact's LinkedIn profile and their company's website.

Use web searches to find professional organizations, industry news and publications.

Does that information create any additional questions for you?

Treat It Like a Job Interview

Treat this as a job interview (even though it isn't!): dress professionally and be on-time. Be prepared with your questions and a brief statement about who you are: what you're doing now, what you are interested in, and future goals. Keep the conversation to the time-frame you proposed.

Common Informational Interview Questions:

1. How did you decide on this career?
2. What was your career path? Your major in college?
3. What type of individual usually succeeds?
4. What are some of the problems/decisions you often face?
5. What are the rewards/challenges/frustrations of your work?
6. What do you wish you would have known prior to entering this field? What would you change about your job if you could?
7. Where do you see yourself going from here?
8. What steps would you recommend that I take to prepare to enter this field?
9. Can you suggest anyone else whom I could contact for additional information?

If you asked for 20 minutes, end the conversation after 20 minutes, unless they invite you to continue.

Follow-up and Stay in Touch

Continue job search etiquette – send a thank you note or email within 24 hours of your conversation.

Add them to your network on LinkedIn if you asked permission to do so in the interview. Send them status updates if you get a new position. Take the opportunity to build the relationship.

Keep a tracking system of your contacts – it's good to do multiple informational interviews! Note the person, organization, their contact information, when you talked, and what you discussed. This will be helpful for future networking and contact.

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