

Six Steps of Informational Interviewing

An informational interview is a meeting to learn about the real-life experience of someone working in a field or company that interests you.

1. Research career fields, industries, and organizations you want to learn about.
2. Identify people to interview. Ask people in your network for contacts. Make use of family, friends, professors and former employers. People you already know can lead you to people who are working in the fields that interest you.
3. Make contact. Either call, email, or through LinkedIn. Mention how you got their name. Emphasize that you are looking for information, not a job.
4. Prepare for the interview. Plan open-ended questions to ask such as:
 - What is a typical day like in your job?
 - What do you like most/least about this career?
 - Are there related fields I might want to look into?
 - What makes a resume impressive in your field?
 - What would you recommend I do at this point to get into this field?
 - How do you stay current in your knowledge?
 - What are employers looking for in this career (skills, education, experience)?
 - What is the corporate culture like here?
 - How do you normally hire for this occupation?
5. Conducting the informational interview:
 - Dress neatly and appropriately for the work setting you are exploring.
 - If meeting in person, arrive on time or a few minutes early.
 - Bring your list of questions and take notes.
 - Respect the person's time. Limit the interview to 20 to 30 minutes.
 - Give a brief overview of yourself and your education and/or work background.
 - End the interview with stating any follow up actions you will take based on their recommendation.
 - Thank them for their time and information.
6. Follow up and keep records.
 - Write down what you learned, what more you would like to know, and next steps you plan to take.
 - Send a thank-you note with 1-2 days to express your appreciation for the time and information given.
 - Keep in touch with the person, let them know that you followed up on their advice and the outcome. Connect on LinkedIn and they could become an important part of your network.