



Informational Interviewing Guide

The best and most current information about a particular industry or career field often comes from the people who are actually working in that field. Conducting an informational interview is a great way to develop your professional business network while simultaneously conducting in-depth research about a specific area of interest.

An **informational interview** is an informal conversation you can have with someone working in an area of interest to you. It is important to note the purpose of an informational interview is NOT to ask for a job or internship or to learn about current openings. It is a conversation with the objective to learn. Initially, it may feel uncomfortable or awkward reaching out to someone you don't know. However, most professionals will welcome the opportunity to share information on their own insights and experiences.

You can conduct an informational interview with anyone – executives, alumni, supervisors, colleagues, friends, family, or family friends. Apart from the four steps of conducting an informational interview which are described below, this packet contains a sample informational interviewing email request as well as an extensive set of potential interview questions.

There are four steps to conducting an informational interview: Arrange, Prepare, Conduct, and Follow-Up. Each step is detailed below with some helpful information to keep in mind as you progress through the process of informational interviewing.

1. Arrange

- Choose professionals that are relevant to your job search, network, and career goals.
 - You may have access to professional contacts from attending career fairs, by reaching out to classmates, or by searching on LinkedIn.
- Early on, you may have a broader scope that includes multiple job areas within a particular industry. Later on, you should be more specific in choosing professionals from one particular area.
- Draft and send an email requesting an in-person or phone meeting (see sample email).

2. Prepare

- Prior to your informational interview, do research on the industry, the professional, the company at which they work, etc.
- Prepare a strong set of questions to serve as a guide (see sample questions).
- Know your story, your career goals, and what you want to get out of the interview.

3. Conduct

- Meet with the professional and seek advice.
- Dress in professional business attire and act professionally, as though it is an interview.
- Be mindful of their time. If meeting for coffee, always offer to pay as a courtesy.

4. Follow-Up

- Send a thank you email within 24 hours of the interview
- Be sure to discuss any next steps that were referenced during the informational interview.
- Continue to communicate overtime – Don't let the relationship end with one meeting.



Networking 101

Sample Outreach Email – Informational Interview Request

If you are planning to start networking, you can use the sample outreach email provided below to request an informational interview. Variations of this email can be used for other networking purposes as well.

To: Sally Smith <SSmith@company.com>
From: Ima Warrior<Ima.warrior@wayne.edu>
Subject: Informational Interview Request

Dear Ms. Smith:

I am a sophomore majoring in _____ at the Wayne State University - Mike Ilitch School of Business and received your contact information from _____.

I am interested in learning about career paths in the field of _____ and what skills I might need to develop during my last couple years at Wayne State. I would welcome the opportunity to connect for 20-30 minutes to discuss few questions about your position as _____.

Please let me know what times/date would be most conducive for your schedule.
Thank you for your time.

All the best,
Ima Warrior
Your Major
Wayne State University
Mike Ilitch School of Business
ima.warrior@wayne.edu
(313) 555-1234

Additional Notes:

If reaching out to a Wayne State alumnus or alumna, use the subject “Wayne Student – Informational Interview Request”



Networking Informational Interview Sample Questions

Below are some sample questions you can use in an informational interview. Keep in mind that an informational interview is designed to help you learn more about a field, so ask about what's important to you.

General Question: How did you get involved in this career path?

Forms it may take:

1. How did this type of work interest you and how did you get started?
2. What are the most important personal satisfactions and dissatisfactions connected with your occupation? What part of this job do you personally find most satisfying? Most challenging? What do you like and not like about working in this industry?
3. What things did you do before you entered this occupation? Which have been most helpful?
4. What other jobs can you get with the same background?
5. How did you get your job? What jobs and experiences have led you to your present position?
6. Why did you decide to work for this company?
7. What interests you least about the job or creates the most stress?
8. If you could do things all over again, would you choose the same path for yourself? Why? What would you change?

General Question: What is your job like?

Forms it may take:

1. Could you describe a typical day?
2. What do you do? What are the duties/functions/responsibilities of your job?
3. What kinds of problems do you deal with?
4. What kinds of decisions do you make?
5. What percentage of your time is spent doing what?
6. How does the time use vary? Are there busy and slow times or is the work activity fairly constant?

General Question: Could you tell me about your company or organization?

Forms it may take:

1. What do you like most about this company?
2. How does your company differ from its competitors?
3. Why do customers choose this company?
4. Are you optimistic about the company's future and your future with the company?
5. What does the company do to contribute to its employees' professional development?
6. How does the company make use of technology for internal communication and outside marketing? (Use of e-mail, Internet, intranets, World Wide Web page, video conferencing, etc.)

General Question: Could you tell me about this field or occupation?

Forms it may take:

1. What sorts of changes are occurring in your occupation?
2. How does a person progress in your field? What is a typical career path in this field or organization?
3. What is the best way to enter this occupation?
4. What are the advancement opportunities?
5. What are the major qualifications for success in this occupation?
6. If your job progresses as you like, what would be the next step in your career?

General Question: What leads to success in this field or occupation?

Forms it may take:

1. What are the skills that are most important for a position in this field?
2. What particular skills or talents are most essential to be effective in your job? How did you learn these skills? Did you enter this position through a formal training program?
3. How can I evaluate whether or not I have the necessary background for a position such as yours?
4. How well did your graduate experience prepare you for this job?
5. What courses have proved to be the most valuable to you in your work? What would you recommend for me?

General Question: Could you tell me about the company culture?

Forms it may take:

1. How would you describe the working atmosphere and the people with whom you work?
2. Is there a basic philosophy of the company or organization and, if so, what is it? (Is it a people, service or product oriented business?)
3. What can you tell me about the corporate culture?
4. What is the average length of time for an employee to stay in the job you hold? Are there incentives or disincentives for staying in the same job?
5. Is there flexibility related to dress, work hours, vacation schedule, place of residence, etc.?
6. What work-related values are strongest in this type of work (security, high income, variety, independence)?

General Question: Would you be willing to share your professional opinion on my job qualifications and materials?

Forms it may take:

1. These are my strongest assets (skills, areas of knowledge, personality traits and values)... Where would they fit in this field? Where would they be most helpful in this organization? Where might they fit in other fields? Where might they be helpful in other organizations?
2. How would you assess the experience I've had so far in terms of entering this field?
3. [If you feel comfortable asking and it seems appropriate:] Would you mind taking a look at my resume?
4. With the information you have about my education, skills, and experience, what other fields or jobs would you suggest I research further before I make a final decision?

General Question: What is the job outlook for this type of position?

Forms it may take:

1. How is the economy affecting this industry?
2. What can you tell me about the employment outlook in your occupational field?
3. How much demand is there for people in this occupation? How rapidly is the field growing?
4. What are the salary ranges for various levels in this field? Is there a salary ceiling?
5. What are the typical job titles and functions that are growing?

General Question: Are there written materials or other professional such as yourself that you could refer me to that would further assist me in my career exploration?

Forms it may take:

1. Who else do you know who is doing similar kinds of work or uses similar skills?
2. What other kinds of organizations hire people to perform the functions you do here?
3. Do you know of other people whom I might talk to who have similar jobs?
4. Are there any written materials you suggest I read?
5. Which professional journals and organizations would help me learn more about this field?
6. How did you learn about this particular position/organization?
7. What are resources you would recommend as I search for a job/internship in this field?