



INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW STEPS

Adapted from Yale Undergraduate Career Services

Informational interviews are a way of exploring career paths, learning about companies and creating professional relationships. An informational interview is NOT a time to ask for a job or internship. Instead, it is a time for you to request advice, inquire about opportunities and ask for other contacts. Before professional contacts feel comfortable referring you for an opportunity, they need to know you and understand your interests, skills, values and experiences.

Identify someone to interview

Family, friends, professors, advisors, professional organizations, alumni, staff, faculty and connections from LinkedIn are people you might consider. Use the correct spelling and pronunciation of contact's name, job title and salutation (Dr., Mr., Ms., etc.). If you are not sure, it is okay to ask.

Contact

Call or email to request an appointment. Be sure to state the reason you are contacting him/her, how much time you are seeking (30 minutes), and how you learned about his/her work. You can also request a telephone interview (if the person does not live nearby) or an observational visit/job shadow. Your communication should be professional (Mr., Ms., Dr., etc.), clear and concise.

Scheduling

Be prepared to adjust your schedule. When is it convenient for your contact to meet with you (lunch, coffee etc.)? Suggest a few dates and times.

Confirm

Be sure you have agreed on the date and place of your meeting (send a brief confirmation email).

Research

Research and read about the career field *before* the informational interview. Informational interviews should not be a starting point for your career research – they should supplement what you have already learned. Prior to the interview, research your contact's place of work/company/organization.

Preparation

Prepare a list of relevant questions and an updated resume and business cards in case the person asks for a copy- but be aware that it may be inappropriate to offer it during your meeting.

NOTE: Let the contact determine the formality of the conversation.

Appearance & Arrival

The formality of your dress should match or exceed that of your interviewee's workplace. Check the weather and consider how long it will take you to get to the meeting place. Try to arrive 10-15 minutes early; this may give you a little extra interview time.



Thank You

Ask for a business card before you leave and send a short and personalized note thanking the person for his/her time. Remember, these contacts can continue to serve as resources throughout your career.

Stay Connected

Request to connect with your new contact on LinkedIn and occasionally like a post or tag them in one of your posts. Create a Google Alert for their organization to learn of any new clients, initiatives, and awards and send a congratulatory email. Ask if they are attending an upcoming conference – if so, set up a time to have coffee and catch up.

Informational Interview Sample Email

Dear Dr. Andrews,

My name is Roberta Kelley and I am a second year Psychology major at Elon University. Currently, I am learning about different career paths in psychology. Ross Wade, my career advisor at the Student Professional Development Center, suggested I reach out to you. I was hoping to schedule a brief informational meeting to learn more about your time at Elon, career journey and experiences as a psychologist serving individuals with addiction issues. Mr. Wade speaks very highly of you and mentioned you have had some incredible experiences over the past few years! I am in the Chicago area over Winter Term, and could meet you for coffee at any time between December 19 and 22. If you are unable to meet face-to-face, I would greatly appreciate a brief (20-30 minute) phone or Skype conversation. Thank you so much for your time and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Roberta Kelley
555-555-5555

Informational Interview Sample Questions

- What led you to pursuing this type of work?
- What educational preparation would you recommend for a new hire in this field?
- What experiences do you expect new hires to have for this position?
- What is a typical day like for you?
- What challenges do you face in your position?
- What is the most enjoyable part of your job?
- How are employees typically promoted in this field? Do they typically stay with the company?
- How would you describe the culture of your organization?
- What values does your company highly regard?
- In what ways can I best maximize my time at Elon to be a strong applicant for internships and jobs?
- Do you have any advice for me or other contacts I could reach out to?