

Informational Interviews

An easy and effective way to meet people in a professional field in which you are interested is to conduct informational interviews. This interviewing approach allows you to meet key professionals, investigate career options, gather career information, get referrals to other professionals, and get advice on job search techniques. Your goal is to gather information, make a good first impression and to get referrals to other professionals.

Why professionals grant informational interviews.

Most people enjoy sharing information about their jobs and themselves. Some individuals believe strongly in encouraging newcomers to their profession. Still others are on the lookout for potential future employees.

How to set up an informational interview.

1. You may contact the professional by telephone. Your goal is to set up a meeting, not have a telephone interview. Clearly state the purpose of the meeting and indicate the fact that there is no job expectation.
2. Another approach is sending a letter or email message requesting a brief informational interview. Clearly state the purpose of the meeting and indicate the fact that there is no job expectation.
3. The best way to obtain an informational interview is a referral by another professional. This process becomes easier as your network expands.

Preparing for an informational interview.

Before the informational interview, conduct preliminary research on the organization and profession. You may wish to outline your questions.

Appropriate questions to ask.

1. Describe a typical day on the job.
2. What are the employment prospects in this field?
3. Are you active in any professional organizations?
4. What should the most important consideration be in my first job in this field?
5. What education or training is required or recommended for this profession?
6. Can you recommend other professionals with whom I should speak?

Remember to send a thank you note to each person who grants you an informational interview or refers you to someone.

Informational Interview	Job Interview
You contact them	They contact you
Easier to get meeting	Difficult to get meeting
More relaxed atmosphere	More formal agenda
Limited time for interview	Extended time for interview
You ask the questions	They ask the questions
Promote your strengths gently	Promote your strengths heavily
Large chance for referrals	Small chance for referrals
You never ask for a job	You are asking for a job
Talk much less of the time	Talk about 50% of the time
Always send a thank you note	Always send a thank you not
Dress in professional attire	Dress in professional attire