

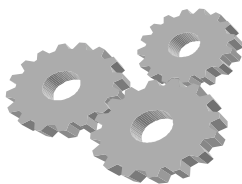
Focus the conversation. A variation on your 30-second introduction is a good way to open the conversation. Ask your most critical questions first and take notes.

If you happen to get an information interview with someone who is a hiring manager, it's a good idea to reiterate your intentions for the interview. Say something like: *"Thank you for meeting with me. I want to emphasize that I'm a student researching my career. I'm not here for a job. At this point, I'm just looking for information about (the role, company, industry, etc.). If you know of any openings here or at other organizations I'd of course appreciate hearing about them, but that is not my purpose."* Making this distinction takes the pressure off both of you.

Ask for other referrals. Ask for additional contacts during the last five minutes of your interview. You'll find you get good results if you ask for specific kinds of contacts. For example: *"Do you have any associates you'd recommend I talk with about my field/major?"*

Ask for feedback. An information interview is a great chance to assess how you're coming across. Save the last minute or two of your interview for feedback. Ask questions such as:

"What questions did I fail to ask that are key to getting the information I need? What problem areas do you see that may cause me particular difficulty? What do you see as my best assets for success in this field? What suggestions do you have for me (on any aspect of the information interview process)?"



Offer something in return. Your contact has just given you a gift of time, information and resources. You can do the same. Most people who agree to do information interviews recognize it is good for them too. It allows them to build their connections – one of the most valuable strategies in career management. Think how you can contribute to them. Save time to ask your contact where they see their career headed. Keep this in mind and over time, provide resources and information to them that may help them meet their goals.

After the Information Interview

Follow-up with thanks. After your meeting, write a note of thanks. This one-page letter should: thank the person for their time and contacts they offered you; express your enthusiasm for their time and assistance.

Build your connections. If you feel like you've made a good connection, stay in touch over time. Send copies of articles you find interesting or let them know about websites you find valuable. Offer to return the favor for them or a friend. Building connections is key to work-life success because it enriches the growth and learning process. Again, you never know when a job or internship may come along. If you presented yourself as a clean, articulate, interesting student – you may get the job!



INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW WORKSHEET

NAME OF CONTACT:

POSITION:

COMPANY/ORGANIZATION:

ADDRESS:

TELEPHONE:

REFERRAL:

DATE OF FIRST CONTACT:

PURPOSE OF INTERVIEW:

RESULTS:

- 1) How did you decide to work in this field? For this company?
- 2) What is a typical workday like? A typical week? Year?
- 3) How many hours per week do you usually work? It is common to take work home?
- 4) Do you travel a lot?
- 5) What is the best training or education to acquire?
- 6) What is your background and education?
- 7) Do you have an area of specialization? If so, what?
- 8) How did you decide in which area to specialize? What are other areas?
- 9) What are the most difficult problems/decisions/challenges you face?

- 10) Is the field growing? What are the various types of employers?
- 11) How secure is employment?
- 12) Do you find certain personality traits make it easier to do this work well? Which traits?
- 13) What is it like to work here?
- 14) What is the hiring process? Is that process standard procedure within the industry?
- 15) What is the best way to find a job in this field?
- 16) If you could do it all over again, what would you do differently?
- 17) What is a typical starting salary?
- 18) Are there professional trade journals I should read? Which ones?
- 19) Do you belong to any professional associations? Can nonmembers attend meetings?
- 20) Would you mind reviewing my resume and making comments or suggestions?
- 21) Can you recommend other people I might talk to?

Example Informational Interview Questions

- What is your job like?
 - A typical day?
 - What do you do? What are the duties/functions/responsibilities of your job?
 - What kinds of problems do you deal with?
 - What kinds of decisions do you make?
 - What percentage of your time is spent doing what?
 - How does the time use vary? Are there busy and slow times or is the work activity fairly constant?
- How did this type of work interest you and how did you get started?
- How did you get your job? What jobs and experiences have led you to your present position?
- Can you suggest some ways a student could obtain this necessary experience?
- 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?
- What things did you do before you entered this occupation?
 - Which have been most helpful?
 - What other jobs can you get with the same background?
- Why did you decide to work for this company?
- What do you like most about this company?
- Do you find your job exciting? Why?
- How does your company differ from its competitors?
- What does the company do to contribute to its employees' professional development?
- What sorts of changes are occurring in your occupation?
- How does a person progress in your field? What is a typical career path in this field or organization?
 - What is the best way to enter this occupation?
 - What are the advancement opportunities?
 - What are the major qualifications for success in this occupation?
- What were the keys to your career advancement? How did you get where you are and what are your long-range goals?
- What are the skills that are most important for a position in this field?
- 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? How can I evaluate whether or not I have the necessary skills for a position such as yours?
- How would you describe the working atmosphere?
- 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?)
- What can you tell me about the corporate culture?
- 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?
- Is there flexibility related to dress, work hours, vacation schedule, place of residence, etc.?
- What work-related values are strongest in this type of work (security, high income, variety, independence)?
- If your job progresses as you like, what would be the next step in your career?
- How is the economy affecting this industry?
- What can you tell me about the employment outlook in your occupational field? How much demand is there for people in this occupation? How rapidly is the field growing? Can you estimate future job openings?
 - Are there organizations you have joined that are helpful to your occupation?
 - Are there other things you are expected to do outside work hours?
- How has your job affected your lifestyle?
- What are the salary ranges for various levels in this field?
- What are the major rewards aside from extrinsic rewards such as money, fringe benefits, travel, etc.?
- From your perspective, what are the problems you see working in this field?
- If you could do things all over again, would you choose the same path for yourself? Why? What would you change?
- What are the educational requirements for this job? What other types of credentials or licenses are required? What types of training do companies offer persons entering this field? Is graduate school recommended? An MBA? Does the company encourage and pay for employees to pursue graduate degrees?
- How well did your college experience prepare you for this job?
- What courses have proved to be the most valuable to you in your work? What would you recommend for me?

- How did you prepare for this work? If you were entering this career today, would you change your preparation in any way to facilitate entry?
- What abilities or personal qualities do you believe contribute most to success in this field/job?
- What are the typical entry-level job titles and functions? What entry-level jobs are best for learning as much as possible?
- Who else do you know who is doing similar kinds of work or uses similar skills? What other kinds of organizations hire people to perform the functions you do here? Do you know of other people whom I might talk to who have similar jobs?
- What kinds of experience, paid or unpaid, would you encourage for anybody pursuing a career in this field?
- What special advice do you have for a student seeking to qualify for this position?