

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

This is one of the most common ways to network and gives you the opportunity to connect meaningfully with a professional. Informational interviewing is asking someone about what they do - it is not asking for a job or internship.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Investigate a specific career field and learn about important issues in that field
- Narrow down career options or uncover options you never knew existed
- Obtain advice on where your skills might be applied
- Broaden your network of contacts for future reference

WHO SHOULD I INTERVIEW?

You can contact a wide range of professionals from a variety of fields. Contacts generally fall into one of two categories: people you know and people you don't know. It helps to ask people you know to introduce you to people they know who work in your desired field.

People you know:

Friends
Family
Neighbors
Co-workers
Professors

People you don't know:

Alumni
Professional Organization Members
Employers
Social Media Contacts

HOW DO I PREPARE?

Preparing for an informational interview allows you to be more confident, make a positive impression, and ensures you get your questions answered. It also allows you to respond to questions about yourself more effectively.

To prepare, you should:

- Identify what you want to get out of the meeting
- Research the professional and his/her company
- Research the industry
- Review your experiences, interests, and skills
- Practice your introduction
- Develop a list of questions

If the meeting will be in person, be sure to arrive a few minutes early and dress in formal or business casual attire (depending on the industry and venue). If the meeting will be virtual or over the phone, be sure to identify a quiet space you can use in advance that has a strong internet connection.



WHAT QUESTIONS SHOULD I ASK?

Sample Questions for an Informational Interview:

- How did you enter this job/career?
- What do you do in a typical day/week?
- What are the most interesting aspects of your job?
- What do you like least about this career? And what do you find dull or repetitious?
- How would you recommend someone break into this field?
- What educational background is required?
- What kind of person would be best suited for this career in terms of personality, interests, and skills?
- What kind of experience or internship would help in this career?
- Are there specific courses a student might take that would be particularly beneficial in this field?
- Is travel expected with this job?
- What types of training do companies give to people entering this field?
- What technologies are integrated into this career?
- What special advice would you give to a young person entering this field?
- How do you see the jobs in the field changing over the next five years? What can I do to prepare myself for such changes?
- How can I learn more about this career/job?
- What professional organizations are active and responsive in this career field?
- Are there any other individuals you recommend I speak with to learn more about this career?
- What are some job titles of entry-level positions in the career field? What is the career trajectory?
- What is a typical salary range in this field?
- What advice would you give on locating opportunities, the time frame for applying, and the application process?

WHAT DO I DO AFTER THE MEETING?

THANK YOU NOTE EXAMPLES

SEND A THANK YOU NOTE

Within two days, send a thank you email or note highlighting the value of the meeting and referencing something specific the professional suggested. This keeps the door open for future exchanges.

REFLECT ON WHAT YOU LEARNED

Every informational interview allows you to learn about possible careers. Take the time to reflect upon what you learned and how that relates to your own values, interests, personality, and skills. You might find that your interest has been piqued further, or that a particular career isn't exactly what you thought it was. It's important to have multiple conversations with people in a given field to get a full picture of it.

DEVELOP A PLAN TO STAY IN TOUCH

Since networking is relationship building, it's important to stay in touch with your contacts. It may be a simple email filling them in on something new in your professional life, sending an article that could be of interest to them, or sharing a seasonal greeting. It is appropriate to follow up every few months, but it depends on whether or not you have something substantial to say. Don't forget, not everyone will find time to reciprocate so don't take offense if you don't get a reply. Also create a database to track contact information - name, date of conversation or follow-up, outcome, and notes.

FINAL TIPS/KEYS TO NETWORKING

- Create a list of everyone you know and identify how they could help you gather career information
- Define what information you need and what you are trying to accomplish
- Know yourself (values, interests, personality, and skills) and practice a concise introduction
- Start each in-person encounter with a firm handshake, good eye contact, and a smile
- Be tactful, courteous, and authentic in all conversations
- Adopt a positive attitude about networking and be proactive
- Send communications at least a week apart and no more than 3 times; if you don't receive a response, move on
- Create a database of contacts with notes about each person and conversations you had
- Send a thank you note after any networking interaction
- Focus on quality of interactions, not quantity
- Be patient - you may start slowly but soon you will build momentum

Dear Mr./Ms. Alum,

Thank you again for taking time from your busy schedule to speak with me last Friday morning about your career. Your advice was very helpful! I will be contacting Ms. Amy Smith today, as you suggested. In addition to following up with that contact, I have applied to job openings with ABC Inc., and XYZ Co. Thank you for that suggestion!

(Include a point or two about advice they gave you that you took to heart).

I hope you have a great start to the summer! Again, thanks for your insight. If any additional suggestions come to your mind please pass them along. I will keep you posted on my job search progress.

Regards,
Jane Johnson
Jjohn2@nd.edu
574-123-4567



SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS

One in three employers have rejected candidates based on something that was on their social media. The tips below will help guide you before reaching out to future employers or potential networking contacts.

- Adjust your privacy settings
- Be aware of what is public (photos, posts, etc.)
- Search yourself on Google
- Proactively tag or un-tag yourself in photos and events
- Always proof before you post
- Never complain about your job or boss or broadcast confidential employer information
- Utilize social media sites to research organizations and professionals
- Follow companies of interest and engage in career related groups
- Customize the invitation to connect on LinkedIn (who you are, how you know that person, and why you want to connect)
- Use the University of Notre Dame Career Insights feature on LinkedIn to search for alums (see the CCD website for more information)