



Informational Interviewing

The purpose of an **informational interview** is to gather information, learn the basics about a career field or company, and to make networking connections. Unlike a job interview, in an informational interview you take responsibility for the progress of the interview. Good questions to ask, include:

Job Description

- What are your major duties and responsibilities?
- How does your position fit into the structure of the organization?
- With what people in the organization (superiors, subordinates, peers) do you have the most contact?
- Describe a typical day.
- What aspects of your job do you find most interesting?
- What aspects do you enjoy least?
- What changes do you see occurring in this field? Will the type and number of jobs change significantly over the next 10 years? What, if any, will be the effect of changing technology on the field?

Career Path

- What are the typical entry-level jobs in this field?
- What were the positions you had that led to this one?
- How long does it usually take to move from one step to the next in this field?
- Are there any specifically defined prerequisites for advancement—for example, years in service, examinations, advanced degrees, board interviews, and so on?
- What are the best jobs in this field for career advancement?
- Are there other areas of this field to which people in it may be transferred? What are they?

Work Environment

- How would you describe your work environment?
- How much flexibility are you permitted in your job (hours, vacation, dress code)?
- How much autonomy do you have on the job?
- What portion of your job involves interacting with others, including co-workers and clients?
- Is there travel involved in your job? If so, how much and what type?
- What are your biggest challenges or problems you must deal with?

Industry

- What are the challenges facing this industry today?
- Who do you consider to be the leaders in this industry?
- How do you view the current state of the industry?

Preparation

- What are the academic and experience prerequisites for entry-level jobs in this field?
- Is the degree I'm working on/I have suitable?
- Are there any specific courses I might take that would be particularly useful?
- Are there any extracurricular or other experiences (work, volunteering, internships, etc.) that would enhance my chances of employment?
- What types of training do companies give persons entering the field?
- What advice would you give to someone planning to enter this field?

Organization/Company

- What is the size of your organization?
- What geographic locations do you have offices?
- What is the organizational structure?
- How does the work of your group/division/office fit into the work of the overall organization?
- What is the average length of time employees stay with the organization?
- What type of formal on the job training is provided?
- What is the on-boarding process for a new employee entail?
- How are performance reviews conducted and how often?
- What sets your organization apart to similar ones in this industry?

Job Requirements and Experience

- What skills or talents are most essential for effective job performance and to succeed in your field?
- What college courses have been the most helpful to you in your position?
- Is there special certification, licensing, or an advanced degree required for your job?
- What is the most rewarding part of your job?
- How did you get to this point in your career?

Job Hunting Strategies

- How do most people enter this field?
- What type of position in this field might I reasonably target given my background?
- If you were in charge of hiring someone to assist you, what criteria would you use to make your selection and why?
- Are there any professional groups in the field that you recommend I join?
- What was the best advice you received when you started in this field?
- What specific aspects of my background should I highlight or sell the most when applying for positions?
- What organizations (based on your list of target companies) would you recommend I pursue?

General

- What is the current demand for employees at entry level in this field? And higher?
- What are the salary ranges at various levels in the field?
- How many hours a week does someone typically work in this field?
- Where might I find job descriptions and other specifications for some of the positions in this field?
- Are the content and format of my resume appropriate for someone seeking a job in this field?
- Do you have any suggestions on my job search strategy?
- Are there any questions I should have asked but did not?
- Do you mind if I stay in touch with you regarding my career search?
- Is there anyone else in the field with whom you would suggest I speak?** (*hint: This will lead you to other networking contacts and you'll keep building your network!*)

Always thank the individual for their time and follow-up with a thank you note or email!