

HOW TO REQUEST AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

An informational interview is a useful tool that allows you to connect with professionals who work in an occupation or position you are interested in learning more about.

WHO TO ASK

- Start with your existing professional connections and consider who you know that works in this field.
- If you do not currently have any existing professional connections who work in the field you are researching, then you can search for professionals via LinkedIn or a company website.
- Another tip to connecting with professionals in your field is to let family, friends, and colleagues know you are interested in connecting with people in a specific field, occupation, or position.
- Your social and professional connection are vital to your career path and it is important to expand and utilize your professional network.

REQUESTING AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

1. An informational interview request should be a professionally written email. It is appropriate to use LinkedIn as a way to find people who either hold a position you are interested in or work for a company you would like to work for, however when you send a message via LinkedIn it may look like SPAM to the professional and can easily be ignored or missed altogether.
2. The subject line of the email should be grammatically correct, include 'Informational Interview Request', and if you have been referred by a mutual connection be sure to include their name.
3. Start the email with a professional salutation, like hello or dear, and address the professional with the appropriate title: Mr., Ms., Dr., etc.
4. The first paragraph should be brief, only 2-3 sentences. Start by introducing yourself and explaining how you found their contact information. Whether it was a personal or professional connection, or from a

website, briefly explain how you found them. It is also beneficial to advise the professional that you are looking for their help on navigating your career path.

5. The second paragraph should explain in greater detail your purpose for emailing them. State what you do for work or where you attend college, your career goals or intended career path, and how talking with them would benefit your career. Do not be vague when asking them to talk. Be specific with what you want to know from them and show them that you have done your research. Again, this professional's time is very valuable, so acknowledge that by being brief in your explanation.
6. The last paragraph should be a short closing statement reiterating that you are looking to speak with them, either over the phone or in person, regarding their professional journey. Let them know that you are happy to meet them for 20-30 minutes at a time that is convenient for them. Additionally, if your connection is in another state or country, then offer to meet via telephone or video conference. Thank them for taking the time to consider your request and that you look forward to hearing back from them.
7. End the email with your full name, current position if you are a working professional, your mobile number, and your LinkedIn account URL.

EXAMPLES OF INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW REQUESTS

'Email Informational Interview Requests' – Susan Joyce with Job Hunt

<https://www.job-hunt.org/informational-interviews/informational-interview-email-requests.shtml>

HOW TO PREPARE

1. Do your research: know the exact position held by the professional, research what their company does, what current projects they are working on and any recent articles. This will show the professional that you are dedicated and have taken the time to learn more about who they are and what they do.
2. Prepare questions ahead of time: write questions on a Word document or in a notebook that you plan to take with you to the interview and have a pen ready to take notes. These questions should be specific to the professional and their career path. They should not be questions that can easily be answered by doing an online search.
3. Bring something professional to take notes with, business cards if you have them, and a portfolio if applicable for your profession. Typically, you want to avoid offering your resume in an informational interview. You do not want to give a professional the idea that you are searching for a job. The purpose of an informational interview is to learn more about an occupation or position within your career path.

4. Be sure to dress professional. While this is not a formal interview, it is still a professional meeting and you should dress business casual. Avoid wearing any revealing clothing or flashy jewelry. Do wear clean, ironed clothing, slacks and a button down, closed-toed shoes, or a knee-length dress or skirt.
5. While the majority of the interview will be spent asking the professional questions regarding their work, occupation, and company, you want to be prepared to answer questions about yourself. The interviewer will likely want to know what your career goals are and what work you are interested in pursuing. Have an answer prepared ahead of time.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK

- What kind of education, training or certifications does your position require?
- What are your main responsibilities?
- What does a typical day in your position look like?
- What kind of decisions do you make in your position?
- How do most people get into this field?
- What are common entry level jobs in this field?
- How did you begin your career?
- What does your company do to assist with their employee's professional advancement? Is this common for other companies within the field?
- What previous positions have been most beneficial in getting you to this point in your career?
- What is the best way to enter this occupation?
- What are the major qualifications for success in this occupation?

EXAMPLES OF INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

'The 8 Best Questions to Ask During an Informational Interview' – Top Resume

<https://www.topresume.com/career-advice/the-8-best-questions-to-ask-in-an-informational-interview>

'Questions to Ask at the Informational Interview' – Live Career

<https://www.livecareer.com/career/advice/interview/information-interview>

WHAT IF I DO NOT HEAR BACK?

- If you do not hear back within one week after sending an informational interview request, then send a follow up email reminding the professional that you sent the initial email requesting to meet with them to discuss their work.

- Many professionals have busy work schedules and receive many emails every day, therefore it is easy for your request to be missed.
- In the second email, the subject line should say something along the lines of “Follow-Up from Informational Interview Request” to let them know that you are following up from your previous email.
- The salutation should be professional just like the first email, starting with hello or dear and addressing the professional with the appropriate title: Mr., Ms., Dr., etc.
- In the first paragraph, briefly re-introduce yourself, how you received their contact information, and advise them of your previous email with the specific date it was sent. Adding the specific date will allow them to easily search through their email.
- Emphasize that you realize their time is valuable and let them know you are happy to talk over the phone if they would prefer. You can also request the professional provide you with contact information of a colleague who may have more free time to chat about the work they do.
- Close the email by genuinely thanking them once again for taking the time to consider your request and that you look forward to hearing back from them.
- If after the second email you do not hear from them within one week, do not contact this person again.

ChatGPT Questions for Informational Interviews

See the additional document “ChatGPT Questions for the Job Search” in the student and mentor resource portals.

REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

‘The Ultimate Guide to an Informational Interview’ – Live Careers

<https://www.livecareer.com/career/advice/interview/informational-interviewing>

‘How to Get the Most out of an Informational Interview’ – Harvard Business Review

<https://hbr.org/2016/02/how-to-get-the-most-out-of-an-informational-interview>

‘Questions to Ask During an Informational Interview’ – University of California Berkley

<https://career.berkeley.edu/start-exploring/informational-interviews/questions/>

‘Email Informational Interview Requests (With Samples)’ – Job-Hunt

<https://www.job-hunt.org/informational-interviews/informational-interview-email-requests.shtml>