[themuse.com](https://www.themuse.com/advice/how-to-ask-for-an-informational-interview-and-get-a-yes)

**How to Ask for an Informational Interview (and Get a “Yes”)**

Elliott Bell

9–12 minutes

The [informational interview](https://www.themuse.com/advice/how-to-ask-for-a-jobwithout-asking-for-a-job) is the secret tool everyone should have in their back pocket. A hybrid of an amazing [networking](https://www.themuse.com/advice/here-are-33-networking-tips-you-can-easily-read-in-under-5-minutes) opportunity, an info session, and a [job interview](https://www.themuse.com/advice/interview-questions-and-answers), it can give anyone looking for a job or pondering a career change an insider scoop (not to mention a much-needed morale boost).

The problem is that these opportunities aren’t advertised anywhere, typically require a lot of work on your end to make happen, and, in most cases, mean you have to convince strangers why they should take time out of their day to help you.

However, with the right approach, you can land these interviews (and maybe even a job). Here’s advice for finding and approaching potential contacts and getting them to say yes—every time.

***Looking for that perfect role? One of these*** [***open jobs***](https://www.themuse.com/hiring/) ***on The Muse might just be the one »***

**What is an informational interview?**

Have you ever wondered how someone got into a specific field or landed the position of your dreams? Do you wish that someone could give you some words of wisdom about the career path you are choosing? That's where an informational interview can help you.

An informational interview is an informal meeting you have with a professional that could give you insight into a specific career, industry, company, or school. It usually lasts 20 to 30 minutes, but it could be longer, depending on your level of connection with the interviewee. You should use this time to [ask key questions](https://www.themuse.com/advice/informational-interview-best-questions-to-ask) that elicit responses that will help you make a decision about your career or education.

Your interviewee should be someone able to give your answers and opinions based on their real-life experiences, so you should select them wisely (for example, if you’d like to apply for a software developer position at a tech company, you’re better off meeting with a software engineer than the human resources manager). Ideally, you should meet in person, but it's OK to have a [virtual coffee](https://www.themuse.com/advice/how-to-get-better-at-doing-coffee) over Zoom or Meet.

**What are the benefits of informational interviewing?**

Informational interviewing can provide access to valuable insights you might not get otherwise and can also help you build professional relationships. Here's a breakdown of the benefits of an informational interview:

* **Access inside information:** By having a talk with a professional who's in the company, industry, or actual career path you'd like to pursue, you might get information that you won't find on the internet, on the institution's website, or discover during a job interview. You can gain more insight into the positive and negative sides of it, potential challenges, and drawbacks that may come your way.
* **Learn from a person's experience:** By telling you about their experiences, your interviewee can give you the opportunity to learn from their errors and successes, so you know exactly what to do and what not to do in your professional journey.
* **Build professional relationships:** Informational interviews are great for growing your network or strengthening your relationship with contacts you already have. (Since it can be held both in person and online, check out some tips on [how to network from home](https://www.themuse.com/advice/ways-build-network-when-you-work-remotely).)

**How to ask for an informational interview in 7 steps**

Any good cold email has two things: a clear message (the reason you’re reaching out), and an easy-to-understand ask (the action you want the recipient to take). But it doesn't stop there—there are a couple of steps you should take before and after the request.

Here’s how to ask for informational interviews with a formula that checks both boxes:

**1. Find the right people**

This may seem obvious, but choosing who you approach can make all the difference in hearing back. Start by making a list of companies you’d love to work at and job titles or positions you’d be interested in. While people who fit on either list are good, someone who has your dream role at your dream company is an ideal informational interview prospect.

That said, it’s important to consider the person’s level and the size of the company—you want to target people who are in an aspirational role, but who aren't so high up that they won’t have time to meet with you.

You may think you want to talk to the CMO of a major company, but you can probably learn more by talking to the marketing director of a smaller company. Also, look for people you have some sort of connection with—if they went to your college or have a shared connection, they’ll be more likely to meet with you.

**2. Start by asking for help**

This sounds obvious (and, OK, a little weird), but it’s a proven fact that people love to feel like they are helping others. So, if you literally start by saying, “I’d love your help,” or “I hope you’ll be able to help me out...” your chances of getting a positive response go up significantly.

**3. Be clear**

Ask for something very specific, and make it as easy as possible for the person to say yes. Saying, “I’d love to know more about what you do and how you got your start” is OK, but doesn’t tell someone how much of their time you’re after or what you’re really suggesting.

Instead, try something like, “I’d love to take you to a quick coffee so I can hear your perspective on this industry and what it’s like to work at your company. I’ll actually be in your area next week and would be happy to meet you wherever is convenient for you.”

**4. Have a hook**

A great way to increase your chance of landing the interview is to demonstrate why you really want to meet with this person. Do you admire their career path? Do you think the work they’re currently doing at company X stands out as the best?

Maybe you have a shared connection and think they would be a great voice of wisdom. Don’t be afraid to share why you are specifically reaching out to this person. The more personalized your ask feels the greater chance of success you’ll have.

**5. Be very considerate**

Remember that, in asking for an informational interview, you’re literally asking someone to put their work on hold to help you. Show your contact you understand this by saying, “I can only imagine how busy you must get, so even 15-20 minutes would be so appreciated.”

**6. Don't make it seem like you’re job hunting (even if you are)**

If you sound like you’re really just looking for a job, there’s a good chance this person will push you to HR or the company’s career page. So be sure to make it clear that you really want to talk to them, to learn about their career history and perspective on the job or industry. After you meet and make a great impression, you can mention the job hunt.

**7. Follow up, and be pleasantly persistent**

If you don’t hear back right away, don’t worry. People are busy, and sometimes these things slip to the bottom of a person’s to-do list. The key is not to just give up. If you haven’t heard back in a week, reply to your first email and politely ask if your contact has had a chance to read your previous email. Also, use this opportunity to reiterate how much it would mean to you to have 15 minutes to learn from them.

Some would say that after one or two tries, you may run the risk of upsetting the person. At the end of the day, it’s really up to you and your personal comfort level. That said, once you shoot off a few emails, you’ll see that most people are happy to help (hey, people love talking about themselves!).

**Informational interview email example**

Still wondering how do you politely ask for an informational interview? Here's an example email you can adapt and create your own version. (This message format can also be turned into a LinkedIn direct message if you don't have the person's email address.)

*Hello Ann,*

*I hope you’re having a nice day.*

*I am writing because I'm a UX Writer considering a pivot to ASO. Given that you are a Senior ASO Writer at Infinite Marketing, I hope you can give me some insight about the ASO industry based on your experience and professional background. Would you have time for a 15 to 20 minutes chat over a coffee next week?*

*I'm also based in New York and would be more than happy to meet you wherever is convenient for you. If you prefer, we can take a virtual coffee over Zoom.*

*Let me know if any of my suggestions work for you. Thank you for your time.*

*Regards,*

*Grace*

**Informational interview questions ideas**

An informational interview is an informal meeting, but it's still a professional conversation. You should have some key questions in mind—after all, this person is taking time to meet you and you don't want to waste it. Remember to not cross boundaries by asking directly about salary or the person's relationship with their boss and colleagues, for example.

To help you out, here are some ideas of questions to ask in an informational interview:

* “How did you get into this field?”
* “What are your main responsibilities as a [role]?”
* “What skills are daily required in your position?”
* “Is this industry growing so that there's space for new professionals?”
* “What level of education or training a person would land a job in this field?”
* “What parts of the job are more challenging and more enjoyable?”
* “How did you get your job?”
* “Can you recommend any certifications I should get to pursue this career?”
* “What do you like most about [company name]?”
* “What are the potential advancement opportunities I would have in [company/field]?”

**Bottom line**

Informational interviews are opportunities to get clarity about a career path, industry, field, or company you're interested in. If you choose your interviewee smartly and take time to prepare the questions well, you can come out of it with great insight on what should be your next steps and answers to doubts and concerns that you wouldn't find elsewhere.

[*Amanda Cardoso*](https://www.themuse.com/author/amanda-cardoso)*contributed to the latest version of this article.*