


[Benefits of Informational Interviews](#)
[Interview Guidelines/Interview Don'ts](#)
[How to Ask for an Informational Interview](#)
[Sample Questions](#)

Benefits of Informational Interviews

An informational interview is an opportunity to gather in-depth information about career fields and positions that interest you, for instance: traits that fit well in a certain position, rewarding aspects of a particular job, opportunities for advancement, academic training requirements, a typical day in this field or position, hiring trends, etc. The more you about an industry and particular roles, the easier it will be to decide if that might be the right path for you. Students and alumni regularly report that informational interviews are an exceptionally useful component in their career development. Informational interviews will not only enrich your understanding of various career fields, but will also broaden your network of professional contacts.

How to Ask for an Informational Interview

When approaching a contact for an informational interview, start by sending a brief email explaining how you found their contact information, that you are interested in learning more about their field and were hoping you could set up a time to speak about their career path. Be sure to also briefly state how you became interested in industry and be clear about your goals for the meeting. For a more detailed approach, view our [sample email](#).

Interview Guidelines/Interview Don'ts

- Start by browsing [QuakerNet](#), which is an online directory of Penn alumni. Alumni tend to be an approachable and friendly audience, so they may agree to schedule a time to speak with you about career-related questions. As you proceed, please keep the following guidelines in mind.
- Make your appointment with a potential contact 2 or 3 weeks in advance. Be flexible and have a variety of times you can be available. If you are not able to meet with the individual in person, try to schedule a convenient time to speak on the phone. Many advisors are also happy to offer advice via e-mail.
- Respect the advisor's time - don't wear out your welcome. The average time for an information interview is about 30 minutes. Be familiar with the industry and organization before your meeting. Read relevant trade journals to find out what is going on in the industry.
- Arrive on time. If you know you will be late, call and let the individual know.
- Come prepared with questions. This will help you organize your thoughts on what you want to learn.
- Do NOT ask for a job. You can be clear that you are looking by asking for general advice about the best places to look or how to best market yourself.
- Be prepared to answer questions concerning your interests, values, skills and where you would like to use them. You may want to bring a copy of your [resume](#) but only provide it if asked.
- It is a good idea to ask the person you interview for [referrals to others](#) who might be able to provide valuable information on the career(s) that you are considering.
- Be sure to send a thank you note within 24 hours following the interview. This can be either via email or hand written but most people greatly appreciate a hand written note.

[^ Top of page](#)

Sample Informational Interview Questions

[Appointments & Walk-Ins](#)
[Resumes, CVs, Cover Letters & Correspondence](#)
[Interviewing Advice](#)
[Networking & Mentoring](#)
[Resources by Career Field](#)
[Career Exploration](#)
[Jobs & Internships / PennLink & iNet](#)
[On Campus Recruiting](#)
[Career Fairs](#)
[Applying to Grad School](#)

QUESTIONS TO HELP PREPARE FOR A CAREER IN THIS FIELD

- What educational preparation do you believe would be best for working in this industry?
- What skills, talents, and personal qualities are most essential in this job?
- What kinds of experiences (paid employment or other) would you most strongly recommend?
- What credentials, educational degrees, licenses, etc. are required for entry into this kind of work?
- How rapidly is your present career field growing? What opportunities for advancement are there in this field?
- What entry-level opportunities offer the most ability to learn a great deal? What is the typical salary for these positions?
- How do people find out about jobs in this field? How are they advertised, or is word of mouth more important?
- Which professional journals and organizations would help me learn more about this field?
- How well suited is my background for this type of work?
- With the information you have about my education, skills, and experience, what other fields would you suggest I research further before making a final decision?

QUESTIONS ABOUT A PARTICULAR ORGANIZATION / COMPANY

- What are the main job categories within this organization? What "types" of people tend to be in each?
- Why did you decide to work for this organization and what do you like most and least about it?
- How does your company differ from its competitors?
- How does your organization distinguish itself from other organizations doing similar work?
- In what ways does this employer provide ongoing training and education for its employees?
- What is this organization's mission and philosophy?
- What is the "corporate / organizational" culture here?
- What do your hiring managers look for on resumes and in cover letters? in interviews?

ADVISOR'S PRESENT JOB

- How did you choose this career field?
- How do you spend your time during a typical workweek?
- What do you find most rewarding about the work?
- What are the toughest problems you must deal with?
- If you were ever to leave this kind of work, what would drive you away from it?
- Would you describe the organizational structure of your company?
- What is the average length of time employees stay with your organization?
- What type of formal or on-the-job training does your organization provide?
- How does your organization compare/differ with its competitors?

ADVISOR'S CAREER FUTURE

- Does your work become more interesting as you stay longer?
- If things develop as you would like, what does the future hold for your career?
- If the type of work you do was suddenly eliminated, what different kinds of work do you feel you could do?

ADVISOR'S PRIOR EXPERIENCE AND PREPARATION

- How did you prepare for this kind of work? What was your college major?

If you were a college student again, had it to do all over, knowing what you know now, what would you do differently?

- What has been your career path?

LIFESTYLE

- How much flexibility do you have in terms of dress, hours, vacation schedule, place of residence, etc.?
- Must you perform all your job responsibilities in your place of work?
- What obligations does your work place upon you, outside of the ordinary workweek? Do you enjoy these obligations?

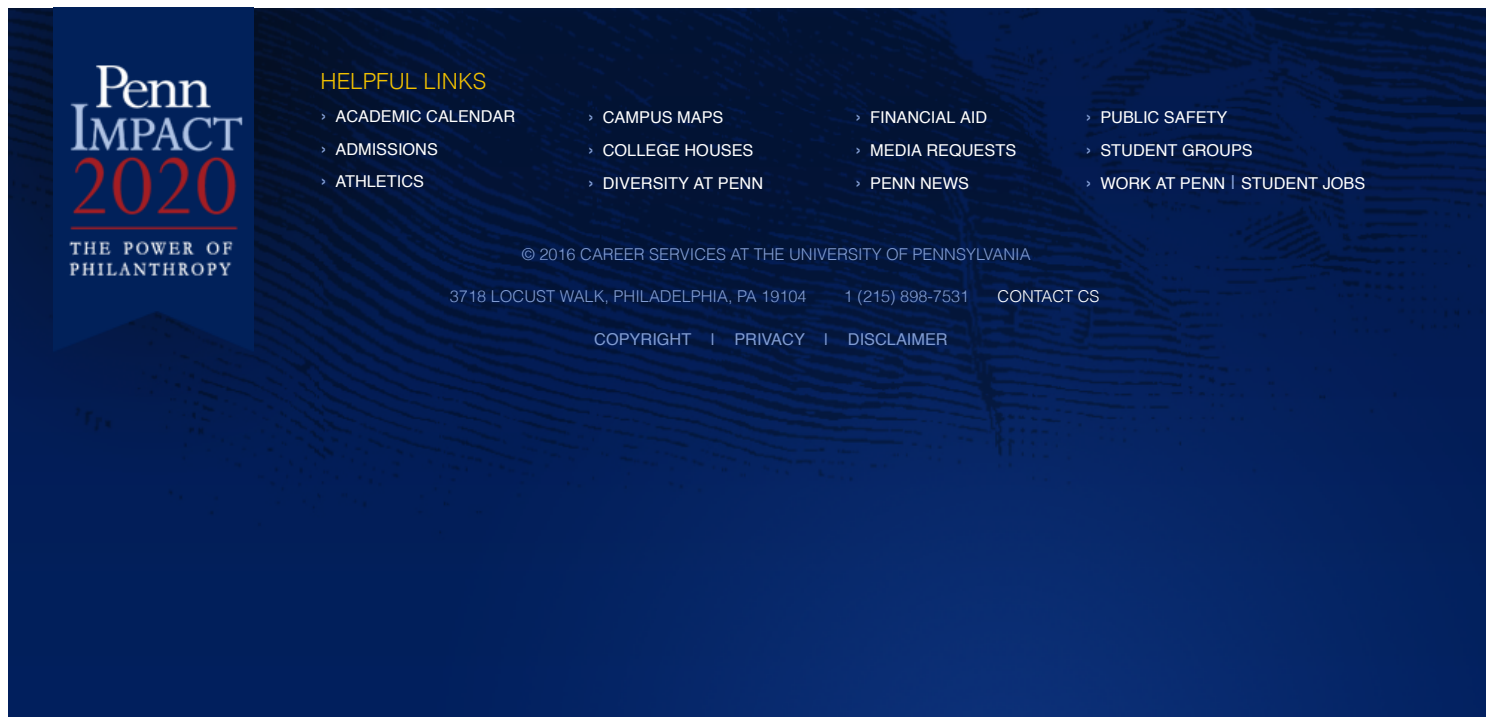
HIRING DECISIONS

- If you were to hire someone to work with you today, which of the following factors would be most important in your hiring decision and why: Educational credentials? Past work experience? Personality or personal attributes? Specific skills and talents? Applicant's knowledge of your organization, department, or job? Others?

REFERRAL TO OTHERS

- Based on our conversation today, what other people do you believe I should talk to? Can you give me names of a few who might be willing to see me?
- May I have permission to use your name when I contact them?

[^ Top of page](#)



**Penn
IMPACT
2020**
THE POWER OF
PHILANTHROPY

HELPFUL LINKS

- › ACADEMIC CALENDAR
- › CAMPUS MAPS
- › FINANCIAL AID
- › PUBLIC SAFETY
- › ADMISSIONS
- › COLLEGE HOUSES
- › MEDIA REQUESTS
- › STUDENT GROUPS
- › ATHLETICS
- › DIVERSITY AT PENN
- › PENN NEWS
- › WORK AT PENN | STUDENT JOBS

© 2016 CAREER SERVICES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

3718 LOCUST WALK, PHILADELPHIA, PA 19104 1 (215) 898-7531 [CONTACT CS](#)

[COPYRIGHT](#) | [PRIVACY](#) | [DISCLAIMER](#)