

Informational Interviews Guide

How to conduct informational interviews with confidence



Career insights

Informational interviews are crucial for gaining valuable insights into your desired career path.

It is important to understand that an informational interview is not a job interview. Rather it is an informal meeting between a person seeking further information about a particular job, career or industry and a person already established in that field of work.

By conducting an informational interview, you can find out if the company or industry you think you want to work in aligns with your values, skills and interests before taking the plunge with a formal application. Informational interviews can be particularly useful for students contemplating different career paths or job seekers looking for a career change. They can help you better understand a career or topic.



In this guide...

You'll learn about the benefits of conducting informational interviews

- Gain insights into a specific industry or role
- Establish and grow your professional network
- Clarify career goals
- Access unadvertised job opportunities or resources
- Develop interviewing and communication skills
- Receive constructive feedback or insights



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Identify careers or jobs you want to explore

An informational interview starts with understanding what you want to learn about

If you aren't sure which occupation(s) you want to explore, take some time to pinpoint potential career paths and jobs of interest. As a University of Phoenix student you can:

- Complete the [Career Interest assessment](#) to view how your interests align with real-world careers.
- [Explore careers](#) that are aligned to our specific degree programs and view required skills, salary and growth information and view day-in-the-life videos.

Things to consider:

You don't need to be 100% sure about what you'd like to pursue. Remember, interviews can help you gather more information to determine if a specific career is right for you.

Does this career path align with your interests?

Does this career path align with your degree?

Does this career provide the growth and opportunities you are seeking?

Are there any specific skills or qualifications required for success in this field, and do you possess or need to acquire them?

Have you considered the work-life balance and job satisfaction associated with this career path?

How does this career path align with your personal values, passions and overall life goals?

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Find contacts

The next step is to identify contacts

The following is a list of suggested channels to source the names of those contacts.

Personal referrals

Make a list of all the people you know who already work in your desired career field or at a company you're interested in. Schedule a time to speak with them about their experiences.

Use your network's network

If you don't know anyone in your desired career field or at a company you are interested in, ask people in your network who they know and see if they can facilitate an introduction.

Professional associations

Consider joining a professional association related to your career interests (e.g., SHRM, PMI, ACHE). The website may have a directory of members' contacts to reach out to. You could also attend a local chapter meeting. Use our [professional association guide](#) to find associations related to your industry or career of interest.

Introduction on LinkedIn™*

Ask an existing LinkedIn contact to facilitate an introduction or connect with people in the industries you are targeting.

Organization websites

Small to mid-sized companies, government agencies and nonprofits will typically have employee contact information posted.

* LinkedIn is a registered trademark of LinkedIn Corporation and its affiliates in the United States and/or other countries.

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Initiate contact and request a meeting

Once you find a new contact, you are ready to reach out

It is recommended that you lead your outreach with an email, as phone calls from an unknown person can fall at bad times and promote awkwardness. Refer to the samples below for ideas.

Sample email request for an informational interview

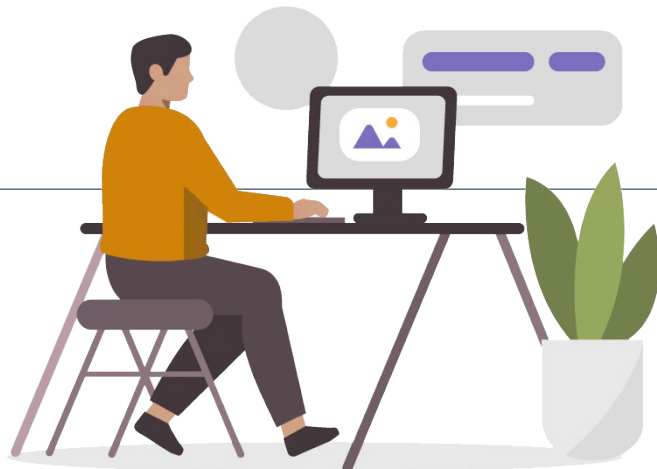
Dear Mr. Smith,

My name is Charles Hubbard, and I am a business management student from University of Phoenix. I am currently investigating [insert desired career field], and Stan Jones mentioned that you might be a great person to talk with given your current role at ABC organization.

I'm interested in getting your perspective on [industry/company] and learning about your career background. If you are open to a face-to-face meeting, we could meet for coffee or I could schedule a Zoom call.

Let me know a time that works best. I can be reached via email or at 555.555.5555. Thank you so much for your time.

Sincerely,
Charles Hubbard



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Initiate contact and request a meeting

Sample voicemail request for an informational interview

Hello, this is Charles Hubbard.

Amy Johnson suggested I contact you. I am researching agencies for a possible field placement as part of my BSSW program and would love to talk with you for 15-20 minutes about your experiences at [agency]. Your perspective on the field of social work would be helpful because I am considering [insert area of practice] where I can apply newly acquired skills in [insert a few skills you want to use].

I can be reached at 555.555.5555 and appreciate your time.

Thank you.



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Prepare for the interview

Things to do before your call

Preparation is key for any interview, so be sure to take time and read these suggestions before your conversations.

Do the following:

Complete detailed research: Research the interviewee and the employer. Research the industry, job title, responsibilities and salary. Having this information ahead of time will help you prepare relevant questions.

Prepare a written list of questions: This helps ensure you are using your interview time wisely (see specific questions in step 7). Your questions should allow the interviewee opportunities to share their industry insight and professional expertise.

Don't forget to practice: Just like you would practice for a job interview, you want to practice for your Informational Interview. The Interviewee's time may be limited so you will want to practice and plan your talking points so you can have an estimate of how much time it takes. Practice in front of a mirror or with a trusted family member or friends who will give honest feedback. Practice until you are comfortable asking your questions and you feel like it flows naturally.

Dress appropriately: Dress in the same way as you would for a job interview. If the environment you are interviewing in is business professional, you might want to wear a suit. If the environment is more casual, you may want to lean towards a sweater and nice dress pants.

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Conduct the informational interview

Questions to ask for an informational interview

When preparing for informational interviews, consider asking questions in the following categories to keep the discussion well-rounded and to help you gain deeper insights about the career opportunities you are researching. These questions are suggestions. Feel free to come up with your own.

Sample questions

- a. *Can you tell me what an average day/week in your job is like?*
- b. *What do you like most and least about what you do?*
- c. *What skills and personality traits do you think are most important to being successful in this field?*
- d. *How did you acquire those skills and how do you use them on a daily basis?*
- e. *Were there any surprises for you when you started working in this field?*
- f. *What advice would you give to someone considering a career in this field?*
- g. *Do you know of any internships, volunteer work or professional organizations I can be a part of?*
- h. *Is there anyone else you think I should talk to?*
(This is the most important question you can ask in closing the interview.)

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Follow Up

What to say and how to say it

After a conversation concludes, make sure you follow up to build the relationship.

Follow these simple principles:

- Send a thank-you note to your contact within 24 hours or the next business day. See a sample note below for ideas.
- Stay in touch and find ways to add value to the relationship. The sample below outlines a recommended follow-up strategy.
- Invite the contact to be part of your LinkedIn® network. Personalize the invitation to your contact.

Sample follow-up email

Dear Mr. Smith,

It was great talking with you yesterday about how you got your start in [career field], and what things I should be thinking about in my career planning. You also really helped me solidify my thinking on the types of companies I am most interested in exploring right now.

Your advice was very helpful, and I wanted you to know how much I appreciated our conversation. I am continuing to research other areas of [career field], so if you think of other professionals who might be a good fit for me to speak with, I would be most appreciative of any referrals you could provide. I will be plugging into the professional association you suggested and hope our paths will cross again in the future.

Sincerely,
Charles Hubbard

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Reflect on what you learned

Take it all in

As you conduct informational interviews, write down what you learned.

Reflection questions:

What were the key takeaways from the informational interview?

How does the information obtained align with my career goals and aspirations?

What new perspectives or ideas emerged during the conversation?

Where do my skills align particularly well with this career path and where do I have skills gaps?

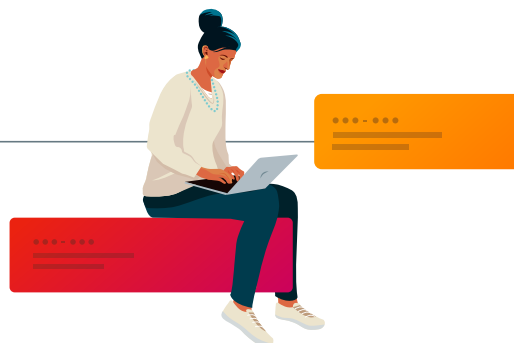
Next steps and integration:

What additional research or follow-up actions do I need to undertake based on the interview?

How can I leverage the connections made during the interview for future networking opportunities?

What steps can I take to further explore or deepen my understanding of the career path?

How can I integrate the information learned from this interview into my career planning or decision-making process?



You've got this!

Good luck on your interviews.

