

Informational Interviewing Guide

What is an informational interview?

An informational interview is an interview with someone currently working in a field of interest to you.

Why should I conduct an informational interview?

- To help you make informed choices about where you want to work and what kind of job you want
- To get “inside information” about workplaces and companies
- To create a network of contacts
- To make a favorable impression with someone who may be able to offer you a job or a job lead at some point in the future
- To build your confidence for your job interviews by practicing asking questions and providing information about yourself

How do I find people to interview?

- Friends, family, neighbors, and acquaintances
- Professors, advisors, and classmates (current and previous)
- Current and previous employers and coworkers
- People whose careers interest you or that you are curious about - you might read or hear about them in the media or through social media
- The alumni finder tool on the Central Michigan University LinkedIn page
- The Central Connections alumni mentoring platform
- People employed at organizations where you think you might like to do an internship or work
- People to whom you have been referred by your contacts

How do I set up an informational interview?

You can set up your interview by phone, email, or through LinkedIn. If someone refers you, be sure to mention his or her name. Here are some things to include in your request:

- I'm currently a student at Central Michigan University (indicate what you are studying and when you plan to graduate).
- I'm collecting information about _____ field and types of positions as I prepare for (internship or job search).
- I'm really interested in the work you do.
- I'd like 20 minutes of your time to ask you some questions.
- When would it be convenient for you to schedule a virtual or in-person meeting?



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What questions should I ask?

- What do you do in a typical day or week?
- How did you get started in this job? What has been your career path?
- What experience, education, training, and skills did you most need?
- What do you like about your work? What do you dislike about your work?
- What trends do you see in this industry?
- What advice would you give me if I were interested in this field/industry/type of job? What classes should I take? What experiences should I get?
- Who else do you know that I can talk to? (If the interviewee gives you a name, ask if you may use the interviewee's name when contacting the referral).

Informational Interview Guidelines

- Bring your list of questions - consider 8-10 questions.
- Try to hold your informational interview in person when possible. You'll get a better understanding of what the company is like: how people interact, how they dress, what kinds of facilities are available for employees.
- Take notes during the interview - you are doing research. Jot down key words to help you remember the conversation.
- Keep track of time. After 20 minutes, thank the person for spending time to meet with you. If the other person wants to continue beyond 20 minutes, you may.
- If your interview is in person, bring your resume with you. The person might offer to critique it, or you can ask if they would be willing to do so. If your informational interview is virtual, you can ask the person if they are willing to critique it.
- Make sure you have accurate information for your records and follow-up: the person's name, job title, department, email, and phone number; the company name, address, and website.
- Send a thank-you note within 24 hours. Remember to include your name, address, phone number, and email in the note. Proofread your note carefully for typos and professionalism.

Pointers

- Relax and enjoy yourself.
- Be prepared with your documents.
- If the interview is virtual, make sure you are in a quiet place, free of distraction, where you can concentrate on the conversation.
- If the interview is in person, be well-groomed and neatly dressed. Professional dress is appropriate - first impressions count!
- If the interview is at a company site, look around and notice your surroundings. Notice what you like and don't like about what you see and be sure to put these observations in your notes.
- Be aware that informational interviews can turn into employment interviews. Be prepared to talk about your background, educational knowledge, skills, experience, and enthusiasm for the field.



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