

Informational Interviews

What are Informational Interviews?

An informational interview is a conversation that's designed to produce information. They provide an opportunity to expand your network and learn more about a company, career path or what you can do with your degree. Whether you want to explore career paths, finalize career choices or decide which organizations to apply to, an informational interview is often the best way to get started.

Benefits of an informational interview?

- Expand your professional network
- Develop insights into the skills and attributes needed to be successful in an organization, occupation, or industry
- Learn about exciting new industries and career options
- Learn how other graduates with your degree have used their academic training in a real work setting
- Get an inside edge on job leads within the organization
- Improve your communication skills

Setting up informational interviews

When you request informational interviews, consider using email or a networking site like LinkedIn. When you reach out:

- Explain who you are (student or recent graduate) and that you're asking for help: People like helping others, so consider a phrase like, "I'd love your help," to increase the chances of a positive response.
- Be clear: Make a specific request, tell them what you are looking for (advice, industry information, suggestions to make more informed career decisions), how much time you're requesting (20-30 minutes), and in what format (virtual, phone, in-person).
- Show your enthusiasm: Explain why you want to meet this person, highlighting your admiration for their career or work, your passion for a specific industry, or make note of a shared interest or connection.
- Be very flexible: Acknowledge their busy schedule and express appreciation for even a short meeting.



- Avoid seeming like you're looking for a job: Focus on learning about their career and industry, rather than directly asking for a job.

Be prepared and do some research

Make the most of the informational interview by researching in advance the profession you're investigating and the company you're visiting. Identify your goals for the meeting.

Research occupations using [Career Cruising](#), [Job Bank](#), [O*Net](#), or [UManitoba's resource](#).

Access professionals on **LinkedIn** to research your questions about career and educational paths and identify key issues in your field of interest. Research how people in your careers of interest got their start. Post questions on professional organization discussion boards: [search McMaster alumni](#), [Join the SSC Career and Employment LinkedIn group](#).

Questions to ask

Through your research, identify thoughtful questions to ask, keeping in mind the amount of time requested.

About them

- How did you get into this field?
- How has the field changed since you started?
- What advice do you have for someone starting out in this work?
- If you weren't doing this job, what other work would you consider based on your skills and experience?
- What motivates you about this work? What excites you most about your job?

About the job

- What does a typical day look like in this job?
- What are the key competencies required to be successful in this line of work?
- What do you find most challenging?

About the industry

- What is the employment outlook for this industry?
- Is there a shortage of skilled people in this field?
- What are some of the trends you have noticed over the years?
- Are there opportunities for self-employment in this field?



About the company

- What made you decide to choose this company?
- What does this company do differently than its competitors?
- Why do customers choose this company over others?
- What is the workplace culture like in this company?

Skills, experience and education

- What could I do to make myself a successful candidate for a role in this organization or industry?
- What is the ideal educational path for someone in this position?
- If I'm willing to get that training at some point, but want to get involved in this field right away to test out whether it's a good fit, where would I start?
- Would you feel comfortable giving me some feedback on my resume? How can I market myself more effectively?
- Given my skills in X, Y and Z, what other types of roles do you think I should consider?

More information

- What professional journals, organizations or websites do you recommend?
- Who else would you recommend I speak with? What information might they be able to share with me? May I use your name when I contact them?

Thanking your contact

After conducting an informational interview, follow-up with a thank you note to let your contact know their advice or referrals helped you. This will give the impression that you are professional and committed to career planning.

- Send a Thank You note through email or LinkedIn within 24 hours of your networking connection.
- Recall key takeaways from your conversation.
- Send a 'Connect' request on LinkedIn (if you have not done so already) and be intentional about opportunities to stay in touch.

Sample thank you note

Dear ___ [name],

Thank you for the time you spent with me on ___ [date]. I found your insights on ___ and ___ very interesting. I also contacted ___ [name] as you suggested, and we are meeting on ___ [date] to discuss some current opportunities with this organization.



Thank you again for your time and interest in my career. I hope to return your generosity one day.

Sincerely,

___ [name]

___ [contact information: phone number, personalized LinkedIn URL]

