



Informational Interview

An informational interview offers you an opportunity to gather information about a career field, job, or employer in which you are interested. The *purpose of an informational interview* is to expand your understanding, not to ask for a job or internship.

Conducting an informational interview will help you actively:

- Secure firsthand information about industries, jobs, work responsibilities, career paths, work settings, and organizational cultures
- Build contacts and referrals for your personal network (increasing your chances of securing employment in the future)
- Increase your self-confidence and interviewing skills
- Gather insight for stronger career decisions

Ways to conduct an informational interview:

- In-person (ideal)
- Phone
- Skype

*Make sure to ask your contact for the most convenient way to conduct the interview.

Step 1: Getting Started – Finding Contacts to Interview

The first step is to find people to interview. The goal is to find someone in a desired industry, organization, job, or career field. Typically, the best place to start is with your personal network. This may include family, friends, roommates, past employers, and/or professors. Ask these contacts for the names of people within occupations or organizations that interest you.

Additional resources to help you secure contact names include:

- Organizational websites/literature
- Professional/trade association chapters
- Chamber of Commerce directories
- Gator CareerLink Employer Directory
- LinkedIn Alumni Feature – Search for UF alumni by organization, major, location, industry, job, and/or skills.

After identifying the person to contact, request an appointment via email, telephone, or through the source who helped you secure the contact. If calling or emailing, use professional language, state who you are (including that you are a student), why you are contacting them, clearly state that you are not seeking a job at this time, but gathering career information, and ask if they are available to talk with you for 20-30 minutes.

Important Tips to Remember:

1. This is not the time to ask for a job or internship – *Focus on gathering information*
2. Most Informational Interviews last 20-30 minutes – *Keep the conversation brief and friendly*
3. Professionalism & Reliability are essential –
 - a. *If you must cancel your interview, call or email 24 hours prior and reschedule at that time.*
 - b. *Arrive early – Prepare for traffic and parking*
 - c. *Begin and end the interview with a “thank you” and a handshake*
4. Dress appropriately – *Business Casual is ideal*
5. Conduct several informational interviews – *Gain a broader perspective and identify patterns about the industry, occupation and/or career field*



Activity: Create your network web - Friends, professors, or relatives, can help introduce you or arrange an informational interview for you. Start by identifying who is currently in your network



List those in your network to initially contact:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Step II: Prepare for the Interview

Always prepare before an informational interview to ensure that you make a professional first-impression. Prepare by:

- Conducting preliminary research on the respective field or organization:
 - Gather facts in order to formulate intelligent questions
 - Avoid asking questions easily answered on the company's website or LinkedIn profile
- Developing a list of open-ended questions, avoiding yes/no answers that often fail to stimulate more response and discussion. Topics to consider include:
 - Career choice and goals
 - Education
 - Work/life balance and their career progression
 - Organizational culture
 - Day-to-day responsibilities
 - Technical skills
 - Making informed career decisions
- Preparing for:
 - In-person interview: Consider issues related to traffic and parking
 - Interview via Skype: Ensure technology is working adequately, secure a quiet space, and make sure the background behind you is clean and distraction free

Step III: Conduct the Interview

- Start the interview by building rapport. Ask questions about their day before jumping into the interview. Once rapport has been established, then:
 - Restate your purpose for the interview
 - Share insight as to why you are seeking career information and the general types of questions you will be asking
- Take notes - If you want to record the conversation, make sure to ask permission first.



- Be prepared to answer questions about yourself:
 - Education, background, and career ambitions
- Offer to share your resume to help them understand your experiences and qualifications
 - Ask for feedback
- Additional questions to consider:
 - Ask for a business card (if necessary) to follow up
 - Ask if you can connect with the person on LinkedIn
 - Ask if there are articles, professional associations, websites, or books that might help you learn more
 - Ask who they recommend you talk with next

Step IV: After the Interview

- Send a hand written card or email thanking the contact for their time
 - Refer to some portion of the conversation and why the advice that was given was helpful to you

Informational Interviewing – Sample Questions

- How did you get into this career field/industry?
- Which majors are most successful with securing employment in this field?
- How would you describe a typical day/week on the job?
- What is your job like?
- What kind of decisions do you make?
- How did you get your job? Why did you decide to work for this company/organization?
- What are the most satisfying aspects of your job?
- What frustrations or drawbacks do you experience at work?
- How would you describe the work environment such as work, pressure, deadlines, and routines?
- What are the essential skills to be successful in this line of work? How did you learn these skills (e.g., training programs, classroom, on the job)?
- What are the key software programs in the field?
- How much time do you spend alone? Interacting with people? Writing reports? Reading job-related publications?
- What's an example of a problem that you help solve at work?
- How does your career affect your lifestyle (the amount of time you work vs. time for leisure, traveling, family, outside interests)?
- What are the latest developments and primary issues impacting this field today?
- How do you see jobs in the field changing over the next five to ten years?
- What educational degrees, licenses, or other credentials are required for entry and advancement in your kind of work? Are there any which are preferred or helpful?
- What are the trade/professional groups to which you belong and which do you find most beneficial to your work? What is your advice about getting involved with these organizations as a student?
- What other career areas do you see as being related to your work?
- What other functional areas within the organization do you collaborate with the most?
- What personal, characteristics, personality traits, values, strengths, and/or interests do you believe are necessary or helpful for success and satisfaction in this occupation (or organization)?



- How do people learn about job openings in the field?
- What do you wish you had known about this career field before you entered it? What about your current employer?
- How is this organization structured? What kinds of entry-level jobs are typical for this career field or employer (e.g., typical titles, responsibilities)
- What is your organization's leadership/management philosophy? How does this differ from other organizations in this field/industry?

- What is the typical career progression in this field? What are the keys to advancement?
- What books/periodicals/websites that you would recommend?
- What special advice would you give to a young person entering this field, industry, or line of work?
- What is the next step in your career?
- Who else do you recommend I talk with about careers in this field?