

Informational Interviewing



What is an informational interview?

Informational interviews are a widely accepted method of obtaining information about careers, job search methods and potential employers. It's a process of talking to someone who is in a field or organization that interests you. It provides a unique opportunity to gather first-hand information that you can't find online.

Informational interviews allow for :	How to request an informational interview:
Exploring a specific industry, field, organization or position, and ability to assess whether it's a good fit for your skills, personality, and career goals.	Make contact by telephone or email, making sure to explain your purpose. Ask for 15-30 minutes at the convenience of the person you are contacting during which you might visit and ask questions.
Observing and getting a real life feel for different work environments.	Stress that you are seeking advice not a job.
Networking with professionals who may have advice about future opportunities.	Be on time, dress appropriately, and be courteous. Thank your contact person for his/her help and follow up with a thank-you note.
Developing the social skills you'll need in professional interactions.	

How to make contact:

- **Telephone** – This method provides the quickest response. If the person you contact is not available to meet with you, ask them to refer you to someone who might assist you. Be clear that you are only seeking information, not a job.
- **Email** – Introduce yourself, explain your reason for requesting the meeting and provide a window of time when you would like to meet. Expressing interest in the person's field may encourage them to meet with you. Make sure that there are no typos or grammar errors in your email message. Compose a message and allow for 48 hours for response; if there is no response you may follow up with one phone call.
- **Personal Referral** – Ask your contact (professor, friend, parent, etc.) to arrange the meeting or permission to use this person's name as a referral. When you make the call, mention that this person suggested that you call to speak to him/her about their career.

What do I say?

- Hello, my name is _____. I am a student at Cuyahoga Community College, and I'm doing career research to help me plan my educational path. I'm really interested in the field of _____, and was hoping you may be available to talk with me for 15-30 minutes about your work?
- Emphasize that you're looking for information – not asking for a job.

Action Sequence

Before your meeting:

- Know about the person/company you're meeting/visiting.
- Research several occupations relating to the company using online sources or information from your guidance office.
- Prepare a folder to keep notes, business cards, or any other information given to you during the meeting. Make sure you bring a good pen and clean note pad to take notes.
- Bring a copy of your resume and consider asking the interviewee to take a look at your resume to see if they can offer any suggestions for making the resume a more effective tool for obtaining a job in this field or work with this company.

During your meeting:

- Listen to what the other person is saying. If you don't understand something, don't be afraid to ask, don't guess. The goal of an informational interview is for you to learn.
- Ask questions that demonstrate you are informed and genuinely interested in your speaker.
- Take notes.
- How you speak is just as important as what you say.

After your meeting:

- Keep records. Right after the interview write down or type up what you learned (including the suggestions or advice given to you), what more you'd like to know and your reactions in terms of how this industry, field or position would "fit" with your lifestyle, interests, skills and future career plans.
- Send a thank-you note within 1-2 days to express your appreciation for their time and information given. Based on whether the informational interview was relatively informal or more businesslike, this may be a handwritten note, an email, or a business letter.
- Keep in touch with the person, especially if you had a particularly nice interaction; let them know that you followed up on their advice and how things are going as a result. This relationship could become an important part of your network.