

Informational Interviewing

What is Informational Interviewing?

An informational interview is an informal conversation with someone who does work in a field of interest to you. It is NOT a job interview, but rather a research tool to find valuable information for your professional development.

How does it benefit a student?

- Explore different career paths
- Learn about someone's real-life career trajectory
- Learn about the organization you're interested in and what it's like to work there
- Get insider tips and information on how to apply and interview for a job
- Expand your professional network; these people could forward job leads in the future

Steps to set up an interview:

1. **Research:** Research to find employers or careers in general that you'd like to learn more about. You need to come into the meeting with basic information about a company or job field.
2. **Reach out:** One method is to reach out to someone you already know. That way, it's easier to set up an interview since both parties are familiar with each other. It can be a former colleague or someone you've talked to at an event. Another way is to find someone you don't know through your UIC alumni network or via LinkedIn. It's easier to reach out to a stranger when you can find some common ground, like you both attended UIC!
Reach out to your contact by email or phone. Be sure to emphasize that you are looking for information, not a job. And ask for a convenient time to have a 20 to 30-minute conversation.
3. **Prepare:** Prepare for the interview by practicing your introduction and putting together a list of questions. Also, prepare your expectations/hopes for the meeting.
4. **Conduct Interview:**
 - Dress neatly, as you would for a normal job interview. Be sure to dress at least business casual.
 - Restate your objective for the meeting
 - Introduce yourself and your background, including your education and work background
 - Be prepared to lead the conversation with the questions you had prepared but allow for a natural conversation flow
 - Respect the person's time and don't go beyond the agreed-upon time
 - Ask for names of others that could provide insight and advice
 - Ask the person if it's okay to contact them in the future with updates and/or further questions
5. **Follow-up:** Make sure to take note of important information shared. Send a thank you note to your interviewee within 2 days of the interview, expressing gratitude for their time and advice. Last, be sure to stay in contact with them. Connect on LinkedIn and let them know if you acted on any of their advice.



Example Informational Interviewing Questions

Warm-up Questions

1. How's your day going so far?
2. What are you working on right now?
3. Can you tell me about your background and how you came to work for [company]?

During Interview

1. What trends are impacting your business right now?
2. What are your main responsibilities as a...?
3. How has your field changed the most since you started?
4. What surprises you most about your job?
5. What's been the most valuable experience at [company] so far?
6. What's the best lesson you've learned in your job?
7. What do you like least about your work?
8. If you had to attribute your success in your field to one trait, what would that be?
9. What could I do to prepare for a career in this field?
10. If you were me, what would you be doing right now to maximize your chance of breaking into this field?
11. What resources should I look into next?
12. What next steps would you recommend for someone in my situation?
13. How relevant is your current work to your undergraduate major?
14. What website, blogs or magazines do you read regularly to keep current on trends in your field?
15. If I wanted to learn the language of your field (common acronyms or industry-specific terminology), what resources would be helpful?
16. What related fields do you think I should consider looking into?
17. What projects have you done for your employer(s) that you feel have added the most value?
18. Have you had interns or contractors in your current and past roles? What types of projects have they worked on?
19. What types of projects would an entry-level professional in your field work on?
20. Given what you have learned in your time at your employer, what would you do, if you were me, to maximize your chance of getting an interview?

Closing Questions

1st part of the close: "Our time is up but thank you so much for your time today. You've given me a lot to think about, and it sounds like you're working for a great organization. I'm going to take a few days to process all the information you've shared. If, on reflection, it seems like [company] and I may make a good mutual fit, is it OK if I reach back out to you to get your recommendations for how to best proceed?"

2nd part of the close: Place a follow up call/email, assuming they say yes to the question in the 1st part of the close.

Source: *The 2-Hour Job Search* by Steve Dalton



**Engineering
Career Center**