

# How to do Informational Interviews

Drafted from content from “How an Informational Interview Can Boost Your Career” by Alison Doyle for The Balance Careers, August 2019. <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/informational-interview-questions-to-ask-2061056>

## **What Is an Informational Interview?**

This is a short (15-30min) interview to collect information about a job, career field, industry, or organization. It's an opportunity to speak with a person working in a field you'd like to know more about. Through the conversation, you can (hopefully) discover what a person's job is like, what they do, what responsibilities they have, and what it's like to work in their job at their organization. As the person requesting the informational interview, it'll be your job to steer the conversation and ask questions.

## **How do I request one?**

Find people in careers and organizations you're interested in and send them a message. LinkedIn is a great source for reaching beyond your existing network. Introduce yourself, your interest in their work, and ask if they'd be available for a 15-30 minute informational interview over phone or zoom.

## **How do I prepare?**

Come with questions and be prepared to steer the conversation. Be considerate of their time and close the conversation at the agreed-upon time. Your contact might ask you questions as well, so be ready with an elevator pitch.

During the interview, try to ask questions that go beyond what you could find out through a quick online search. You can ask the person about their journey to this position, for a description of their day-to-day responsibilities, and for tips they would offer you as someone interested in working in the field.

## **What kind of questions could I ask?**

*Occupational Questions to Ask – what are the specifics & logistics of their job and field?*

1. What is your job title?
2. What are the typical duties and routine? Which skills are most needed?
3. What degree or certificate do employers look for? Which courses are the most valuable to succeed?
4. What kind of work/internship experience would employers look for in a job applicant?
5. What are the opportunities for advancement, and to what position? Is a graduate degree needed?
6. What are the most important personal characteristics for success in the field?
7. What are the demands and frustrations that typically accompany this type of work?
8. How can you determine that you have the ability or potential to be successful in this specific occupation?
9. **What does the advisor know now that would have been helpful to know when she or he was in your shoes?**

10. What are the employment prospects in the advisor's geographic area? What are the employment prospects at the advisor's company? Is mobility a necessary factor for success?
11. What are the different salary ranges?
12. Where are job listings found?

*Functional Questions to Ask – what's the "flavor" of the person's daily life on the job? The answers you receive can help you see where you might excel and which items, such as a lot of overtime, might not make sense for your lifestyle.*

- 1. What are the satisfying aspects of the advisor's work?**
2. What was the advisor's career path from college to present?
3. What are the greatest pressures, strains, or anxieties in the work?
4. What are the major job responsibilities?
5. What are the toughest problems and decisions with which the advisor must cope?
6. What is most dissatisfying about the work? Is this typical of the field?
7. How would the advisor describe the atmosphere/culture of the workplace?
8. Can the advisor suggest others who may be valuable sources for you?
9. How many hours does the advisor work?
10. What sort of education does the advisor have?

### **What to do after the Interview**

Consolidate your notes for future reference. Follow up with a Thank-You note via email. For an added personal touch, you could attach a link to an article on something relevant to your conversation, and let the person know they inspired you to read the article.