

Informational interviews are informal conversations with an individual who is studying or working in a field of interest. These interviews are commonly used to gain a clearer understanding of the day-to-day realities of a particular career, and they can also provide valuable insight into academic pathways and career development opportunities.

How to identify individuals for informational interviews

Identifying potential individuals to interview can be challenging. A useful first step is to create a list of people whose academic or professional paths you find interesting. The following categories may help guide your thinking:

Family and Friends

Relatives or family acquaintances can offer helpful insights, and starting with someone familiar can build confidence and provide useful feedback for future interviews.

School Contacts

Teachers and school staff may have experience in related fields or may be able to recommend former students, colleagues, or other contacts who can provide valuable perspectives.

Extracurricular Connections

Mentors, advisors, and coaches from extracurricular activities may be willing to share their professional backgrounds or connect you with individuals in relevant industries.

Community Members

Local professionals, community leaders, or members of organizations in your area may serve as useful resources. Reaching out respectfully can lead to meaningful connections.

Unconnected Professionals

It is also appropriate to contact individuals with whom you have no prior relationship. Professional platforms, such as LinkedIn, can help identify people working in fields you wish to explore.

How to reach out and request an interview

When reaching out to potential interviewees by phone call or in written communication, it is helpful to keep your communication clear, respectful, and purposeful.

- ☐ Briefly introduce yourself and explain your interest in their field or academic path
- ☐ Clearly state that you are seeking an informational interview
- ☐ Outline the type of insight you hope to gain
- ☐ Propose a few possible meeting times while emphasizing flexibility
- ☐ Keep your message concise and proofread it carefully and express genuine gratitude for their consideration
- ☐ Maintain professionalism and courtesy to help establish a positive connection

Possible informational interview questions

The following questions can help guide these conversations, deepen understanding of potential career or academic paths, and support thoughtful exploration of future opportunities. Consider identifying the 5–7 questions you most want to learn about and use them to structure your interview.

- ☐ What does your job or academic program involve on a typical day?
- ☐ How did you first become interested in this field?
- ☐ What education or training is most helpful for this career?
- ☐ What skills are most important for success in your work?
- ☐ What do you enjoy most about your job or area of study?
- ☐ What challenges or difficulties are common in this field?
- ☐ How did you decide which college, major, or training program to pursue?
- ☐ Are there classes or experiences you recommend for someone exploring this path?
- ☐ What surprised you when you first started in this field?
- ☐ What do you wish you had known earlier in your career or education?
- ☐ How do people usually start out or get their first opportunities in this field?
- ☐ What are the most important qualities employers or programs look for?
- ☐ What advice would you give to a high school student interested in this career?
- ☐ Are there other professionals or resources you suggest I learn from?

Important final steps after your informational interview

After an informational interview, following up in a professional manner helps reinforce the connection and clarify what you learned as you continue exploring academic or career interests.

- ☐ Send a brief thank-you message expressing appreciation for the individual's time and insight.
- ☐ Review and organize any notes taken during the conversation.
- ☐ Reflect on key takeaways and how they relate to your interests or goals.
- ☐ Follow up on any resources, advice, or contacts they shared.
- ☐ Consider whether additional interviews or research would further support your learning.

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Select your Questions:

Question 1:

Question 2:

Question 3:

Question 4:

Question 5:

Question 6:

Question 7:

Interview Notes:

Question 1:

Question 2:

Question 3:

Question 4:

Question 5:

Question 6:

Question 7: