

Informational Interviews offer a simple and effective way of gaining practical information from experienced professionals that is not easily obtained through regular research.

Informational Interviewing involves engaging with someone at a more advanced level in their career to participate in a focused conversation to receive useful insights about their position, background, career trajectory, the organisation and/or industry they work in and any advice they may have. Well-structured conversations with professionals can inspire exploring career options and clarifying goals through obtaining meaningful career information from first-hand experiences.

Benefits of Informational Interviewing.

Informational interviewing is a powerful way to create new opportunities through connecting with individuals who are either employed in roles you are interested in or are completing programs that you may have an interest in.

Here are some of the benefits:

- **Learn:** you can gain valuable insights by speaking to working professionals and taking an inside look at positions of interest, you can test any assumptions you may have and even learn about other opportunities that align with your skills and experience. This can support you in exploring career options and clarify your goals
- **Build your network:** informal networking can provide a great opportunity to get to know someone that you may not normally meet and while the purpose of the interview is not to gain a job, it can support you in
- **Practice interview skills and build your confidence:** interviewing can be intimidating when you are expected to sell yourself and convince an employer you are worth their investment. Informational interviewing can provide the opportunity to ask insightful questions and practice expressing yourself under less pressure.
- **Uncover new opportunities:** in further developing your professional relationships they may consider offering themselves as a mentor or keep you in mind for future opportunities within their organisation or through their extended networks.

Step 1: Decide what you want to know.

Spend some time brainstorming what is it that you want to learn more about. Are you exploring a specific role and want to know what the job is really like? Do you want to understand how the industry works or what it takes to be successful in this field? Is there a competitive graduate program you are hoping to apply for and have found someone who was successful in gaining and completing that program?

Once you have identified what it is you hope to learn from the experience it is useful to start mapping out your current network. Anyone who you feel confident will provide you with a new perspective or good advice are people you should consider. This could be fellow students, alumni, senior professionals in your area of speciality, people employed at organisations and in positions that interest you.



For more ideas, check the [Employability Edge](#) module: **Develop your Professional Identity**. Activity 3 in the booklet

Explore [Career Snapshot](#) for my discipline.

Step 2: Reach out to request a meeting.

Once you have identified a suitable person that you would like to learn more from, reach out in a friendly and professional way to ask them for some of their time. It is useful if you have a mutual connection that you can reach out to first and ask for an introduction via email/linked in or another form of communication. The use of online networking platforms such as LinkedIn has become increasingly common and convenient for establishing professional connections.

You can make your initial connection using a personalised note to send along with a connection request, but check out their profile first and see if they have an email address listed as this can be a more formal request for an informational interview.

Here is a sample

I hope you're doing well. I am writing because I recently graduated with a marketing major, and I am interested in pursuing a career in sustainability. Given that you are a marketing manager at [organisation name], I hope to ask you some questions about your background and experience. Would you happen to have time in the next week for a coffee? I am also based in Townsville, so we can meet anywhere that is convenient for you. Alternatively, we can have a 30-minute Zoom call if you prefer. Either way, I am eager to get to know more about you and how you got to where you are. Thank you in advance for your time.

Kind Regards

[your name]

Step 4: Develop a list of questions.

Invest time in your preparation. You may already have specific questions that you want to know about the role they are in and the experiences they have had that have supported in further developing their career.

Below are some example questions to help you get started:

A. Questions about the interviewee's present professional experience

- Could you describe a typical day/week in your position?
- What skills and experiences are key to being successful in your position?
- What are the common qualities and attributes of successful colleagues in your position?
- What makes this organisation a good place to work?
- What is most challenging about working in this position?
- How would you describe the organisational culture and management style at your current place of employment?

B. Questions about the interviewee's past professional experience

- What steps did you take to enter this field and what path led you to this position?
- What job search strategy did you adopt to find a position early in your career?
- Is there anything that you would have done differently?
- When you think about your first year in this position, what actions/activities were key in creating success (engaging with colleagues, establishing expectations, work/life balance etc.)?
- Were there any gaps in your training/development that you wish would have been included?

C. Questions about the interviewee's professional future

- What opportunities do you see opening up for you in your position over the next 5 to 10 years?
- What do you see as professionally interesting next steps in your career path?

D. General excellent advice

- What advice would you give a recent or soon-to-be graduate who wants to be successful in this field?
- What advice would you give new graduates about what to look for in terms of orientation, support, workload ect?
- Looking back on your interview, what questions do you suggest candidates ask before taking on a new position? What do they need to know?
- I have a copy of my resume/CV. Would you look at it and let me know your thoughts?
- Can you recommend anyone else who may be willing to talk with me about their career path, with either a background or similar interest to mine?

Step 5: Conduct the interview.

Informational interviews tend to cover four key areas: The present past, future and advice. Interviews tend to be 30-60 minutes in total and can occur in person, via email, online platforms (Zoom), or over the phone.

<i>Focus</i>	<i>Length of time</i>	<i>Topics to discuss</i>
A. Interviewee's Past	10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information about their current responsibilities• Information about the organisation they work for
B. Interviewee's Present	5-6 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information about their academic and professional background• How they found the position• What the interview process was like• If they weren't in this job, what other roles are they interested in
C. Interviewee's Future	5-6 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What opportunities do they see opening up in 5-10 years
D. Interviewee's Advice	5 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What individuals and organisations do they recommend connecting with• Provide critique of job application documents• Resources/activities to pursue if you want to source opportunities in this field

Step 6: Follow-up and reflection.

After the interview make sure you send a thank you note as soon as possible to acknowledge their contributions and express your gratitude for them giving up their time to meet with you. Write a thoughtful note that includes a few sentences that highlight some specific points from your conversation that have had a positive impact on you and your next steps.

Stay connected. Following on from your positive interaction, the next step is to keep in touch and build a stronger professional relationship with them. Keeping the line of communication open is how you remain at the forefront of their mind for potential jobs, professional development and ideas that may be useful for you. Actively engaging with and building your professional network with intentional and like-minded individuals can be invaluable to your future career.



For more ideas, check out the [Employability Edge](#) module: **Graduate Job Search: Proactive Job Search Approaches**

Getting the most out of your Informational Interview.

- Do your research before going in so that you remain professional and come across as a committed individual who is genuinely interested in seeking new opportunities.
- Prepare a clear and succinct introduction about who you are and what you are looking to achieve.
- Be respectful of their time and demonstrate professionalism. Respect their schedule by showing up on time and dressing according to the position you are hoping to learn about in your interview.
- Have a professional and up-to-date LinkedIn profile.
- Stay connected. The interviewee has now become a valuable member of your professional network.



For more ideas, check out LinkedIn Learning: **COURSE Informational Interviewing By: Barbara Bruno**