

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

DON'T FORGET:

They've been in your shoes and remember what it's like to be starting out. Agreeing to the interview is proof they want to support you!



KEY POINTS

Informational Interview: Professional conversation with someone who is working in a career field or job of interest.

BEFORE THE MEETING

Research the person, industry, and the organization before you ask for an informational interview.

Reach out to the individual and include the following:

- ◆ A brief introduction of yourself
- ◆ How you found their contact information and what interests you about their role/experience
- ◆ A request to schedule an informational interview to learn more about X, Y, and Z
- ◆ A meeting location that is convenient for them

Prepare questions ahead of time.

Bring copies of your **resume** and a notepad and pen.

DURING THE MEETING

Arrive early. We suggest 10-15 minutes early.

Restate the reasons for your interest in meeting and what you hope to learn from them.

Ask open-ended yet pertinent questions. Request referrals to other appropriate individuals in the field or in related organizations.

Remember that you are here for information and not to ask for a job or internship.

Take notes and don't forget to ask for a business card.

Note: Asking for general feedback on your resume is okay, but don't provide it in hopes of an opportunity, unless the interviewee offers.

FIRST

"Thank you for taking the time to meet with me."

THEN

"As I mentioned, on the phone/in my email, I'm looking at different careers and gathering information and advice about the field of [____]. [Name] suggested that I should contact you."



AFTER THE MEETING

Send a Thank You note or email within 24 hours.

Keep in touch on occasion to maintain the relationship. People who provide assistance want to celebrate your career success.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

GENERAL

- ◆ Send a confirmation email to your interviewee 24-48 hours in advance.
- ◆ Triple-check spelling and grammar before you send any correspondence.

IN PERSON

- ◆ Make eye contact, smile, breathe.
- ◆ Respect their time. Stick to your agreed timeframe and end the conversation once you meet that time.

ONLINE

- ◆ Respond within 24-48 hours to online correspondence.
- ◆ If using virtual platforms to connect, test your technology and internet connection ahead of time.

WHO DO I??
HOW DO I??

FAQ

WHERE DO I??
WHAT DO I??

WHAT are the benefits?

Build professional relationships while getting the inside scoop on:

- ◆ A typical week and its challenges
- ◆ An organization's culture, structure, and reputation
- ◆ Recommended skill sets, classes, experiences, and resume tips

WHAT about timing?

- ◆ Request to meet for 20-45 minutes
- ◆ Establish your timeframe in advance so that you both know what to expect
- ◆ If applicable, include time zones for video or phone calls

HOW can I find interviewees?

- ◆ On LinkedIn, use the "Find Alumni" function and search groups like Puget Sound's ASK Group
- ◆ Participate in CES events that feature alumni and recruiters
- ◆ Attend local interest groups and meetups, or regional and national conferences

WHERE should this take place?

In-person interviews often convene at a cafe or the interviewee's place of employment that both parties agree upon in advance.

- ◆ If applicable, include time zones for video or phone calls

WHO guides the conversation?

You do!

- ◆ Bring a list of 8-10 questions to ask
- ◆ Don't let your reliance on your questions prevent you from genuinely connecting
- ◆ Find sample questions on CES' *Informational Interview Worksheet*

CAN I directly ask for a job?

No. This conversation is primarily about expanding your network and learning about other people's career paths.

- ◆ Although an informational interview may result in an offer, these are initiated by the professional and not the student

HOW should I invite the person?

Reach out via email, phone, or LinkedIn.

Remember to:

- ◆ Communicate with a professional tone
- ◆ Triple-check for spelling or grammatical errors
- ◆ Thank them for their time and consideration

WHAT should I wear?

Dress like this meeting matters! Business casual is usually a good standard. What type of clothing does business casual entail?

We recommend:

- ◆ Trousers, skirt, or dress
- ◆ Blouse or button-down shirt
- ◆ Make sure your clothing is wrinkle-free

WHY send a Thank You note?

This person has kindly taken their time to share advice and support your career development. Cultivating an appreciative attitude is a vital skill!

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

WORKSHEET

INTERVIEWEE NAME: _____

DATE: __/__/__

JOB TITLE: _____

ORGANIZATION: _____

PUGET SOUND ALUM? YES NO CLASS YEAR: _____

SAMPLE QUESTIONS:

- How did you break into your career and what has been your path to this role?
- How has your major helped you in the workplace?
- How has your liberal arts education helped you as a professional?
- What previous roles prepared you for your current position?
- What is your favorite part of your role?
- What do you like about working for this organization?
- What are the most challenging and most rewarding aspects of your role?
- What is one thing that surprised you about your career?
- What is a common misconception people have about what you do?
- How is the work/life balance?
- What advice do you have for someone who'd like to enter this field?
- What type of professional development is offered by your employer?
- How did you build skill sets to advance in your career?
- What career advice would you have offered your college self?
- What are your main tasks or responsibilities at work?
- What does a typical week look like?
- What kind of education, training, or other preparation is needed to enter this field?
- What advice do you have for an entry-level graduate who is just starting out?
- What was the importance of networking in your field?
- What advancement opportunities exist beyond an entry-level role?
- For your organization/industry, what social networks are relevant?
- Do you have any recommendations for other professionals in this field to contact?
- I'd like to stay in touch. May I reach out to you again or follow-up via LinkedIn?

Add Your Own:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

NOTES