

Tips for Preparing for an Informational Interview

How to prepare for an informational interview:

1. Send a formal letter, call, or email. Introduce yourself and provide information of how you learned of this individual. Request a time to talk either in person or on the phone. Attach or send your resume (for industry/government) or C.V. (for academia) as appropriate.
2. Phone the individual or meet with them in person. The interview can last between 20 minutes to an hour.
3. Send a thank you note within 24 hours stating your appreciation of their time and advice. It is best to send a hard copy, but email is okay if it is the only possibility.
4. If you decide to pursue a career or employment as a result of the interview, it is important to email or call the individual with an update.

Example questions:

- What is the most rewarding and/or toughest part of your position?
- What types of employers hire in this field?
- What kinds of skills are needed in your position?
- What kind of educational preparation or training is needed for this position?
- Do you recommend any professional societies to join? Journals to read?
- How did you enter this field?
- What made you decide to pursue this type of career?
- What training, credentials, or experiences were critical for you to obtain this job?
- What advice do you have for someone starting in this field?
- What are your responsibilities and what do you do on a typical day?
- What are the greatest satisfactions you derive from your work?
- What do you like least about your job or organization?
- What are the most common issues or problems confronting people in your field?
- What are the best sources for learning more about your field?
- What are the most effective techniques for obtaining work in your field/organization?
- How does your research background on _____ come into play in your current position?
- How do individuals learn about job opportunities?
- Do you know anyone else in your field/organization who would be helpful for me to talk to?