

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

Informational interviews are a great way to learn about a career or industry. They can help you gain the “inside scoop” about a profession you might be interested in joining. They may also lead to valuable connections with people in the field that could help you land a job. Finally, informational interviews may help you confirm or rethink your plan.

It's best to conduct at least a few informational interviews with different people and/or organizations. This allows you to get a good sense of what you can expect from a particular field.

INITIATING AN INTERVIEW

Asking a complete stranger for a meeting can be intimidating, but the results are worth it! To alleviate some of the discomfort, you can compose an email to the person you want to interview. Here's an example of how you can reach out in a professional way, without coming across as overbearing:

Hello Mr. Williams,

I am an Austin Peay State University student majoring in psychology. I am interested in working with others in a clinical setting. In researching mental health clinics in the area, I discovered that your organization is providing the kind of services that interest me, and I'm very interested in learning more. Would you be willing to have a brief conversation with me in the next couple of weeks? I would love to ask you a few questions about working in the field. I would be grateful for the opportunity.

Thank you for support!
John Campbell

Keep in mind that not all people/organizations will agree to meet with you. Don't take this personally. Just reach out to another!

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INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

When someone grants you an informational interview, it is important to be prepared with some questions you want to ask them, especially since you're leading the conversation. Your time will be limited, typically 30-60 minutes, so focus on the questions that will help guide your next steps. Here are some example questions to consider:

Career Path

- How did you get started in this industry?
- What do you like most and least about your job?
- What challenges do you face in your role?
- What skills and knowledge are most critical in this industry?

Skills and Experience

- What experiences, skills, and educational background are necessary for a person who wants to do a job like yours?
- What advice would you give to someone just starting their career in this field?
- What kind of professional development is helpful in your current role?

Daily Tasks

- What is a typical day or week like in your current role?
- What kind of decisions do you make in your role?
- Do you work independently or as part of a team?
- How do you interact with customers or clients?

Industry Trends

- What are the current employment prospects in this field?
- What are some of the current trends for this field?
- What are some of the emerging trends in this field?

POST INTERVIEW ACTIONS

After the interview is finished, be sure to send an immediate thank you note and consider extending an invitation to connect on LinkedIn if the conversation went well. Also, if you follow any advice that the interviewee suggests (and have positive results) always let them know what happened. Most people love knowing that they've provided sound counsel. This also gives you another opportunity to build rapport.