

## Informational Interviewing

### Tips for reaching out to potential contacts

- Keep it short: usually less than 150 words
- Emphasize learning: don't directly ask for a job or a favor (resume review) if you don't know them
- Be specific: out of all of the people in the world—why do you want to talk to them as an individual?
- If they don't respond after seven business days, reply to your first message with a friendly nudge that you're interested in talking with them. After another seven business days, you can try one more time, but after that you should move on to other contacts
- Arrange a meeting, phone call, or video chat: building rapport is harder if you just ask your questions in an email
- Send a thank you email within 24 hours: include what details were the most helpful and/or interesting for you and what your next steps will be

### Sample Informational Interview Request (Email)

Dear Ms. Park,

I saw on LinkedIn that you are a Duke alum who is now working at the NC Museum of Art. I'm a current Duke student, and I'm interested in learning about careers combining technology and the arts. I'd like the opportunity to talk with you about your experiences after Duke and how you prepared yourself for your current position.

Would you have 20 minutes next week to meet in person, talk on the phone, or video chat? I am available Monday at noon and Wednesday after 4pm.

Sincerely,  
Anthony Student

### Sample Thank You Note (Email and/or Handwritten Note)

Dear Ms. Park,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me yesterday. I enjoyed our conversation, and I was particularly excited to learn about the flexibility that employees at your company have when choosing projects. I'm going to reach out to your colleague, Mr. Hadad, to learn more about the different roles on his project management team.

Kind Regards,  
Anthony Student

## Tips for conducting the informational interview

- Do your research: look at their background and experiences on LinkedIn and other websites to help guide the questions you'll ask
- Create a list of questions that suit their industry and experience: you may not get through all of the questions, but they can keep the conversation going
- Allow them to shine: ask questions that highlight their stories and allow them to share their expertise
- React to what they say: share similar experiences you've had or ask more in-depth follow-up questions
- Be your best self: they may be deciding if they want to recruit you

## Sample Informational Interview Questions

### Start with these easier warm-up questions

- How did you get started in this field?
- What are the most and least rewarding parts of the job?
- What is a typical day or week like?
- What skills or experiences do you (or your company) look for when hiring?

### Ask questions that inform your decisions

What are you looking for in a job or internship? What career values matter to you? What work environments, working styles, and projects suit you best? Here are a few examples of how your values can inspire the questions you ask.

- **Autonomy:** How much input do you have over the direction of your projects?
- **Learning:** How often do you feel like you're learning new information or techniques?
- **Compensation:** What salary range and benefits could an entry-level position expect to receive?
- **Helping others:** In what ways do you feel your work impacts the lives of others? Does the company host volunteer days with local organizations?
- **Work-life balance:** How quickly are you expected to reply to messages after business hours? What types of hobbies do you pursue in your spare time?
- **Creativity:** How often do employees get to use innovative solutions to problems?
- **Family:** How many of the people in your office have spouses and children? Do they offer family leave or flexible schedules?
- **Harmony:** What is your working environment like, a bustling open office or more of a quiet space?

### Create reasons to follow-up later

- What advice do you have for me?
- What courses or experiences should I seek out before I graduate?
- What sources of information or books should I be reading?

### At the end of the conversation, be sure to ask this question

Based on what you know about me, who else do you think I should talk to?