



## Informational Interview Guide

### What is an informational interview?

It's an opportunity to gather career information from a professional by asking questions related to their job or previous experience. This is a learning experience, not a chance at a job offer. The interview typically spans 30 minutes to one hour. It may take place in-person, through email, or over the telephone. You can conduct an informational interview with anyone – managers, co-workers, supervisors, friends, family, or family friends!

### What are the benefits?

- Gain direction in choosing a career field or preparing for a career change with firsthand, up-to-date, insider information
- Insight to guide future job searches and interviews
- Provides context to help you update your resume to better align with the job you seek
- Allows you to assess your fit for a particular job or field
- Expands your professional network
- Improves your interviewing skills

### What is my role in the process?

By reaching out to a professional contact or Mission team member to conduct an informational interview, you are responsible for directing the interaction:

- Demonstrate your desire to explore career options and learn about the personal skills and attributes that equate to success in the field
- Generate your own list of questions addressing job related topics like work environment, career preparation, a sample day, educational requirements as well as questions about their personal experiences, loves and loathes
- Maintain professional conduct during the entire interview
- Coordinate the scheduling of the interview and related details with respect to their schedule and workload

### How do I connect with someone to interview?

If you already have a connection to someone in your field of interest, reach out! If you “know someone who knows someone,” ask them to make an introduction. The Career Exploration team can always help with internal introductions for current employees.

Conversations with mentors can take place over email, on the phone, or in-person. Usually, conversations and informational interviews are initiated through an introductory email or call. Most people are receptive to this sort of request, particularly when you are polite in your outreach and flexible with timing.



## How do I make the ask?

Generally, an email is the easiest way to get started.

- **Don't skip the subject line.** To ensure an email is not deleted as spam, make use of the subject line. Use this to address your specific need or intention, such as "Seeking Informational Interview with Nurse Manager"
- **Introduce yourself.** Share your current role in Mission and how you got their contact information (through the Career Exploration team, a co-worker, a manager, etc.)
- **State your request.** Explain why you are reaching out for help and describe what you hope to gain from the connection.
- **Keep it simple.** Write a concise email without attachments (other than a resume if desired). Consider your first email to be an invitation to connect.
- **Spelling and grammar count.** Use professional communication skills.
- **OTHER TIPS TO CONSIDER:**  
 Err on the side of formality – first impressions count!  
 Spell check. Spell check. Spell check.  
 Mind your manners. You're asking someone to set aside time for you; don't forget to say please and thank you.

## Informational Interview Checklist

Make the most out of your experience with a little preparation and follow through.

### Before the Interview:

Strategies	To-Do List
Prepare logistics for the interview	<input type="checkbox"/> If meeting in-person – make it convenient for your subject! Bean Shop, the cafeteria, etc., are great places to meet. <input type="checkbox"/> For phone interviews, get number and schedule time to call
Research your contact's job	<input type="checkbox"/> Review information about the department on the Mission website, MissionandMe, MOD, and Scope
Identify your goals	<input type="checkbox"/> Ask yourself, "What do I want to get out of this conversation?"

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Prepare topics of conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Compose a list of questions to ask the contact, based on your interests, your research, and the included “Sample Questions” in this guide</li> </ul>
Be professional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Bring a pen, a pad of paper, your questions list, and an updated resume (if applicable)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If meeting the contact in any sort of clinical environment, ask about appropriate clothing. Professional dress is recommended for all other settings.</li> </ul>

## During the Interview:

Strategies	To-Do List
Getting there on-time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Give yourself enough time to get to your meeting, or to a quiet place for the phone call</li> </ul>
Make introductions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Introduce yourself and your goals for the interview</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ask the contact to share about him/herself</li> </ul>
Be a good conversationalist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Begin asking questions. A good place to start is with “Tell me about your career journey.”</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Remember to participate in conversation, as this is a chance for them to get to know you</li> </ul>
Wrap things up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ask the contact for other names who may provide insight</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> “Do you have any other general career advice that would be helpful for me?”</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Express gratitude for the contact’s time and insight</li> </ul>

## Post-Interview

Strategies	To-Do List
Express gratitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Write and send a hand-written thank you note or thank you email- include a specific piece of the conversation that was especially helpful.</li> </ul>
Nurture your new relationship by maintaining contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Keep in touch through LinkedIn or quick emails, informing the contact of your progress or relevant articles you think they might like.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Keep them informed if you reach out to one of their recommended contacts</li> </ul>



## Sample Informational Interview Questions

These are just examples to get you started- we encourage you to come up with questions specific to the department/field of interest. Try searching the web for “informational Interview Questions Finance” or other field/job title.

### What Work is Like

1. Tell me about your career path and those common in this field?
2. How would you describe a typical day/week?
3. What are the major responsibilities of your position?
4. What kinds of skills and education are required in your position?
5. What do you find most and least satisfying about your job (your loves & loathes?)
6. What are the positive and negative aspects of working in this career field?

### Industry/Career Field

7. What trends or upcoming changes do you see affecting career opportunities in your department?
8. What recommendations can you give to someone looking to enter this field/department?
9. What traits, characteristics and skills do successful people in this field possess?
10. What are the salary ranges for entry-level professionals in this field?
11. What is the work culture in your department? Is it informal or formal? Do people work autonomously or in teams?

### Skills and Experience

12. What skills and educations are needed to enter this field?
13. What qualifications do you seek in a new hire?
14. What kinds of other jobs or experiences are good training for this industry?
15. Which of my skills and work experiences are strong compared to other job seekers in this field?
16. What do you think of my resume? How would you suggest I change it?
17. Can you recommend any courses or training I should have before proceeding further with my job search?
18. What other departments do you know that might be interested in hiring someone with my background?

### More Information

19. Taking into account my skill, education, and experience, what other career paths would you suggest I explore before making a final decision?
20. If you were me, what would you recommend I do?
21. Who else would you recommend I speak with? When I call, may I use your name?



## Thank You Notes

Thank you notes are tools to express gratitude. Writing a thank you note will help build your network and strengthen this new connection.

- Write a thank you note, or email, to your contact within 24 hours of your meeting or interaction whenever possible. Hand written cards are the gold standard, but an email is sufficient if a card is difficult logistically.

### Sample Thank You Note:

Dear Mary,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me, and for your insight about career paths in nursing. Our informational interview helped me gain more in-depth information about the opportunities available, and I know the steps I need to take in order to move forward. I especially appreciate your insight into the need to develop clear boundaries and healthy habits for stress reduction. I feel more confident about reaching my goals thanks to your direction.

I appreciate all your help, and look forward to speaking with you in the future.

Sincerely,

Jo Jobseeker