



## **INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING GUIDE**

Informational interviewing is a valuable networking tool that allows you to explore career paths and foster meaningful relationships within a company or industry that interests you. While it can lead to job opportunities, the primary goal is to learn about the interviewee's role, their organization, and the journey they took to get there. You can (and should) conduct informational interviews throughout your career, even when you are employed!

To complete the informational interview, follow the steps below. Click on each step to learn more:

1. [Reach out to the interviewee to set up a date/time for the interview.](#)
2. [Prepare for the interview.](#) This includes [drafting a list of questions](#) to ask the interviewee.
3. [Conduct the interview professionally.](#)
4. [Send a thank-you email after the meeting.](#)

When you have completed these steps, you will be ready for the final steps (steps 4 and 5) to complete the Micro-Internship.

### **SET UP A DATE/TIME FOR THE INTERVIEW**

With this Micro-Internship, you will be assigned a professional to contact for your informational interview. You should contact them with a professional message similar to the one below to set up a time to meet for your interview:

\_\_\_\_\_

Dear Mr./Ms./Dr. [INTERVIEWEE'S LAST NAME],

Thank you for your willingness to meet with me and answer my questions about your career journey and job opportunities in your industry. I look forward to our conversation.

What is your availability to meet over the next week or two? Here are a few dates/times that would work for my schedule:

- [LIST 3-5 OPTIONS FOR MEETING DATES/TIMES THAT WOULD WORK FOR YOU].

I look forward to hearing from you, and thank you again.

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME]

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Be flexible with your schedule and accommodate their availability if possible. Once you've agreed on a date and time, send a quick email to confirm the date/time/location. You can arrange to meet in person, but it is recommended that you connect by phone or video (Zoom, Teams, etc.).

Offering available times upfront and sending a follow-up message to confirm the details are all ways to demonstrate initiative.

## **PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW**

Before your meeting, do your research on the industry and the individual's role. Prepare a list of thoughtful questions to guide the conversation, focusing on their experiences, insights, and advice.

### **Key Questions to Consider**

- **Career Path:** How did you get started in this field, and is that typical for others? What was most helpful when you were starting out or in the job search process?
- **Work Environment:** What's the professional climate like in your office? What does a typical day look like for you?
- **Rewards and Challenges:** What are the greatest rewards and challenges/ trends of your work?
- **Advancement Opportunities:** What are the typical career paths in your field? What skills are essential for growth and long term success?
- **Advice for Aspiring Professionals:** What education or training would best prepare me for this field? Are there professional organizations I should consider joining?

[Additional sample questions are listed below.](#)

Also prepare ways to reply when they answer your questions that share insight into who you are and what you bring to the table that is relevant to them, their organization and the conversation. It is a give and take and important for everyone to get a sense of one another from a professional standpoint.

The day of the interview, remember to:

- Bring a copy of your resume, as they may ask for it.
- Dress in business casual or professional attire (even if the meeting is virtual)
- If meeting in person, aim to arrive 10-15 minutes early.

## **CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW**

During the interview, engage your interviewee by encouraging storytelling. Ask questions that prompt them to share specific experiences, such as “Can you tell me about a time when...?” or “What was your biggest challenge in this role?” This will help you gain deeper insights into their perspective. Be open to pauses; allowing for silence can lead to more thoughtful responses. Instead of yes/no questions, aim for open-ended inquiries to foster a smoother dialogue.

Keep in mind what you learned in the *Show Up Ready* Skillsline lesson. You are always sending non-verbal messages, even on video, so consider how to convey professionalism, interest, and enthusiasm throughout the interview. You can also practice all the active listening skills you learned in *Be an Active Listener* in Skillsline. Think about how to minimize distractions, use techniques like mirroring, and minimize listening shutdown behaviors.

## **SEND A THANK YOU**

After the interview, be sure to thank your interviewee for their time. Send a follow-up note expressing your appreciation and summarizing any key insights you gained. Reflect on the conversation and consider how their insights might influence your career path. Keep a record of your interviews, including names, dates, and notes, to track your networking efforts and a few notes from each conversation.

## **Sample Questions to Ask:**

### **Career Path and Experience Questions**

- Can you tell me about how you got to your current position at XYZ?
- What attracted you to this industry, and what keeps you motivated most?
- What are some key skills or experiences that have helped you succeed in your role?
- What are some things you know now that you wish you knew when you were starting out and engaged in the job search?
- What does a typical day look like for you? Or week?
- What are the biggest challenges you face in your position or challenges in the industry?

### **Industry Insights**

- What trends are currently shaping the industry?
- How do you see the industry evolving in the next few years?
- What do you think are the biggest opportunities and threats in this field?

### **Advice / Mentorship**

- What advice would you give someone looking to enter this field?
- Are there any resources—books, websites, organizations—you would recommend for someone starting out?

- What common mistakes do you see newcomers making that I should make sure to avoid?

### **Company Culture**

- How would you describe the culture at your organization?
- What do you enjoy most about working there?

## **Questions You Should NOT Ask:**

- What is your current salary?
- Are there any job openings at your company? Can I get a job, can you hire me?
- How do you feel about your boss or coworkers?
- What do you think about your company's reputation?
- Are there any company policies you disagree with?
- How old are you? Do you have children?
- Can you share confidential information about your projects or clients?
- How soon will I be promoted?
- What's your opinion on the company's layoffs or financial issues?
- Are there any personal issues you face at work?
- Can you share negative experiences you've had in your role?
- Why did you leave your last job?
- How do you feel about the leadership in your company?
- Have you ever thought about quitting your job?

Stick to open-ended, thoughtful questions to help maintain a positive and professional tone. Remember this is a conversation, so you should be prepared to share thoughtful tidbits about yourself.