

Informational Interviewing

WHAT IS AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW?

An informational interview is a conversation with a professional in an industry, field, company, or position that interests you and that you would like to learn more about.

WHY SHOULD I DO IT?

An informational interview is a great way to build on your job-related Internet research by learning about the ins and outs of a career or job from someone who actually does it. It is also a great opportunity to make a networking contact in the field.

WHEN SHOULD I DO IT?

At *any point* in your career exploration or job searches. It is helpful when you are trying to decide what field or industry interests you and also when you are certain about the field but not certain what type of position or work environment might be a good fit. You may even continue to do informational interviews once you have a job, either because the job did not end up being a good fit or simply to consider next steps on your career path.

WHO SHOULD I INTERVIEW?

Alumni are a great resource for informational interviewing, and you can connect with them via the UMass Amherst Alumni Advisors Network. You should also reach out to contacts you can make through your family, professors, previous employers, or friends.

WHERE SHOULD I DO IT?

It is best if you can meet at the professional's place of business so you can get a feel for the work environment or meet other colleagues. However, often times it is only possible to conduct these interviews by phone or Skype.

HOW SHOULD I DO IT?

It is easiest to make the initial contact with the person by email (attach a resume if you choose) and follow-up to request a time to speak with them for 20-30 minutes. If you ask for more time than this, the person may not be able to accommodate you.

The purpose of this type of interview is to find out more information, NOT to ask for a job. Typically *you* will ask most of the questions, not the professional. On the following page is a list of questions that might be helpful.

The UMass Alumni Advisor Network is an excellent resource you can use to connect with alumni who have already said they want to speak with students. You can access this from the career tab of the Alumni Association website.

Always send a thank you note or email promptly after the informational interview. You may also wish to request to connect with the person on LinkedIn

Sample Questions for an Informational Interview

How did you begin in this field?

How much education is required for entry into this type of position?

What personal characteristics do you believe are helpful for success in this career? What types of extracurricular experiences would be good background for this job? Are there any professional organizations in the field that would be useful for me to join? To whom do you report? Who reports to you?

How does your work fit into the organization?

What are the opportunities for advancement?

How do you spend a typical day/week?

What is the range of your responsibilities?

Do you primarily work alone or as part of a team?

Are you required to travel? How often?

What is the employment outlook for this field?

How do you see jobs in this field changing over the next five or ten years?

What is most rewarding about your job? What is the most difficult thing?

What advice would you give someone trying to break into the field?

How can I market myself effectively for a position in this field?

How do people usually learn about job openings in your field?

Do you know of anyone else with whom it may be helpful for me to speak?