

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

An *informational interview* is a focused conversation with a professional to gain information about an industry or career and to build a network.

How will the informational interview benefit you?

- Learn about **current information** beyond the knowledge provided in classes
- Gain **confidence** in speaking with professionals in a comparatively low-stress situation
- Connections can transform into a **mentorship**
- Opportunity to **explore** different fields and companies
- Make personal connections among **management-level** personnel
- **Impress** people who may be your future **referrals**

IDENTIFY PROFESSIONALS

Ask for Introductions

Start with your personal network: friends, fellow students, professors, present or former coworkers, supervisors, neighbors, professional organizations.

Attend Career Services events

Check out oakland.edu/careerservices for upcoming events!

Employers attend career fairs, networking receptions and mixers to meet you! Think of these events as a networking tool. Make it a point to connect with an employer, engage in a conversation and ask for a business card. If you're interested in gathering more information at a later time, you'll have their information in your back pocket.

Use the LinkedIn "Find Alumni" tool

Alumni get it. They were once in your shoes. It's strategic to connect with recent OU alum with a similar major that can provide you with "tips and tricks" that will enable you to make smart career decisions as a student.

Check out university.linkedin.com tip sheets and videos to learn how to effectively use LinkedIn.



REQUEST A MEETING

SAMPLE E-MAIL MESSAGE

"Hi, my name is _____ and I'm a student at Oakland University. I received your name from _____. I am in the process of making some decisions about _____ (i.e. *finance, the automotive industry, career advancement, etc.*). I have an interest in _____ and would appreciate an opportunity to connect with you to discuss your experiences, advice, and knowledge of _____. If you are available in the near future, please let me know what works for you!"

PLAN AHEAD

Do your research

Look for news updates, company missions and projects, or community outreach on these helpful resources:

- LinkedIn
- Twitter
- Company website
- Press releases
- Job posting
- Facebook

Arrive 10 minutes early

It is good practice to do a test drive to the location before the day of your interview. Being late is not acceptable.

Dress business professional

Treat it like a real interview.

- Neutral color suit
- Groomed hair
- Minimal perfume/cologne
- Polished Shoes
- Minimal exposed skin
- Padfolio and Pen

Prepare your questions

Assemble a list of questions pertaining to their past work experiences, education and industry. Ask about the day-to-day activities, and general information about their role. These are things they wish they knew as a student! Be prepared to take notes.



FOLLOW-UP

Thank You Note

- Both e-mail and handwritten notes are appropriate
- Send it within 24 hours
- Mention something you discussed in the interview

Connect on LinkedIn!



Sample Informational Interview Questions

ABOUT PREPARATION FOR ENTERING THE WORKFORCE

- If you could do it all over again would you choose the same path for yourself? Why? What would you change?
- How did you secure your job?
- Are you in the same role as when you started or have you transitioned within the organization?
- What advice would you give a person entering this field?
- If you were a student again, what would you do differently to prepare for this job?
- How important are grades or GPA for obtaining a job in this field?
- What education or training is necessary to get this type of job?
- What experience or skill is required?
- Is graduate school recommended? Do you recommend graduate school immediately after grad school or after some work experience?

ABOUT THE INTERVIEWEE'S JOB

- What kind of work is done in this job on a daily basis?
- What are the positive aspects of this job?
- What are the challenges of this job?
- What precisely do you do? What are the duties/functions/responsibilities of your job?
- To what extent is the job what you expected?
- What part of this job do you personally find most satisfying? Most challenging? Least satisfying?

ABOUT THE INDUSTRY

- What are the various jobs available in this field?
- What types of training do companies offer those who enter this field?
- In what ways is your occupation changing?
- How is the economy affecting this industry?
- What is the employment outlook like in your career field? How much demand is there for people in this career?
- How quickly is the field growing?
- What are the growth areas of this field?

GENERAL ADVICE AND REFERRALS

- Can you suggest some ways a person could obtain the experience necessary to enter this field?
- What is the best way to obtain a position that will get me started in this occupation?
- What do you wish you'd known before you entered this field?
- What are the major qualifications for success in this occupation?
- What are the most important skills for a position in this field?
- What courses should I be taking?
- How can I assess whether or not I have the skills needed for a position such as yours?
- With the information you have about my education, skills, and experience, what other fields or jobs would you suggest I research before I make a final decision?
- Do you know of other people whom I might contact who have jobs similar to yours?