



Information Interviews

Learn how to connect with professionals through information interviews.

An “information interview” is a great way to tap into someone else’s experience. Quite simply, it is a conversation in which you, the student, ask questions of a professional who seems to have charted a course similar to one you would like to take. Your goal is to get accurate, current information about the work so that you can make informed career choices, and express yourself well in applications and interviews. And, yes—generally, if you are polite and professional, people will want to talk with you!

Making Your Request

It may seem a little daunting to think of asking someone you don’t know for information about work that interests you. Take heart. Generally, people are keen to help, particularly if you are polite and professional in your approach, and if you can suggest a “graceful exit” for them or alternatives if they are not in a position to speak with you directly.

STEP 1:

Your 30 second introduction

It’s important to be polite and succinct in your introduction, and to give a clear, concise picture of yourself as it relates to the information that you think the person could provide. Clearly introduce yourself stating your complete name and your connection to them. Then, briefly summarize your background and indicate what you are interested in.

Example:

“Hi My name is Ashley Smith, and I’m in my third year of studying psychology at Queen’s. My neighbor suggested that I get in touch with you when I mentioned my interest in marketing, and in particular sports marketing. I’ve done a summer internship in marketing and am keen to learn more about your perspective on the field.”

STEP 2:

Your request for information

Briefly state your request, and suggest ways they can offer you information without spending a lot of time with you. You’re asking them to give you a valuable commodity—their time. Therefore, be courteous and find a convenient time for your new contact. Here’s one way to ask for help:

Top 3 reasons why people will spend time talking with you

- 1. Most people do not want to say no; in fact, they would rather be helpful,** especially if you’re respectful and don’t take too much of their time. You are asking for something they can give you—information. As long as you are looking for information—and not a job—you’re well on your way to talking with them.
- 2. Many people like to reward initiative.** As they see you in your quest for good career information, they may recognize their “younger self” and want to help you find information that they wish they had found when they were beginning.
- 3. You are asking them to talk about their favourite subject—theirself.** That’s a compliment to them, and people respond well to endorsement.



Example:

"I understand that you are busy, but as I investigate work that's done in this area, I wonder if you could offer more in-depth information about the field? If you are available for a 20-minute conversation sometime, or a phone chat, that would be great. If you are not available, perhaps there are sources that you recommend—publications I should read, organizations or associations I should connect with or people I should contact. Thanks very much. I appreciate your help."

Leaving a message? Repeat your name, telephone, and email, and perhaps indicate that you'll contact them again in a few weeks.

How to make a good impression

- Dress appropriately for the work environment and arrive five minutes early.
- Take along prepared questions. Ask if you can take notes; if you do, pay attention to the person.
- Give a mini-introduction of yourself to briefly recap why you came to speak with them. Then, let the conversation begin.
- Remember—keep to the time limit.
- At the end of the meeting, express thanks. Then follow up with a concise thank you letter. In it, acknowledge something you learned about the field or the work, and perhaps indicate what you've done to act on their suggestions.
- Stay in touch! Based on what you've learned you can follow up by sharing information and contacts of interest to them as well.

Making Your Request

STEP 1: Research

Read a little about the work using resources at Career Services. It's a good idea to keep a file including articles from newspapers, magazines, the internet and company literature as well as notes taken while watching TV programs or listening to radio specials.

STEP 2: Prepare some questions

To make sure you're able to ask meaningful questions about essential factors in the other person's work, you need to do some advance research. By doing so, you'll be professional in your approach and you'll convey respect.

Sample Questions—for Information Interviews:

1. What interests or passions keep you going in the work?
2. What skills are essential in doing the work?
3. What are your work/life fit preferences (values and needs) that are met in this work?
4. If you were going to start again in this field of work today, what would you do to be really ready? (What training and experience would you need to have? What would be great ways to get it?)
5. What professional associations do you rely on to keep up to date? What publications, organizations or people do you suggest I contact for more information?



6. Where do you foresee growth or change in the work/field in the next few years?
7. What's a typical day, week, month or project like?
8. What is fun, or frustrating, about what you do?
9. What other fields could someone work in with this training and these skills and interests?
10. What advice would you have for me?

Be persistent!

Remember, having professional conversations is a skill that you will get better at with practice. As you connect with more people, you will also keep growing your network, and getting more information about fields of interest. One day, YOU just might be the person who a student is asking questions!

Want to learn more? Check out the [Networking tipsheet](#), attend the [Networking workshop](#), or read books like *Highly Effective Networking* in the [Career Services Information Area](#).