

# INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

Informational interviews are great ways to gather information for exploring career options. They generally involve a 30-minute conversation with professionals about their careers and what they do in their job. Requesting and conducting informational interviews is about networking and gathering information about a particular industry or occupation—it is not about asking for a job.

## Why conduct an informational interview?

Conducting informational interviews will enable you to:

- Gain a better understanding of a career field and the work it involves.
- Learn about new and interesting careers.
- Acquire knowledge about a company at which you are interested in working.
- Clarify your career goals.
- Learn more about the company in which you already work and other departments that might be of interest to you.
- Gain a perspective on employment trends and opportunities.
- Learn what skills are needed for a job.
- Gather ideas for selecting relevant courses and degree programs.
- Make contacts and network in the field or company in which you hope to work.

## How do you ask for an informational interview?

Send a message through email or LinkedIn. A sample message:

Dear Mr. Smith,

I am a sophomore at WPI studying biomedical engineering. I saw through LinkedIn that you graduated from WPI and have been working in the biomedical engineering field for five years. I am writing to inquire about meeting or speaking with you over the phone for about a half hour to talk about your career path and your experience working at UMass Memorial Lab Institute. Please let me know if you are able to meet or talk with me and, if so, what time would be convenient for you. I can be reached at sally@wpi.edu or (123) 456-7890.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Sally Stone



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## Who do you ask for an informational interview?

Reach out to people you know or have some connection to who work in a desired field or who had the same major as you:

- Friends or family members.
- Friends of your parents.
- Your friend's parents.
- Your professors.
- Your boss/supervisor at an internship.
- WPI alumni (including friends who have recently graduated and are working in desired field or company).
- Contacts in Career Shift with job titles of interest to you
- Anyone you know from experiences and events (for example, if you are a BME major and want to be a doctor, ask your own physician for an informational interview).
- Someone in your community.
- Members in your fraternity/sorority, athletic team, and other organizations, including WPI students and alumni and members from other schools
- Professional association contacts.

**LinkedIn** is an extremely helpful tool for finding professionals with whom you can conduct informational interviews. You should establish a profile, join professional groups in your field, and run advanced searches to find WPI alumni or professionals who are connected to someone you know well (you can then ask for an introduction). The page [www.linkedin.com/alumni](http://www.linkedin.com/alumni) has a great search feature for identifying WPI alumni. Be creative in your searches and network, network, network.



## Informational Interview Worksheet

The worksheet below will help you prepare and stay organized for your informational interview.

Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Company Name/Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Visit Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Questions to Ask:

1. _____	5. _____
_____	_____
_____	_____
2. _____	6. _____
_____	_____
_____	_____
3. _____	7. _____
_____	_____
_____	_____
4. _____	8. _____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Notes from Meeting: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



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## Sample Questions

1.	What are the ideal qualifications for someone in this field related to education/training/skills/experience/personal attributes?
2.	Which personality traits make it easier to do this work well?
3.	How did you decide to work in this field? For this company?
4.	What is your background? Do you have an area of specialization?
5.	What do you like/dislike most about this job?
6.	How much personal freedom do you have in this job (supervision)?
7.	If you had to do it over again, what would you do differently?
8.	What is a career path for someone in this field?
9.	Are there career options (in this or related fields) that open up as a result of this position?
10.	Do you feel it is more beneficial to go to graduate school or obtain work experience and then go to graduate school?
11.	What degree(s) are most helpful for this job?
12.	What salary ranges exist in the field?
13.	Is the field growing? What are the various types of employment in this field?
14.	How secure is employment in this company/field?
15.	Are there advantages to working for small or large firms?
16.	What is the typical hiring process? Is that process standard procedure within the industry?
17.	What is a typical workday like? A work week? A year?
18.	Do you work under a lot of pressure? Is that expected?
19.	How many hours a week do you work? Is it common to take work home?
20.	Do you travel?
21.	Is relocation expected?
22.	Are there other responsibilities (civic or social obligations) that are expected?
23.	Are there any publications related to this field (trade magazines, etc.) that would help me learn more about it?
24.	Are there professional associations related to the field that I could join as a student?
25.	Can you recommend other professionals I could talk with about the field?
26.	What advice can you give me as a graduating student going into this field/company?
27.	What kinds of internships/work experience will benefit my candidacy?
28.	What buzz or key words are helpful to have on my resume?

For additional questions, research “informational interview” on the Internet, as there are many great external resources on this subject.

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