



INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

An informational interview is a networking strategy in which you ask a professional questions about their industry or job position. While this is not only a great way to gain valuable knowledge about a career field you are exploring, informational interviews can also lead to internship or job opportunities! Take a look at the tips below to make the most out of this strategy.

Make a list of organizations you would like to learn more about.

- Who are the big names in your field?
- Are you interested in a small or large organization; federal or state agencies; nonprofit or for profit?

Locate people to talk to who have positions of interest to you.

- Start with your immediate relationships (friends, family, roommates, professors). Then ask everyone you know if they know of anyone working in your field of interest.
- Attend Career Center [events](#) (i.e. career fairs, networking events) to meet new professionals.
- Participate in college- and major-specific lectures and events. You never know who will be present!
- See more tips/resources for locating professionals to the right.

Make your introduction.

- State who you are, the purpose of your message (or phone call), and how you are connected.
- Be clear about what you want: "May I have 15-20 minutes of your time to learn more about...(your organization, the your job, your career path, etc.). I am trying to learn more about XX industry as I am considering it as a career path."

Treat this like a real interview.

- Try to make a good impression. This interview could lead to something else, so always put your best foot forward.
- Show up early, [dressed professionally](#). Show appreciation for their time.
- At no point should you ask for a job, because it can discount the fact that the professional is trying to share their career story with you, including tips and strategies.

Ask questions specific to the industry – do your homework!

- Demonstrate your background knowledge by asking questions related to current events in the field. Use the resources to the right to read more about your field of interest prior to requesting an informational interview.
- Ask questions about qualifications in the field. You may be able to pinpoint a skill that will be in demand in the future and gain that skill now to make yourself more marketable.
- Ask questions about the most popular hiring methods in the field (i.e. networking, professional associations, etc.).

Follow up.

- Send a short thank you email and confirm that it is ok to stay in touch.
- Now, stay in touch with the contact (through email, LinkedIn, twitter). Send him/her a message periodically (if you are in a job search).
- Let your contact know when you land a position. Don't forget to pay the favor forward by offering to help the professional in the future.

Research organizations/career fields BEFORE your informational interview to develop better questions.

Start your reading research with:

- [OOH](#), career title dictionary
- [Glass Door](#)
- [Vault](#)
- [GuideStar](#) (nonprofits)
- Best places to work in [federal government](#)
- [Indeed](#) employee/employer reviews
- [LinkedIn](#), research top ranked organizations

Locate professionals to interview:

- [UMD Terrapins Connect](#) connects you with alumni who have volunteered to answer your questions.
- Review UMD alumni's career path with the [LinkedIn Alumni Tool](#).
- Request an informational interview from your favorite UMD instructor, campus researcher, or University administrator.
- [Connect with BSOS alumni](#) on the LinkedIn group to post general questions or send direct messages.



INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING: SAMPLE QUESTIONS

If you are seeking a job or internship opportunity.

- What next steps might you suggest for a student like me who is just beginning in the field?
- Where is the best place to stay informed of opportunities with your organization?
- Were there search strategies that you found helpful when you were searching for an internship?
- Where did you start your career? How did you obtain that position?
- I am starting my long distance search and I feel overwhelmed. What worked for you when you left College Park and landed a position in NY?
- What do you think are the important skills to highlight on a resume for an entry-level position in this field?
- What strategies do you think most employers use in this field to bring in new talent (i.e. bring them in as interns, post opportunities on website, etc.)?

Exploring career options.

- Can you tell me about your career path and how you got to where you are?
- What is a typical day like as a ___?
- What do you like about your job? Are there any downsides?
- Is there anything you found surprising in your first year of work?
- What is the balance between working independently (e.g., with data) versus with others?
- Do you find your work rewarding? Are you asked to work overtime often?

Talking with UMD alumni.

- Were there any classes or experiences you had at UMD that better prepared you for the field?
- Are there experiences you wish you had gained?
- Was your major directly related to your first position after graduation?
- When searching for your first position, what strategies did you find most helpful?
- Are there industry-specific professional associations that you recommend joining?
- Do you think an internship in this field would be helpful to test out the job duties?
- Did you have a faculty member that you worked closely with?

Talking with an organization who is seeking to fill a position.

- I see that x, y, and z skills are important for the XX internship position, can you tell me any additional skills you look for?
- What is a typical day like in the XX position?
- Is there a hiring timeline for the XX position?
- Is there a skill set that most applicants are missing?
- Are there certain school or previous job experiences that best qualify students for this internship program?
- How do you usually advertise XX position?
- Can you tell me more about your application process?

It takes a lot of courage to approach a professional with questions, but the benefits are worth the risk! Take a deep breath, be yourself, use the tips and questions above to prepare, and you will make a great impression. Eighty percent of jobs go to someone with a connection to the organization, and informational interviews will help you to make those connections.

[Review additional questions](#) that can be used when networking and/or create your own. Get started today!