

Informational Interviewing

Informational Interviews are 20-60 minute long conversations for you to ask questions, listen, and learn about organizations, career paths, and industry trends from a professional in a field of interest. This is also an excellent way to expand your network in a particular industry, and gain more nuanced information about a career or organization.

This is not the same as a job interview, so use the time to listen and learn.

When you reach out to a potential contact, communicate these three things:

1. Why you are reaching out: What would you like to learn about them? It is best to be brief in your explanation.
2. Why THEY are the best person for you to learn from: What makes them unique in their field? What about their career, position, or work intrigues you?
3. What you are asking for: How much time will you need? Do you want to meet in person, through Skype, or by phone? Offer times to meet, but indicate that you can adjust to their schedule. Ask for 20-30 minutes of their time.

Sample Informational Interview Request (Email)

Dear Dr. _____,

I am a current (PhD Student/Postdoc) at UCLA in the Bioengineering Department, and I came across your name while browsing the UCLA LinkedIn alumni group. Over the past 6 years my research has been focused on the use of nanotechnology in medical devices. Although this work has been gratifying, I am now seeking to shift my career into science policy.

If possible, I would like to learn more about your work in science policy at AAAS. The opportunity to learn about your career trajectory, and any advice you might be willing to share regarding steps I could start taking now would be greatly appreciated. If you are available for 20-30 minutes in the next month we could meet over coffee (my treat), Skype, or talk by phone. I'm typically available Monday-Wednesday 9am-12pm, but am happy to meet when it's most convenient for you.

Thank you and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Jillian Engineer



Helpful Tip

Do not take it as a rejection if the contact offers to chat via phone when you requested an in person meeting. Remember their schedules are busy.