

# Informational Interviews

An informational interview is an informal conversation, usually lasting 20–30 minutes, with a person working in a job, organization, or field that interests you. It is not a job interview, and its purpose is not to find job openings, though connecting through an Informational Interview might give you an edge. Rather, it's a way to explore a given field, and it can also give you an opportunity to get an inside look at an organization where you may want to work in the future.

While it may feel awkward to request an informational interview, most people enjoy taking a bit of time out of their day to reflect on their professional life and give advice to someone interested in their field, especially if they are individuals you already have a connection to or relationship with (think: Chatham alumni, someone who works in the organization you are interning with, or a contact shared with you by a faculty or staff member).

## Establish your goals for the interview

- What do you want to gain from the conversation? Industry insight? Understanding of what a specific job entails? Job search advice in a particular field?
- You may be more likely to receive a positive response from the person if you can clearly communicate what you hope to gain from the meeting

## Decide who you want to interview

- Consider asking for an interview with someone in your industry, field, or a company that interests you
- Conduct your research to find out more about them

## Ask for the interview

- After identifying a professional you'd like to connect with, prepare a message to ask the person you want to interview
- Choose a method that allows you to message them privately, such as email
- Avoid using personal social media profiles to ask for the meeting (i.e. Instagram)
- Send a professional and polite message that clearly states why you're contacting them.

## Some examples of people you may have an informational interview with include someone who:

- Chatham Alum who graduated with the same or similar degree
- Works at a company where you may seek employment
- Has experience in your career path or industry
- Attends a university where you may seek admission
- Teaches higher education programs related to your career interests
- Holds certifications or credentials that you're interested in pursuing
- Has an education or professional background similar to what you have

# Requesting an Informational Interview

## Template Email Requesting Informational Interview

Subject: [Your name]—Informational Interview request

Dear [Name of recipient],

[Write about how you heard about the company or recipient]. I find your work incredibly interesting and would like to know more about what you do.

I would greatly appreciate learning about [insert what you want to know]. I know you're probably busy, but would you be available for an informational interview [suggest at least one date and time]? Let me know if you can meet at one of those times or if there's a better time for you.

I appreciate your time and thank you in advance.

Sincerely,  
[Your name]  
[Your contact information]

## Request for Informational Interview Example

Subject: Carson Cougar—informational interview request

Dear Rachel Carson,

My name is Carson Cougar and I'm a student at Chatham University majoring in Environmental Science. I received your name from Professor Ida Expert.

I'm doing some career research for Environmental Field Technician positions, which I'm thinking about pursuing after school. I'm hoping you could meet with me for 20 to 30 minutes for an informational interview to discuss your background and get your perspective on what skills and experiences I should be prioritizing. If that would be possible, please let me know when that might be convenient for you.

Thank you and I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,  
Carson Cougar  
(412)-365-1209  
carson.cougarechatham.edu

## Here is a general format to follow when conducting your informational interview and questions you can ask:

### Warm Up:

- How did you get your start in this field?
- What's it like working at your company?
- What projects are you working on right now?
- What's your opinion on [exciting development in the industry]?

### Get the Insight You're After:

- How did you choose this company or position over others in your field?
- What is the most rewarding thing about working in this industry? The most challenging?
- How do you think I can best leverage my previous experience for this field?
- What do you wish you had done differently when you first started at your company?
- What job search advice would you give to someone in my situation?

### Tap Into Their Network:

- Could you recommend a couple more people for me to speak with to learn more about X field/organization/industry?
- Is there anyone else you would recommend that I speak with?

### ...And Don't Forget the Follow-up!

Be sure to send a thank-you email (or even a handwritten note!) thanking the person you met with for their time and insight.