

BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

Below are guidelines to help you before, during, and after each informational interview.



Before:

- Assess your skills, interests and abilities
- Identify an industry and/or target companies you'd like to learn more about
- Research the company using a variety of resources, including:
 - Company website, materials, information
 - Other sources (glassdoor.com, vault.com, Occupational Outlook Handbook, etc.)
 - Your network
- Choose the kinds of information, advice, and referrals you would like to collect and generate a list of questions that will help you gain that information (see list of sample questions later in this resource)
- Prepare to dress appropriately, making sure you have the right outfit well before the meeting takes place
- Develop your 30 second commercial and practice it
- Formulate and practice answers to several commonly asked interview questions in case they come up in the informational interview
- Identify (and research) the person/people within the company you would like to talk with and reach out to set up a meeting (see sample script for asking for meeting below)
- Practice informational interviews with someone already in your network
- Have someone in your network introduce you or make a referral to a targeted person, in advance of you reaching out to them if possible
- Contact the targeted person and include the following key information in your "ask"
 - Your name and your commercial
 - Connections you have in common
 - Ask to meet (be as SPECIFIC as possible in terms of date, time, location, and types of questions you would like to ask). Emphasize that you are not asking them for a job, but exploring career options
- Once a meeting is agreed upon, confirm the details, exchange contact information (cell phone numbers) in case something comes up last minute, and say "THANK YOU"
- Make sure you know exactly where to go and when to meet: show up early to avoid stress and bad impressions.
- Create the agenda for the meeting, which should include the following elements:
 - Introduction — using your 30 second commercial — and thank them
 - Build rapport by talking about common connections, interests, etc.
 - Re-statement of the purpose of the meeting (gathering information, not asking for a job)
 - Ask questions to help you gather information, advice and referrals
 - Identify next steps
 - Say thank you and end the meeting on time
- Set a goal of conducting 2-5 informational interviews per week

During:

- Follow the agenda you developed for the meeting
- Make a strong first impression: show your calm confidence, make eye contact, shake hands, etc.
- Ask permission to take notes
- Start with easy questions, but get to the meaty ones fairly quickly
- Bring a resume, but only share it if they ask for it
- When appropriate, don't be afraid to "soft sell" yourself by sharing your knowledge, experience, insights, enthusiasm
- Ask who else they might recommend you talk to in order to learn more about certain things you covered
- Ask permission to stay in touch after the meeting (via email, LinkedIn, etc.)

After:

- Within 24 hours, send a thank you note. Thank them for their time and information — make specific reference to topics of interest
- Make notes of what you learned (helpful and not) and ask yourself how these learnings may change the ways you think, act, or feel, including what types of jobs, companies, etc. you might pursue moving forward
- Follow-up on any items discussed, especially any people they referred you to.
- As you complete follow-up tasks, reach back out and update them
- Keep the connection active by establishing a contact plan (every week, other week, monthly, etc.)