

URI Career Services ♦ 228 Roosevelt Hall ♦ Kingston, RI 02881 ♦ (401) 874-2311 ♦ <http://career.uri.edu>

*Clarify career objectives, explore career fields and specific companies,
expand your professional network, develop leads and... perhaps land a job!*

What is an Informational Interview?

An informational interview consists of having a conversation with someone who is knowledgeable in a job or career that you want to learn more about. It is not an interview for a job but an interview to gather information.

Why use informational Interviews?

As you gather information through this method, your views and beliefs about your career decisions will solidify. The more experience you have talking with people in careers that interest you, the better prepared you'll be to make an informed career decision.

- Collect information about a career, occupation, or organization that interests you
- Learn about job opportunities and career paths in a given field
- Develop a network of contacts with key people
- Enhance your confidence by speaking to a variety of professionals
- Visit people in various work settings to gain insight into different environments
- Find hidden job markets

Where Do I Find Contacts?

A good informational interview starts with research. After you decide what areas you are interested in, you need to figure out who has the information you need. Start with a list of people you know: professors, former teachers, friends, neighbors, alumni, co-workers, supervisor, former/current employer, and even family members! Tell them what you are interested in. Consider them as a potential interviewee and ask for appropriate referrals.

Utilize the RodyNet Career Mentors online (<http://career.uri.edu>). It is a network of URI alumni/friends giving alumni and current URI students the chance to talk or email someone in an industry, position or geographic location of interest. Speak to a URI career advisor for more information.

Newspapers offer a variety of possible leads. Look at the classified listings for organizations and names of people in areas that interest you. Wait a month after the listing appears before trying to set up an informational interview. This way you can gain insight into who they hired and why. Newspapers also cover local and national business activity. Each event reported gives you a reason to call that particular business and demonstrate your knowledge and active interest in the business community.

Check out the Telephone Yellow Pages. Use the index to search for headings of obvious interest and browse other sections to find connections to your interests.

Professional associations can provide possible informational interview contacts along with trade papers and newsletters. To find these organizations look up your field of interest in the [Encyclopedia of Associations](#) in the Career Resource Center or search online.

The Career Resource Center (Roosevelt 221-223/874-2311) is stacked with many valuable resources to research appropriate contacts. See the Career Resource Assistant for help. Public libraries maintain collections of directories as well.

How Do I Make the Contact?

Why should people, especially strangers, be willing to give you their valuable time and information? Most people like to help others and will be flattered that you asked for their advice. Be appreciative and thank them. As you set up your informational interview, be sure to say something such as, "Thank you. You're very nice to take the time to do this."

Calling people is the easiest way to connect with contacts. You may be a bit nervous, but remember you have nothing to lose. Write out your ideas and rehearse what you want to say. Sound upbeat and positive. Briefly introduce yourself, explain how you received their name and ask if they have a few minutes to talk. *If No*, ask for a good time to call back. *If yes*, explain that you'd like to set up a 30 to 45 minute information interview. Stress that you are not applying for a job, but rather seeking career information. Set a date, place and time. Ask for directions and make sure you give your name and telephone number in case the person needs to reschedule.

What Do I Do in the Interview?

Before the interview, decide what it is you want to gain. Prepare a list of questions and bring a note pad to jot down responses. Arrive promptly, give a strong handshake and introduce yourself with confidence. If someone recommended this interviewee, mention the person's name, it's usually a good icebreaker. Listen carefully and maintain eye contact. Towards the end of the interview, you may want to ask if they will take a look at your resume and give some constructive feedback. Be sure to close on a positive note. Thank them for their time and information. Here are some sample questions to ask:

What do you do as a ...?

How do you spend the day/ week?

What kinds of problems do you deal with or decisions do you make?

What do you find most/least satisfying about your job?

Tell me about this career field.

What are the positive/negative aspects of working in this field?

How did you enter the field, what has been your career path?

What are typical entry-level jobs? Is there a definite career path in this field?

What are the "hot issues" in this field today?

What is it like to work in this organization?

How does your job fit into the organization/department?

What are the toughest challenges you face in this organization?

What is the corporate climate? How do you balance company demands with everyday life?

Can you give me advice on how to break into this field?

What skills, education and experience are required?

Can you suggest anyone else whom I could contact for additional information?

What are the professional journals/associations in this field? Do you participate?

If I wanted to apply for a job, whom should I contact in this organization?

What's the Best Way to Follow-Up?

Within a week of the interview, send a short, typed or hand written (only if you have nice penmanship) thank you letter to the person you interviewed. If the career still interests you, say it in your letter. Your thank you letter leaves a positive reminder of you.