

# How To Ask For an Informational Interview

Written by [Kristin S. Johnson](#) on May 19, 2013 · [6 Comments](#)



We all like to be appreciated for what we do well. When someone asks me a question about resumes or other career topics, I'm always happy to answer, or at least refer the person to where they can get the answer. I like to think this is because I'm a giving, altruistic person. But, in all honesty, there's ego involved, too. Knowing someone appreciates my expertise makes me want to talk. (My friends will confirm this.)

That is why I recommend people conduct informational interviews. If you ask someone to offer their advice, showing respect for their success, they will likely want to share. Is it only that we like to pay it forward? Sometimes, but I'm not unique; people like to hear themselves talk about the things they know. Either way, having a specific agenda with pointed questions will get you further in your networking efforts than the vague request of asking your connection out to coffee.

So, how do you set up an informational interview? It can be hard to ask for a favor. Many job seekers procrastinate on setting up informational interviews or networking meetings because they are afraid of being rejected. If you follow these guidelines, you'll be much more likely to get a positive response.

## 1. **Consider the mode of communication**

People often have different ways they prefer to be contacted. Some people are phone people; others are more likely to respond via email. Judge which mode of communication your contact might prefer, but try another if your request goes unanswered. You might try going through a contact's assistant if she is hard to reach.

## 2. **Use this template**

However you make contact, your message should contain the following:

- Give a polite salutation. "Dear so-and-so," or "Hello what's-your-name" are safe bets.
- Tell your contact where you know her from, or if you have a mutual connection.

- Inform him of your objective: to meet, talk via phone, or simply exchange emails.
- Be clear that you want a brief meeting to discuss a specific set of questions, and that you are not inquiring about a job or seeking feedback on your resume.
- Provide a hint of what the questions are about, i.e. you'd like to know more about the inner-workings of XYZ Company, you're interested in joining ABC association and would like to know about her experience, etc.
- Provide two or three options for your meeting so that it is easy for him to check his calendar and schedule the appointment in his return email.

Here's an example you can modify for your own use:

A good friend of mine, Joe Blow, M.D., suggested that I contact you. I recently told him that I have always been intrigued by the work that you do. I have researched your company extensively and am very impressed with the comprehensive approach you take with patient safety and satisfaction.

As someone who is considering a transition from my work in research into to your field, I'd love to talk with you about courses I'm thinking of taking to make me a more desirable candidate. Your insights would be extremely helpful as I plan my future career path. Just to be clear, I'm not looking to ask you to hire me, or to have you look at my resume, but just to learn from your expertise.

Would it be possible to meet with you for 15 minutes to gain further insights into the industry, as well as career path advice you might have?

Thank you for considering it,

Mary Jane

### 3. **Follow up**

Give the person a few days or even a week to respond. If you don't hear back right away, don't be surprised. You may need to reach out again, or try a different mode of communication. I recommend avoiding Mondays and Fridays for these attempts, as they tend to be the busiest work days and messages from these days can easily fall through the cracks.

Also, don't focus solely on one or two connections. You want a list to work through so that you aren't being too persistent with one person. If you feel like it's time to move on, trust your gut.

Be sure to opt-in to [my blog](#), so that you don't miss more valuable tips for during your informational interview. I'll be covering questions you will want to ask soon.