

Discover your options

Careers, Internships & Employment

Questions for Informational Interviews



The purpose of an informational interview is to research a field of work that may interest you. It is a way to gain information on employment trends, skills required by employers, as well as confirm whether it is an area of work you are interested in pursuing or not.

As you are not interviewing for a job, it's up to you to ask the questions. Therefore, always go to an informational interview well prepared with questions. Even if it is very informal or spontaneous, you will get much more out of it if you put time into thinking about what you want to know.

- Can you recommend two other people that I should speak to?
- Would you mind looking at my CV and telling me if you think it's appropriate for the sector?
- What steps would you recommend I take at this point?
- Are there related fields/jobs you could recommend I look into if there are few jobs available within my chosen career path?

To identify businesses or industries you could approach, you can use Careers, Internships & Employment Employer information, the Yellow Pages (www.yellowpages.co.nz); the business and situations vacant pages of community and major daily newspapers, trade/industry magazines, the Internet or your own contacts – family, friends, clubs and associations you belong to.

Once you have identified some places to approach, do some research via their websites and/or look at any company/organisation literature so you are familiar with what they do prior to visiting them.

When you contact the company/organisation, find out the name of the Human Resources Manager and/or the name of the person who would be appropriate for you to speak to. You can then contact the appropriate person (via email, telephone or in writing) to ask whether they would be available to meet with you for 15–20 minutes to discuss your questions.

The following questions are a guide to some of the points you may want to discuss with the people you approach. Remember: use open ended questions that elicit more than a “yes” or “no” answer.

- How did you get into this type of work / this industry?
- What kind of background education, skills and experience do people have who work in this field?
- What is a typical day in this job really like? What do you most enjoy about the work that you do? Least enjoy?
- What are the biggest challenges facing your sector? How do you think they will be tackled?
- Where do you see the opportunities for people to enter this sector now? What gaps need to be filled?
- What is the best way of finding out about jobs in this field?
- Do you know of anyone with a similar background to mine that has entered this type of work? Could I meet them?

Adapted from the work of Murray McLachlan and others.

