

# FAQs About Informational Interviewing

## What are the goals of informational interviewing?

- To network and make connections
- To learn about specific jobs, career paths, and developments in the legal world
- To develop professional relationships that will be the basis of continuing conversations
- **NOT** to interview for a job

## What topics should I plan to discuss during an informational interview?

- Your contact's job, organization, or area of law
- Personal career goals and advice
- Ethical or professional dilemmas
- Legal trends and the nature of the legal market
- Issues of concern to the legal practice

## What are some questions that I could ask during an informational interview?

**Ask about your contact's background :**

- How did you obtain your job?
- What summer jobs or internships did you have while you were in law school?

**Ask about your contact's current position :**

- Have you worked on any interesting projects lately?
- What is a typical day like for you?
- What are some advantages and disadvantages of this type of practice?

**Ask about any advice your contact may have for you :**

- What kind of training is necessary for this area of law?
- Are there any law school courses that you found to be particularly helpful?
- What is the best way to gain the skills and experience necessary for this type of job?
- What type of person does your organization look for when hiring someone in this field?
- Are there any professional associations that you would recommend that I join?
- Are there any professional journals, newspapers, or other publications that you would recommend that I read?
- What would be the best way for me to approach prospective employers?
- Do you have any suggestions on how I could improve the content and appearance of my resume?

**Ask about future networking possibilities :**

- Do you know of anyone else in this field whom I should contact?
- Would you mind if I used your name when I contact him / her?



## **What are the steps I should take to obtain and attend an informational interview?**



1. Identify potential interview contacts
  - Make lists of people whom you already know and people whom you would like to know
  - Ask your current contacts if they know anyone who would be interested in giving you advice and information
  - Visit CSO to get referrals to alumni and other potential contacts
  - Research attorneys using Martindale and other legal directories
2. Set up the interview
  - Get in touch with your contact by phone, e-mail, or letter
  - Introduce yourself briefly
  - Explain how you came into contact with him / her (by a mutual acquaintance, through a publication, etc.)
  - Explain that the reason for your call / e-mail / letter is to set up an informational interview
  - ★ See the following examples of introductory calls, e-mails, and letters
3. Research your contact's career and organization
4. Make a list of questions that you would like to ask your contact at the interview
5. Go to the interview
  - Arrive on time
  - Dress professionally

- Introduce yourself
  - Mention the person who referred you
  - Give a brief overview of yourself
  - Explain why you are interested in learning more about that area of the law
  - Ask your questions
  - Be friendly and talk about mutual interests, if appropriate
  - Before leaving, ask for your contact's business card
6. Send a thank you note immediately after your interview
- Thank your contact for his / her time
  - Mention something you found particularly useful or helpful from the interview
  - Note whether you already have / are going to follow up with the contacts that he / she recommended



### Example of an Introductory Call



- "Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. I was given your name and number by \_\_\_\_\_, who suggested that I contact you because you have expertise in the area of \_\_\_\_\_. I am a law student at the University at Buffalo, and I am researching career options in that area of law. I am not calling to ask for a job, but instead to see if you would have 20 minutes or so to discuss \_\_\_\_\_."
- **TIP :** It's best to conduct your interview in person (at your contact's office, over coffee, etc.), but have a list of questions on hand when you call in case he / she wants to talk right then



## Example of an Introductory E-mail / Letter



- Dear Mr. / Ms. \_\_\_\_\_:

I am a law student at the University at Buffalo, and I am particularly interested in learning more about \_\_\_\_\_.

In a recent conversation with \_\_\_\_\_, he / she suggested I contact you about your practice because \_\_\_\_\_ **OR** In a recent search on \_\_\_\_\_ legal directory, I found your profile, and it caught my attention because I am also very interested in \_\_\_\_\_ law.

I am not approaching you to obtain a position with your organization; I would simply appreciate any general advice or information you could offer me as I explore \_\_\_\_\_.

Since I will be in city between date and date, I would be very grateful for the opportunity to meet with you for 15 – 20 minutes that week. Alternatively, if you are unable to meet with me in person, I hoped you would be willing to correspond with me by phone or e-mail in the near future. I am attaching my resume for your perusal.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to meeting you.

Sincerely,

Your Name

- **TIP :** If your contact doesn't reply within a week, send them a polite follow up e-mail / letter



See the following example of a follow up e-mail / letter



## Example of a Follow Up E-mail / Letter



- Dear Mr. / Ms. \_\_\_\_\_:

I recently contacted you about scheduling a brief informational interview. I understand that you are very busy, but I was wondering if it would still be possible to meet with you at some point.

Thank you again.

Sincerely,

Your Name

- **TIP :** If you are still having trouble getting in touch with your contact, try calling his / her support staff, who may be able to help you set up an appointment