

Informational Interviewing

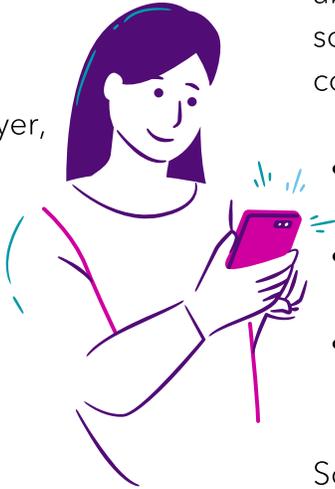


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What is an Informational Interview?

Informational Interviews are considered a form of networking, but their purpose is for gathering information.

You might want to talk to someone about their job, career path, employer, or other topics. An informational interview often helps you better understand what types of jobs you might (or might not) be well suited for, and assess whether or not a workplace aligns with your values.



Typically an informational interview will be short, around 30 minutes long, but you may wish to have follow up conversations if you build good rapport with that person. Informational interviewing is a great way to start meeting new people and building your professional network.

Setting up an Informational Interview

Whether you are calling, emailing, or connecting on a platform like LinkedIn or St. Thomas Connect, it's important to make a positive first impression, and clearly state your purpose for reaching out to that person. Below is some essential information you'll want to include. You can use it to create a "script" to use when you're connecting or calling:

- Your name and a bit about yourself (letting them know you're a student at St. Thomas, and what you're studying is a great idea!)
- How you found them (were you referred by someone, did you find them as a part of the Tommie Network?)
- Why you're reaching out (you're curious about the job that they're doing, you'd love to know more about the organization they work for, etc.)
- Request the opportunity to have a conversation - this could be over the phone, or in person (if it is safe to do so and everyone is comfortable with it). Generally you should plan for a 30 minute meeting.
- Confirm the date and time of the meeting, send a calendar invite if possible!

How do I Know Who to Talk To?

You might do an informational interview for a lot of reasons, but common ones are learning more about majors, careers, and employers. Here are some suggestions of types of people you might consider talking to:

- People who majored in an academic field that you are considering.
- Someone who can tell you more about a career field you're interested in.
- A person who works for an organization you want to learn more about.

Sometimes these are people you already know - like family members, mentors, professors, supervisors, co-workers, or classmates. Sometimes you might ask people you know if they have any connections you can reach out to, or, you can use [LinkedIn](#) or [St. Thomas Connect](#) to find St. Thomas Alumni to talk to!

During the Interview

Remember, your primary purpose is to gather information, and begin building a good relationship with the person you're interviewing. While you're not being interviewed, some of the same rules still apply:

- Dress and act professionally - even if you aren't meeting in person.
- Do a little bit of research ahead of time so you know a bit about the person, and/or their organization's background.

- Have a list of prepared questions, ready to show your curiosity and excitement.
- Be flexible! Sometimes the conversation may go a different direction than planned and still be providing useful information.



What Questions Should I Ask?

Ask open ended questions that allow the interviewee plenty of freedom to respond. Here are some possible questions you might ask during an informational interview:

- What is a typical work day like for you?
- How did you find this field? When did you know you wanted to work in this field for the long term?
- What experiences, skills and educational background are necessary for a person who wants to do a job like yours?
- Do you feel that your academic background prepared you well for the work you're doing?
- What is the typical educational attainment for a person in your role? Is a Master's Degree (or higher) required?
- What do you like the most about your position (or employer)? The least?
- What are some of the pressures, problems and challenges for a person entering this type of career?
- What types of people are more likely to succeed in this career/at this company?
- What are some of the emerging trends in this field?
- Do you belong to any professional associations? Are there any you would recommend I join?
- Would you say you've had a typical educational/career path?
- Is there anything you wish you would've known, or done differently to get to where you are today?
- What types of things would you recommend I do right now to prepare for a career like yours?

And here are some questions that it is essential for you to ask in an informational interview:

- Can you think of anything else I should really know about this field or company?
- Could you suggest one or two other people I might want to contact for information?
- Would you mind if I connected with you on LinkedIn and reached out if I have any other questions?

Don't Forget to Say Thanks!

After you've done an informational interview, it's important to send a [thank you note](#). Express your gratitude for the time they took to talk with you, and reiterate some of the important things you learned from your conversation with them.