



How To: Informational Interviews

Interviewing Steps:

There are 5 Steps:

1. Reaching Out
2. Preparing
3. Deciding whether or not to Record
4. Interviewing
5. Following Up

1. Reaching Out

- Determine the best way to reach out, whether it's by phone or email.
- Use formal language when reaching out (Ex. using “hello” instead of “hey” in an email, addressing someone using a title and their last name, etc.)
- Clearly explain who you are, who you're working for, and what you want to discuss.
- Be honest about how you are planning to use the information from the interview. Is it going in an article? To social media? Is it for personal or informational use only?

2. Preparing

- Do your research beforehand. Look up basic information beforehand so you don't have to waste time on it during the interview.
- This can include where they're from, their full name and how to spell it, their interests and specialties, relevant facts, etc.
- Prepare questions ahead of time, especially for a phone interview. You don't have to follow them exactly, but this ensures you're never without a question.
- Organize your questions into a flow. The interview will be much smoother if you have transitions planned out.



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Interviewing Steps:

2. Preparing (continued)

- Organize your questions into a flow. The interview will be much smoother if you have transitions planned out.
- Even after you prepare, keep a flexible mindset. The interview might go in a different direction than you expected, and that's okay.

3. Recording:

- Recording an interview can be helpful in making sure you have all of the information discussed and for getting exact quotes.
- Decide before the interview if you want to record it.
- If you do, **get consent from everyone else involved in the conversation.**
- Different states have different laws regarding whether or not you need consent from another person in order to record the conversation.
- While it's important to know what the laws are for the state you are in, always get consent anyway. It's the respectful and legally sound thing to do.
- Ask for consent before you start the interview or start recording. If they consent, start a recording and ask them to consent again so you have a record of them agreeing to be recorded.
- If they don't consent, accept their answer and move on. Don't try to convince them to let you record.
- Explain your reasons for wanting to record the interview, such as needing exact quotes or to make sure you have all the info later.
- It is never legal to record someone else's private conversation (unless you are recording what is easily heard by everyone in a public space). Just don't do it.
- Keep in mind that even if you aren't recording, they might be. Some states don't require them to tell you if they're recording. Don't say anything you wouldn't want recorded.



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Interviewing Steps:

4. Interviewing

- Confidence is key to interviewing. If you act confident, people will believe you know what you're doing (even if you don't).
- Remember that this is just another conversation. You're talking to another person, not a robot or machine.
- Bring your questions, a notepad, and multiple writing utensils. Even if you're recording the interview, take thorough notes.
- Take lots of notes, especially if you aren't recording.
- Unless it's a short interview, don't start with your most important questions. It usually takes you and your subject a few minutes to warm up.
- Don't be afraid to ask someone to talk slower or to repeat themselves. It shows that you are listening and care about what they are saying.
- You're driving the interview car. Explore different conversation roads as they come up and then steer back to the main path.
- You're doing better than you think! Interviewing can be intimidating, but you're almost always doing better than you think.

5. Following Up:

- Always send a follow-up email after the interview. Thank them for taking the time to speak with you, and ask any additional questions you may have.
- If you are writing an article or creating a material, it's a nice gesture to send them the finished product.
- Be careful about sending draft materials unless you are directly collaborating with them. They may try to change your work in a way you don't want.
- Remember their name and file their contact info. You've just created a contact that is now a part of your network.
- If you take the time to really listen to people, they will remember you.