

200 Great Informational Interview Questions to Choose From¹

General Questions About Your Interviewee's Career Field

1. What are the various jobs available in this field?
2. What types of training do companies offer those who enter this field?
3. In what ways is your occupation changing?
4. How is the economy affecting this industry?
5. What is the employment outlook like in your career field? How much demand is there for people in this career?
6. How quickly is the field growing?
7. What are the growth areas of this field?
8. Are you likely to have future job openings?
9. What parts of the country offer the best opportunities in this field?
10. What are the opportunities in this career like in [geographical area your most interested in]?
11. What is the typical entry-level salary in this field?
12. What are the salary ranges for higher levels in this occupation?
13. Is there a salary ceiling?
14. Aside from visible compensation as money, fringe benefits, travel, etc., what kinds of mental dividends (such as job satisfaction) does this career yield?
15. Is this industry heavily regulated?
16. What do you find unique about your career field?
17. From everything you've observed, what problems can you cite regarding working in this career?
18. What skills or personal characteristics do you feel contribute most to success in this industry?
19. What sacrifices have you had to make to succeed in this field, and do you feel the sacrifices were worth it?
20. When people leave this career, what are the usual reasons?
21. What are the typical entry-level job titles and functions?
22. What entry-level jobs offer the best opportunities for learning?
23. What are the most significant characteristics of this industry?
24. What trends in the field would be most likely to affect someone just entering this career now?
25. What kinds of people experience the greatest success in this field?
26. What is the most important thing that someone planning to enter this career should know?

¹ Hansen, Katherine. A Foot In The Door. Ten Speed Press. Berkeley, CA . 2000.

All About Your Interviewee's Job:

27. What is your exact title?
28. Do other people in your company with the same job title have the same responsibilities?
29. What was your title when you first started here?
30. What precisely do you do? What are the duties/functions/responsibilities of your job?
31. What is your job like?
32. To what extent is the job what you expected?
33. How much job security do you have in this position?
34. What is a typical day like?
35. What hours do you normally work?
36. Do you have to put in much overtime or work on weekends?
37. Are the time demands of your job specific to this company, or would anyone in this career be expected to put in the same hours?
38. Do you ever bring work home with you?
39. What kinds of problems do you deal with?
40. What do you do if you can't solve a problem on your own?
41. Do you have to deal with a significant amount of conflict in this job?
42. What systems are in place for dealing with conflict?
43. What constraints, such as time and funding, make your job more difficult?
44. What kinds of decisions do you make?
45. Describe some of the toughest situations you've faced in this job.
46. To what extent do you interact with customers/clients?
47. What percentage of your time is spent on each of your job responsibilities?
48. How does your use of time vary? Are there busy and slow times or is the work activity fairly constant?
49. Which other departments, functional units, or levels of the hierarchy do you regularly interact with?
50. How much flexibility do you have in determining how you perform your job?
51. Do you work individually or predominantly in groups or teams?
52. How are work teams or groups organized?
53. What part of this job do you personally find most satisfying? Most challenging? Least satisfying?
54. What are your personal interests and in what way does this job satisfy your interests?
55. What do you like and not like about working in this job?
56. Do you find your job exciting or boring? Why?
57. Are there aspects of your job that are repetitious?
58. Is multitasking a skill that is required for this job?
59. What projects have you worked on that have been particularly interesting?

60. What particular skills or talents are most essential to be effective in your job?
61. How did you learn these skills?
62. What are the educational requirements for this job?
63. What other types of credentials or licenses are required?
64. Is graduate school recommended? An MBA?
65. What obligations does your employer place on you outside of the ordinary workweek?
66. What social obligations go along with a job in this field?
67. Are there organizations you are expected to join?
68. Are there other things you are expected to do outside of work hours?
69. How has your job affected your lifestyle?
70. To what extent does this job present a challenge in terms of juggling work and family life?
71. What are the major frustrations of this job?
72. If you could change anything about your job, what would it be?
73. Is there a great deal of turnover in this job?
74. What interests you least about the job, and what creates the most stress?
75. What is the job title of your department head or supervisor?
76. Where do you and your supervisor fit into the organizational structure?
77. How many people do you supervise?
78. How would you assess your prestige or level of status in this job? In the company?
79. If you ever left your job, what would be most likely to drive you away?

About Preparing for this Career:

80. Does your work relate to any experiences or studies you had in college?
81. How well did your college experience prepare you for this job?
82. What courses have proved to be the most valuable to you in your work?
83. What courses do you wish you had taken that would have better prepared you?
84. If you were a college student again, what would you do differently to prepare for this job?
85. How important are grades or GPA for obtaining a job in this field?
86. What do you feel is the best educational preparation for this career?
87. How do you think [name of your college]'s reputation is viewed when it comes to hiring?
88. How did you prepare for this work?
89. If you were entering this career today, would you change your preparation in any way to better facilitate entry?

About your Interviewee's Career Path:

90. In what way did this type of work interest you and how did you get started?
91. What was your major in college?

92. How did you get your job?
93. Did you enter this position through a formal training program?
94. What jobs and experiences have led you to your present position?
95. What did you do before you entered this occupation?
96. What aspects of your background have been the most helpful?
97. What other jobs can you get with the same background?
98. What were the keys to your career advancement?
99. How did you get where you are and what are your long-range goals?
100. What is the job above your current job?
101. What is the next step in your career?
102. Where do you see yourself in five years?
103. If your work were suddenly eliminated, what kinds of work do you feel prepared to do?
104. If you could do things all over again, would you choose the same path for yourself? Why? What would you change?

About The Culture Of Your Interviewees Company Or Organization:

105. Why did you decide to work for this company?
106. What do you like most about this company?
107. How does your company differ from its competitors?
108. Why do customers choose this company?
109. What is the company's relationship with its customers?
110. How optimistic are you about the company's future and your future with the company?
111. Has the company made any recent changes to improve its business practices and profitability?
112. What does the company do to contribute to its employees' professional development?
113. What systems are in place to enable employees to give management feedback and suggestions?
114. How does the company make use of technology for internal communication and outside marketing (e-mail, Internet, intranets, World Wide Web, videoconferencing, etc.)?
115. What other technologies are integral to the company's operation?
116. How would you describe the atmosphere at the company? Is it fairly formal or more casual and informal?
117. Do people in your department function fairly autonomously, or do they require a lot of supervision and direction?
118. What are your co-workers like?
119. How would you describe the morale of people who work here?
120. Do you participate in many social activities with your co-workers?
121. Is there a basic philosophy of the company or organization? What is it? (Is it a people-, service-, or product-oriented business?)
122. What is the company's mission statement?

123. What can you tell me about the corporate culture of this company?
124. Is the company's management style executed from the top downward, or do frontline employees share in the decision-making?
125. is there flexibility in work hours, vacation schedule, place of residence, telecommuting, etc.?
126. What's the dress code here? Is it conservative or casual? Does the company have dress-down or casual days?
127. Can men wear beards or long hair here?
128. What work-related values are most highly esteemed in this company (security, high income, variety, independence)?
129. What kind of training program does the company offer? Is it highly structured or more informal?
130. Does the company encourage and/or pay for employees to pursue graduate degrees? Is there a tuition-reimbursement program?
131. Does the company offer an employee discount on the products it sells?
132. What's the best thing about the company?
133. How does the company evaluate your job performance?
134. How does the company acknowledge outstanding accomplishments of its employees?
135. What kinds of accomplishments does the company reward?
136. Are there people within or outside the organization that the company holds up as heroes?
137. Does the company observe any rituals, traditions, or ceremonies?
138. What is the typical job-interview process at the company? How many interviews do candidates generally go through before being offered a position?
139. What does the company do to foster innovation and creativity?

About The Company's Needs:

140. In what areas do you perceive there to be personnel gaps in this company? If the company had unlimited resources for creating new positions, in what areas do you think those positions should be created?
141. In what areas do you see the company expanding? Do you foresee the opening of new markets or greater globalization? Do you predict development of new products and/or services? Building of new facilities?
142. How can employees prepare for any planned changes at the company?
143. What obstacles do you see getting in the way of the company's profitability or growth?
144. If you needed someone to assist you in your job, what tasks would you assign to your assistant?

About Opportunities For Advancement Within This Company And/Or Field:

145. How does a person progress in your field?
146. What is the highest-level job one can hold in this career?

147. What is a typical career path in this field or organization?
148. What are the advancement opportunities?
149. What is the average time an employee might stay in the job you hold?
150. How rapidly do people move to the next level in this career?
151. What incentives or disincentives are there for staying in the same job?
152. Would someone in this field need to relocate to advance in her career?
153. If I performed well at this company, where could I expect to be in five years?

Seeking Advice If You Are A Career Changer:

154. My current career is _____. How easy or difficult do you think it might be to make a transition from that field to your field?
155. The skills I use the most in my current career are _____. To what extent and in what ways do you think those skills are transferable to your field?
156. What aspects of my background do you feel would be the most helpful in making the transition to your career field?
157. What aspects of my background do you feel would be the biggest obstacles to making the transition to your career field?
158. What skills needed in your career field do you think someone in my current career might be lacking and need to develop?
159. What would be the best kind of training to get to make the transition to your field?
160. What's the best way for me to get more experience in your field without taking major steps backward from the level I've progressed in my current career?
161. How do you think those with hiring power in your career would view someone in my current field? Would you personally hire someone coming from my current career field?
162. The things I like the best about my current career are _____. Will I find some of those same things if I switch to your field?
163. The things I dislike the most about my current career are _____. Will I encounter any of those same challenges in your field?
164. Do you know of any other people in your career who have made the transition to our field from my current career or a similar career? How did the transition work out?
165. I've heard that people in your field have characteristics such as _____, which I have not had the opportunity to develop in my current career. How important are those characteristics?
166. What sacrifices do you think I might have to make to switch to your career field?
167. Knowing what you know about your career field, and knowing what I would have to do to get into this field, do you think you would make the change if you were in my position? If not, can you suggest any other fields that might be more appropriate for me?
168. Would you take a brief look at my resume and suggest ways I could tailor it to make myself more marketable as I make the transition to your career field?

Seeking General Advice And Referrals From Your Interviewee:

169. Can you suggest some ways a person could obtain the experience necessary to enter this field?
170. What is the best way to obtain a position that will get me started in this occupation?
171. What do you wish you'd known before you entered this field?
172. What are the major qualifications for success in this occupation?
173. What are the most important skills for a position in this field?
174. What courses should I be taking?
175. How can I assess whether or not I have the skills needed for a position such as yours?
176. With the information you have about my education, skills, and experience, what other fields or jobs would you suggest I research before I make a final decision?
177. Do you know of other people whom I might contact who have jobs similar to yours?
178. Do you have any advice for someone interested in this field/job?
179. Which professional journals and publications should I be reading to learn about this career?
180. Are there any other written materials (such as copy brochures) that you suggest I read?
181. What professional organizations associated with this career should I join?
182. What kinds of experience, paid or unpaid, would you encourage for anybody pursuing a career in this field?
183. Who else do you know who uses skills similar to yours?
184. What other kinds of organizations hire people to perform the functions you do here?
185. If I am unable to obtain a position in this field, what other fields would you recommend I consider?
186. What special advice do you have for a student seeking to qualify for this position?
187. Do you have any special words of warning or encouragement as a result of your experience?
188. These are my strongest assets (skills, areas of knowledge, personality traits, and values): _____. Where would they fit in in this field? Where would they be helpful in this organization? Where might they fit in other fields? Where might they be helpful in other organizations?
189. What should I do to prepare myself of remerging trends and changes in this field?
190. How would you assess the experience I've had so far in terms of the requirements for entering this field?
191. What qualifications would you be looking for if you were hiring for a position such as yours?
192. What qualifications would you be looking for if you were hiring a position subordinate to yours?
193. Do you have any written job descriptions of positions in your field/company?
194. What areas of the company would be most interested in hiring people with my background?

195. If I wanted to obtain a job here, who would be the best person to contact?
196. If I wanted to obtain a job here, what would be the best way to learn of job vacancies?
197. If you were conducting a job search today, how would you go about it?
198. Would you be willing to answer more questions, by phone or in person, if I need additional advice in the future?
199. [If you feel comfortable and it seems appropriate]: Would you mind taking a look at my resume to see if you have any suggestions?
200. How would you react if you received a resume like mine for a position with this company?

Reminder: This informational interview should last no more than 30 minutes, so you will want to choose questions that are most important to you.