

Networking & Informational Interviewing Guide



SKIDMORE

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Special Note about connecting on LinkedIn:

How to Proceed:

Informational Interviewing

Once you're ready to connect with people in your network, you may want to set up informational interviews. Informational interviews are meetings you arrange with professionals, where you "direct" the interview by asking them questions about their educational or career background, their current and or past positions, their specific career field or industry and/or advice on a job search. It's also important that you're ready to talk about yourself!

Alumni have told us that while they really want to help, they are very busy, so it's important to get to the point without actually asking for a job or internship. Let them know clearly how they can help in your search.

Making Initial Contact

Most likely, the best way to initiate a contact with someone you don't know is through email. It's important that you are clear about your objectives when reaching out. What do you want to learn? What are you hoping to get out of the conversation? Write a brief note introducing yourself, telling them how you got their name and what you'd like to discuss. Then ask for a brief, 20-30 minute meeting, if possible in person, but if not, through phone or Zoom. If you don't get a response, try sending a follow-up e-mail. If your second attempt is also unsuccessful, move on!

Sample Email for first contact:

Dear Ms. O'Connor,

I found your profile in Skidmore's Career Advisor Network and am grateful that you have offered to help Skidmore students with their career questions. I've just started my senior year, and my goal is to secure an entry-level editorial position in book publishing in the Boston area after graduation. I interned last summer at a major NYC magazine publisher, have started my own fairly successful e-zine, and have worked with SkidNews for the past three years. I would appreciate hearing your advice on conducting an effective job search and uncovering job leads. I'll be in the Boston area over the break and hope that we could set up a short meeting if possible. If that's not convenient, I'm also happy to speak over the phone or Zoom. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Jane Doe '26

¾ Preparing for your Informational Interview

Do preliminary research on the company or industry, dress appropriately and have a list of questions to ask. Also, make sure you've developed your "pitch" about yourself – a 30 second introduction including your name, class year, major, career interest, and perhaps something unique about yourself that will help the person remember you. To network successfully, you need to have a basic understanding of your own interests, needs and skills.

¾ Develop your questions

Your interview will be most effective if you formulate questions that reflect your genuine curiosity about careers and your specific job search. Here are some questions to draw from:

Personal Background Questions

- How has your career path been like since graduation from Skidmore?
- What was your undergraduate major? How big a role did it play in your career?
- Did your college education provide sound preparation for this job?
- What do you enjoy most and least about your work in this field and why?

Job and Industry Related Questions

- What is a typical day like?
- What are the biggest challenges you work with?
- What are the most interesting projects on a day-to-day basis? (m)4.5 (o)-6.6 (s)9 (t)s

How to Nurture Your Network:

Remember, networking is about developing a relationship, not having a one-time conversation. In order to keep the conversation going, so you're comfortable reaching out again and will hopefully be remembered by your contacts if and when an opportunity presents itself, you should do the following:

1. **Send a thank you note** – within a day of meeting or speaking with someone, send a thank you note highlighting what you got out of the meeting and thanking them for their time. If a specific tip or suggestion was helpful, let them know! If requested, send your resume along.

Here's an example of a thank you note:

Dear Mr. Smith:

Thank you so much for spending the time talking with me about my interest in pursuing a career in marketing. Your advice on how to use my liberal arts background to enter the field was extremely helpful. and I've already begun to edit my resume to reflect what we discussed. I feel like I have a much clearer understanding of the skills and experiences necessary to succeed in this field. I will follow up with the contact you provided and keep you posted on my job search.

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