



## Career Conversation Checklist

Career conversations, sometimes referred to as informational interviews, are discussions with professionals in your target career field, role, or organization.

### BEFORE

- Reach out to your network.** Look at your current contacts to find a professional in your target career field, role, or organization, or ask for an introduction
- Invite your professional contact to a career conversation.** Offer to take them for lunch or coffee, to meet them virtually, or by phone. Structure the invitation with four main points:
  - Introduce yourself and your major and/or current role
  - Be specific about why you want to meet
  - Acknowledge their time constraints
  - Explain what you hope to accomplish in your meeting
- Research the person and their organization before you sit down with them.** Don't waste time asking questions that you could answer by doing research online.

To help you out, here is an email template from *Launch Your Career* by Sean O'Keefe:

Subject line: [Name of Your College]

Hi, [Name],

I'm a student at [Name of Your College]. I have an assignment this [quarter/semester/summer] to conduct two 20-minute career conversations via video chat or in person with [companies or organizations] and people that interest me.

You've had a successful career since you finished college at [Name of College]. I'd like to learn about your journey from [Name of First Organization after college] to [Name of Current Organization]. *(Optional: add a second sentence and say more about what you want to learn about.)*

I understand you probably keep a busy schedule, so I'm willing to meet before or after business hours, if necessary. Are you available on [Tuesday afternoon or Friday morning]?

I hope it's okay that I'm sending this email, and I look forward to hearing back from you.

Thank you,

[Your Name]

[Your Email Signature]

For a full explanation of this template, and more email templates for different types of contacts, check out pages 91-116 of *Launch Your Career*.



## DURING

- Arrive on time, or at least ten minutes early.** Plan your transportation beforehand.
- Dress professionally.**
- Take notes during your conversation.**
- Ask your questions.** Keep the conversation flowing.
- Be prepared to communicate your relevant experiences.** This includes accomplishments, qualifications, and job roles. Keep your responses brief in order to get your questions answered

## CLOSING AND FOLLOW UP

- Thank them** for their time.
- Follow up** with a thank you email or a handwritten note. Include a brief personal take away from your conversation.
- Add** them to your LinkedIn contacts

## TIPS

- Do not ask for a job.** It is more important to build this professional relationship.
- Set a professional tone.** As the host, bring energy and excitement to the conversation. Be approachable, engaging, and professional.
- Assume that your contact is assessing you as a potential employee.** Though this isn't the point of a career conversation, you should still be professional and confident about your abilities.
- Respect your contact's time.** Once you begin asking questions, be prepared to drive the conversation with follow-up questions.
- Be conscious of your bad conversation habits and body language.** Avoid twirling your hair, fidgeting, and using words like "umm" or "like" too much.
- Eye contact is an art that takes practice.** Don't stare, but maintain consistent eye contact.
- Listen actively.** Nod and use affirming cues.



## QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

### Individual or Career Path

- How did you choose this career?
- What do you like or dislike about your work?
- What education and experiences best prepared you for your current job?
- What has been the most memorable moment of your career?
- Do you have any advice as a result of your experience?

### Industry Information

- What changes and challenges is the industry currently facing?
- What are the cyclical patterns of this industry?
- What credentials or training programs are most respected within the industry?
- What are the expectations for people who work in this industry?
- What industry organizations, associations, or resources would you recommend?

### Employer-Specific

- What are some of the key challenges in your position?
- What qualifications does your employer require for hiring into your position?
- How did you find your current job?
- What advice would you give someone who wants to work for this organization?
- Who else do you recommend I talk to about this organization?

### Occupational Information

- What does this occupation involve on a day-to-day basis?
- What skills does the role require?
- What would be a typical entry-level starting salary for people in this field?
- How are recent graduates perceived in this occupation?
- Would it be possible for me to job shadow you to learn more about this occupation?