



networking guide

Introduction

80% of jobs and internships are found through networking, or personal contacts; that is, they are never even posted online. This means that the importance of the Carleton network - and chances for alumni and students to meet, network, and connect - are more important than ever.

Whether you are beginning your job search, investigating careers and organizations, or seeking information about internships, Carleton alumni serve as excellent research resources, as long as you approach them in a professional manner. Through the Online alumni directory and LinkedIn, informational interviews can easily be arranged and executed, providing you with a valuable view of your potential profession.

Key Topics

In this guide, we will cover the following topics:

- Informational interviewing
- How to identify contacts
- Getting organized
- Contacting alumni and other individuals
- Suggested questions
- Tips for success
- Etiquette/Netiquette
- After the informational interview

Informational Interviews

What is an Informational Interview

Informational interviewing is a unique way to meet professionals, gain valuable career advice, and expand your professional network. These conversations can be held in-person, virtually, or over the phone between you (the interviewer) and a successful professional or alumni contact (the interviewee).

It is a way that allows you to uncover information about the industry you are exploring, potential opportunities, job searching strategies and organizations. It is not asking for a job. While it is not asking for a job, it is building a connection that has potential to lead to a job.

Why have an informational interview

If you are generally inquiring about careers, jobs, organizations, etc.

- Discover new career options
- Gain insight into a career field or organization
- Reinforce assessment of your interests and needs

If you are looking for specific industry information

- Increase insight into a specific job, organization, or career field
- Awareness of available internship and summer job opportunities
- Gain confidence in job and internship interview situations
- Make contacts in the industry

Tips

- You do not need to know exactly what you want to ask alumni or other contacts; think about what you would like to know and have a few questions to get started.
- Share what you know about your interests (even if it is not yet defined). This helps the contact to point you in the right direction.
- It is never too early (or too late) to begin networking.

Identifying Potential Contacts

Potential contacts are available everywhere you look. These contacts could be people you have known for years on a personal level, someone you met randomly, an alumni you found online, someone working at your internship, or someone you read about on LinkedIn. Check out this list for ideas of potential network contacts:

People you know	Places to find new contacts
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relatives and family• Community members• Professors/administrators• Carleton peers (parents/family)• Former supervisors and coworkers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Carleton Alumni Directory• Carleton Pathways• Alumni & Employer On-Campus Visits• LinkedIn• Career fairs• LinkedIn

Organize your contacts

As you network, we recommend keeping track of all the contacts you find so that you can appropriately follow up with them later. Below is a sample of a spreadsheet to help you stay organized as you work on building your list of contacts. This spreadsheet can be found on the Career Center website under Finding a Job.

Networking				
Contact Information				
Contact Name/Title	Organization	Contact Email/Phone	Date Contacted	Comments

Contacting your network

Start by contacting professionals via email, and be sure to explain how you received their information or mention a mutual connection if you have one. Let them know that you are a current Carleton student requesting to meet with them to hear their perspective on a career in their industry.

Things to consider:

- Ask to meet for 20-25 minutes over the phone or at a convenient location to them
- Provide basic background information about you and why you're interested in speaking with them
- Explain that you are not looking for a job; rather conducting research to help you make better career decisions
- Remember that people like talking about themselves so do not be afraid to ask

Note:

No response? People get busy and emails sometimes fall through the cracks. If you do not get an immediate response, wait a week (or two) and try again.

Email Templates

Additional templates on three basic career-related topics including: informational interviewing, networking for an internship search, and networking for a job search, are available on the Career Center's website.

Sample Email:

Dear Ms./Mr./Dr. Johnson:

I am a freshman/sophomore/junior/senior at Carleton and I found your name and contact information on your alumni profile. [Add sentence about something you saw on their profile that was of interest to you, that shows you have something in common with the alumni.]

I am considering pursuing a career in [career field] and would like to determine if it would be a good match for me. [Add sentence or two that briefly describes your interest in the field and/or the organization.] Would you be willing to briefly answer a few questions about your work and career path? I'd be happy to arrange a short phone call or simply send you an email, whatever is more convenient for you.

Please let me know if this would be possible.

Sincerely,
Sara Student '22 Major (if declared)
123-456-7890
studenta@carleton.edu

Preparing for Networking

Do your research

Show your contact that you have done your homework and are prepared and interested in learning more about their career. We recommend you look up the professional on Google and/or LinkedIn prior to your meeting to and basic information about them. By doing this, you can spend your time asking more in-depth questions and gaining more valuable career advice. Keep a list of questions that arise while doing your research, so that you will be more prepared, and make a powerful first impression.

Questions to Consider

General/All

- How did you get started in this field? If you were to start over again, what would you do differently?
- What are the greatest pros and cons of the work that you do?
- What are the major issues/hot topics in your field today?
- How many hours a week do you typically work? Do you travel?
- What resources, journals, professional associations or training programs might be useful for me to know about or pursue?
- Based on my interest in X, is there anyone else you could recommend I speak to?

Exploring

- I like working with numbers/on teams/writing/etc., are there certain areas of your field that would be a better fit than others?
- What does a typical career path look like in this field? What are the opportunities for advancement?
- What is the work environment/corporate culture of your organization?
- What skills or advanced degrees are required to enter this field?
- What characteristics do employers in this field value?

Industry specific

- What are the best ways to stand out as a top candidate in this field?
- What kind of on-the-job training exists in your organization?
- Would you be willing to give me some feedback or advice on my résumé?
- What could I expect in the interview process for this type of position? Any specific questions or ways to stand out?

Networking Tips

Be prepared. If meeting in person, make sure you know how to get to the meeting location and arrive at least 5 minutes early.

Dress to Impress. If meeting in person, wear business casual or business professional, depending on the industry. Even though you are not asking for a job or internship, this shows the contact that you are taking this seriously and not wasting their time.

Build Rapport. Making a somewhat personal connection with an alum or other contact can go a long way in building the relationship. While maintaining professionalism, take a minute to bring up an experience that would connect you (e.g., you both were involved in Mock Trial at Carleton or both grew up near Chicago).

Take Notes. This allows you to easily recall the contact's tips, as well as indicates to the contact that you value their advice. Do not use a tape recorder.

Ask for a referral. Based on your conversation, ask if there is anyone they could recommend to connect to for an informational interview. This is a great way to quickly expand your network.

Circle back. If you were referred to someone, be sure to circle back to your potential contact to say thank you!

Etiquette/Netiquette

Based on feedback we have received from alumni, we strongly encourage you to adhere to the following tips on basic etiquette.

- Respond to all emails and calls within 24 hours
- Confirm the meeting 24 hours before the scheduled time
- Do not miss appointments or phone calls
- View an email as you would a cover letter; it's a professional contact
- Choose a professional tone rather than informality
- Check spelling and grammar before hitting 'send'
- Do your homework; know something about the field or company so you can ask thoughtful questions
- Verify time zones if contacting someone in a different location

After the Informational Interview

Write a thank you note! Writing a thank you note, either in email or hand-written, shows your potential contact that you appreciated their time and establishes a good rapport for the future.

Connect on LinkedIn. If you do not have a LinkedIn profile, now is the time to create one. After the interview is a good time to send a personalized connection request that could also serve as the thank you note. By connecting on LinkedIn, you will easily be able to stay in touch as well as identify additional contacts through their network.

Stay Connected. If you have made a positive connection, staying in contact through your time at Carleton and into your career is very important. Here are some ways to keep the relationship going. Notify them when you have solidified a new internship or job, and thank them again for their help.

Send a thank you note. If you've connected with someone they referred you to or one of your mutual LinkedIn contacts, send a thank you note.

Applying to a job/internship at their organization? Once you've applied to a job/internship through the primary channels requested by the organization, send a short email (with a résumé attached) to your contact who works there to notify them that you have applied.

Ask. Depending on the relationship you built, don't be afraid to ask something such as "If you have any ideas for how to get my résumé noticed by the hiring manager, I would appreciate your advice." This type of request gives your contact the option to opt out if they do not feel comfortable passing along your résumé.