

EMERGE

with RUBIN

Classroom Activity: How to Ask for an Informational Interview

You want to learn about an industry or job and need an informational interview to do so. The key is a well-written email introduction that makes the person want to meet and talk with you.

There are four main scenarios in which you would ask for an information interview, as found on pages 2-6. They are selections from the book, *Wait, How Do I Write This Email?* Read the appropriate template to familiarize yourself with the strategy. Then, follow the instructions below.

Instructions:

Step 1

Identify the company and job you want to pursue (or the college you hope to attend).

Step 2

Use the appropriate template from pages 2-6 as a guide to craft your own email. Identify key words and phrases that make the guide sound professional.

Do not copy entire sentences directly from the text. Instead use the key words that you identified earlier.

Remember to:

- Include links that showcase your work or ability when possible.
- Discuss an aspect of the employer's career and why you find it notable.
 - o You will need to use the internet to research the employer you address in the email.
 - o When you visit the company's website, look for a page called Staff Bios or something similar. You can also look at the person's LinkedIn profile

or google his/her name to see if any articles appear that feature the person.

Step 3

Read your email out loud to make sure there are no typos or awkward phrases.

Be ready to share your email and discuss what you wrote.

HOW TO ASK AS A RECENT GRAD WITH NO CONNECTION AT THE COMPANY

You're fresh out of school and need to explore a job, industry or other opportunity. To make the situation tougher, you don't know anyone at the company.

Subject line: Recent graduate from [name of school], request for informational interview

Hi _____,

My name is [first and last name], and I'm a [put yourself in context; for instance, "recent sociology graduate from _____"]. It's nice to meet you.

If possible, I would like to schedule a quick informational interview so I can learn more about [name of company].

NOTE: Make your "ask" early in the email so the person knows what you want.

At [college/university], I majored in [field the employer would find relevant] and hope to work in the same field. In school, I often worked on/with [one or two topics or "hard" skills you learned; for instance, "Software Tool 1 and Software Tool 2"] and am ready to put those skills to use.

[If you have a link to a blog or online portfolio, add a line like, "Here's a link to my portfolio, which has several examples of my work."]

I read about your background and see you [one or two highlights from the person's career — look at a website bio or LinkedIn profile; for instance, "began as an intern at Big Corporation and rose to become a senior vice president. It's inspiring for someone like me who has started out in the field"].

NOTE: Use specific words like the person's company, job title or project. Prove you did your research.

Again, please let me know if you have a few minutes to meet. I would appreciate the chance to ask questions about the [name of industry; for instance, "education"] field and learn more about your own path.

I have also attached my resume.

Thanks so much,

– Your first name

Email signature

Deeper Insight

Who could ignore such a genuine, thoughtful email?

Focus on the person's career so he/she can pass along wisdom and make you better. Hopefully, the person will take you up on the offer. If not, try someone else with the same approach.

HOW TO ASK AS A RECENT GRAD WITH A CONNECTION AT THE COMPANY

Isn't life easier when you have connections? The email below, unlike the one where you don't know anyone at the company, allows you to make a more seamless introduction.

Subject line: Friend of [person who connects you two], request for informational interview

Hi _____,

My name is [first and last name], and I'm [reference the way you two are connected; for instance, "Don Cunningham's son"]. It's nice to meet you.

[Your connection] thought I should make introductions and let you know I recently graduated from [name of college/university]. I have a degree in _____ and am interested in a job in the [field you want to work in] field. If possible, I'd like to come by your office for a quick informational interview to learn more about the company and the industry, in general.

NOTE: Ask for the meeting early in the email so a busy person knows what you want right away.

At [college/university], I often worked on/with [one or two topics or "hard" skills you learned; for instance, "Software Tool 1 and Software Tool 2"] and am ready to put those skills to use.

NOTE: Don't drop bland buzzwords like "hardworking" and "dedicated." Reference actual skills, tools and software. That's what counts.

[If you have a link to a blog or online portfolio, add a line like, "Here's a link to my portfolio, which has several examples of my work.]

I read about your background and see [one or two highlights from the person's career — look at the website bio or LinkedIn profile; for instance, "how you lead the company's design team and last year won national honors for your ad campaign about childhood obesity. It's a powerful ad that made me stop and think"].

Again, please let me know if you have a few minutes to meet. I would appreciate the chance to ask questions about the [name of industry; for instance, "health care"] field and learn more about your career path.

Thanks so much,

– Your first name

Email signature

Deeper Insight

Don't take a connection for granted. You must still show you researched the person's career and company and provide examples of your work, if available.

HOW TO ASK IF YOU'RE UNEMPLOYED WITH NO CONNECTION AT THE COMPANY

If you've been out of the work world a bit (not a recent graduate) and need an informational interview, here's how to start the conversation.

Subject line: [Job title; for instance, "Marketing professional"], request for informational interview

Hi _____,

My name is [first and last name], and I'm a [put yourself in context; for instance, "marketing professional here in Boise"]. It's nice to meet you.

I'm writing to see if we can meet for a brief informational interview so I can learn more about [name of company].

NOTE: Be clear about what you want right from the get-go. Don't make a busy person scan the email to learn your intentions.

At my most recent company, [name of company], I handled [your primary role; for instance, “the company’s digital portfolio, which included campaigns for local banks, law firms and restaurants. Here’s a link to my online portfolio”].

[If you feel it’s necessary or appropriate to explain why you’re out of work, do so here; for instance, “To give you the background, Acme Corporation had a round of job cuts in late October so now I’m in search of new opportunities.”]

NOTE: Don’t include an explanation about why you’re out of a job if it will hurt your chances (“I was fired because...”)

I read about your career and see you [one or two highlights from the person’s career — look at the website bio or LinkedIn profile; for instance, “worked on Madison Avenue in NYC for a large ad agency. That must have been a cool experience, and I’d like to hear more about it”].

Again, please let me know if you have a few minutes to meet. I would appreciate the chance to ask questions about the company and learn more about your career path.

Thanks so much,

– Your first and last name

Email signature

Deeper Insight

You must craft an email that proves you care about the company and not as though you sent the same message to 50 different businesses. Make it authentic.

HOW TO ASK IF YOU’RE UNEMPLOYED WITH A CONNECTION AT THE COMPANY

If you have an “in” with someone at the company, leverage the relationship to hopefully schedule an informational interview.

Subject line: Friend of [person who connects you two], request for informational interview

Hi _____,

My name is [first and last name], and I’m [reference the way you two are connected; for instance, “Jovan Wright’s friend”]. It’s nice to meet you.

[Name of your connection] thought I should make introductions and let you know I’m a [job title] and looking for a job in the [name of industry; for instance, “automotive”] field.

If possible, I'd like to come by your office for a brief informational interview to learn more about the company and the work you do.

NOTE: "Brief" is the optimal word. Let the person know right away you don't plan to take up the entire day.

At my most recent job as a [job title] for [name of company], I handled [your primary role; for instance, "inventory management for three car part distribution sites in the Akron area"].

[If you have a link to a blog or online portfolio, add a line like, "Here's a link to my portfolio with several examples of my work."]

[If you feel it's necessary or appropriate to explain why you're out of work, do so here; for instance, "To give you the background, Acme Corporation made budget cuts this past June and laid people off so now I'm in search of new opportunities."]

NOTE: Don't include an explanation about why you're out of a job if it will hurt your chances ("I was fired because...")

I read about your career and see you [one or two highlights from the person's career — look at the website bio or LinkedIn profile; for instance, "have worked hard to integrate robotic technology with traditional inventory management processes. I'm interested in a work environment like that — a place on the cutting edge"].

Again, please let me know if you have a few minutes to meet. I would appreciate the chance to ask questions about [name of company] and learn more about your career path.

Thanks so much,

– Your first name

Email signature

Deeper Insight

Unlike the email with no connection, this time you and the person who receives the email know someone in common. Right away, you have the person's trust and hopefully the willingness to meet.

Still, show the person you researched his/her career and don't take the time for granted.