



Career Conversation Checklist

Career conversations are discussions with professionals in your target industry. The purpose of these brief conversations is to gain understanding of the path into this field as well as begin to create your own network of contacts.

BEFORE

- Begin with your closest network. Ask faculty for introductions to alumni.
- Invite your professional contact to a career conversation. This may be virtually or in person.

Structure the invitation with four main points:

1. introduce yourself and your major
 2. be specific about why you want to meet
 3. acknowledge their time constraints
 4. explain what you hope to accomplish via the meeting
- Research the person and their organization before you meet them. Do not waste time asking questions that you can discover online.

As a starting point, here is an email template from *Launch Your Career* by Sean O'Keefe

Subject line: Name of College

Hi, *[name of recipient]*

I'm a student at Prairie College. I have an assignment this *[quarter]* to conduct four 15-minute career conversations via video chat or in person with people that are in the *[industry]*.

You've had a successful career since you finished at *[College]*. I'd like to learn about your journey from *[Name of first organization after college]* to *[name of current organization]*.

I understand that you have a busy schedule, so I am willing to meet before or after business hours, if necessary. Are you available *[Tuesday afternoon or Friday morning?]* Thank you again for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you,

[your name]

[email signature]

DURING

- Arrive on time. Dress professionally.
- Take notes during the conversation (ask if that is ok)
- Ask your questions and be prepared to communicate any relevant personal experiences.

CLOSING and FOLLOW-UP

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



TIPS

- **Do not ask for a job.** It is more important to build a professional relationship.
- Set a professional tone. Bring energy and enthusiasm to the conversation. Be approachable, engaging and professional.
- Assume that your contact is assessing you as a potential employee
- Respect your contact's time. Once you begin asking questions, be prepared to lead the conversation. (do your research, so you know insightful questions)
- Be aware of distracting body language (twirling your hair, fidgeting, saying 'umm' or 'like' frequently)
- Eye contact is an art that takes practice. Don't stare, but maintain consistent eye contact
- Active listening includes nodding your head and using affirming cues.
- Steer away from anything negative. Do not make negative comments about companies or schools.

Questions you may ask:

Individual or Career Path:

- How did you choose this career?
- What educational experiences best prepared you for your current job?
- What has been a memorable moment in 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 trends do you see in the industry?
- What are the cyclical patterns of this industry?
- What credentials or training programs would you recommend?
- What industry, organizations, association or resources would you recommend?
- What are expectations for people who work in this industry?

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:

- Describe an average day in this position.
- What skills does the role require? Where have you fortified these skills?
- What is an average entry-level salary for people in this field?
- Would it be possible for me to job shadow at some time in the future?