



Curiosity Conversation Guide

Benefits of Curiosity Conversations

- Get firsthand, relevant information about the realities of career and life paths that you may be considering. This kind of information is not always available online.
- Find out about careers and opportunities you did not know existed.
- Get tips and insider knowledge about how to land your first career position, and about the skills and habits necessary to succeed in a particular role, organization or field.
- Learn what it's like to work at a specific organization.
- Initiate a professional relationship and expand your network of contacts in a specific career field; some of these contacts can develop into deeper mentoring relationships or professional partnerships.
- Advance your work through brainstorming and learning with someone with a shared interest.

Six Steps of Conducting Curiosity Conversations

(1) Research Career Fields & Define Your Goals

- Do some initial research on the career field or employer using internet and print resources.

(2) Identify people to interview

- Pursue your own contacts. People you already know, even if they aren't in fields of interest to you, can lead you to people who are. This includes family, friends, teaching assistants, professors, and former employers.
- Employ Design Thinking techniques like stakeholder mapping to identify the range of people who are connected to a particular role or industry
- Use OneHop and LinkedIn to identify Hopkins alumni to contact; they often take a special interest in "giving back" to students.

(3) Prepare for the interview

- Develop a brief introduction of yourself and your hopes for the meeting.
- Plan open-ended questions rooted in genuine curiosity about the person, their career path, and their current role/organization

(4) Initiate contact

- Contact the person via email (or through OneHop/LinkedIn's messaging systems)
- Mention how you got their name.
- Emphasize that you are looking to learn about their career path and the specific industry, not a job.
- Ask for a convenient time to have a 20-30 minute appointment.

Requesting an Informational Interview: Sample Email

"Hello. My name is Ashley Schantz and I'm a junior minoring in Marketing at Johns Hopkins University. Is this a good time for you to talk briefly? I heard you speak at an event sponsored by the Undergraduate Marketing Association last semester. Although I am not currently looking for a job, I have become very interested in public relations and would like to learn more about the field. Would it be possible to schedule 20 to 30 minutes with you at your convenience to ask a few questions and get your advice on how best to prepare to enter the field?"

(5) Conduct the Curiosity Conversation

- Dress neatly and appropriately, as you would for a job interview.
- Arrive on time or a few minutes early.
- Bring your list of questions and take notes if you like.
- Restate that your objective is to get information and advice, not a job.
- Give a *brief* overview of yourself and your education and/or work background.
- Be prepared to direct the interview, but also let the conversation flow naturally, and encourage the interviewee to do most of the talking.
- Respect the person's time. Limit the meeting to the agreed-upon timeframe.
- Ask the person if you may contact them again in the future with other questions.
- Ask for names of other people to meet to gain different perspectives.

Note: You can bring a resume, but don't take it out right away or your interviewee may think you are fishing for a job. At some point you may wish to ask for input about it, but first establish a nice rapport with the person.

(6) Follow-up

- Keep records. Write down what you learned, what more you'd like to know, and what your next steps should be.
- Send a thank-you note within 1-2 days to express your appreciation for the time and information given. Based on whether the informational interview was relatively informal or more businesslike, this may be a brief handwritten note or an email.
- Keep in touch with the person, especially if you had a particularly nice interaction; let them know that you followed up on their advice and the outcome. This person could become an important part of your network or even a future mentor.

Helpful Questions

Below is a list of some generally helpful questions to initiate the conversation. To make the most of your curiosity conversation, don't be afraid to really nerd out and get into specific subject matter. People enjoy talking about topics that matter to them with others equally engaged in the subject. They may also be more inclined to offer further support. Don't be afraid to let your personality shine through.

TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Please tell me about your work.
- Describe a typical work day.
- What aspect of your job do you find most challenging/rewarding?
- Do you more often work individually or as part of a team?
- Which offices/individuals do you interact with on a regular basis?

PREPARATION FOR CAREER PATH

- What do you think is the best academic preparation for this profession?
- How did you become interested in this field?
- What are the qualifications you look for in a new hire?
- What else should I know to make an informed decision about choosing a career in this field?
- Is there anything you wished you knew before entering this field?
- Do you have any recommendations for other people I should speak with in the field to learn more? May I use your name when reaching out to them?

INDUSTRY KNOWLEDGE

- What industry publications would you recommend I read to help keep me informed of developments in this field?
- Is the advice you have passed on to me regarding this sector typical of the industry, or is it specific to your organization?
- Are there any professional associations that you are part of or suggest I join?
- Where do you see this industry going in the next 5-10 years?

CULTURE & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- What are the unspoken expectations of this profession?
- What does work/life balance look like within this field as a whole?
- How does the culture within this profession differ from others?
- What skills can I gain through this work that can be applied to future career options?

BEHAVIORS AND HABITS

- Are there habits or routines that you've found help you be the best version of yourself?
- Are there behaviors you prioritize to make sure you are productive at work?
- What are the things you make sure you have time for when you are not working?
- What habits have been instrumental to your growth and development in your career?

LIFE BEYOND WORK

- What is it like to live and work in your area? What are some things that I should keep in mind when considering moving to this area?
- Does your current live/work situation allow you to pursue hobbies, activities, and/or creative pursuits that are important to you?
- How have you found community and built/maintained relationships in your life after college?

EQUITY & INCLUSION

- How does your organization define diversity? What lenses of diversity has your organization made a direct commitment toward?
- What challenges might someone who shares my identities face in this role/organization/field? What resources does your organization offer to support with these challenges?
- Does your organization have mentoring programs for new employees who share my identity?
- How does your organization support international students? Does your organization accept OPT? Sponsor H1B visas?
- How does your organization support caregivers (programs for new parents, flexible hours/work modalities, etc.)?
- Does your organization complete annual compensation equity analysis? What steps has your organization taken to address any gaps in compensation?
- What steps is your company taking to address social causes that are important to me and central to my values?
- Does your organization have any affinity groups or committees to support diverse populations? If so, how do these groups contribute to the culture of the organization?