

Informational Interviewing

Sample letters and emails to request an interview.

The following are sample informational interview request letters. Note that they are brief, introduce you and your reason for writing, and focus on requesting information, not a job.

These requests can be emailed, or sent in handwritten or typed letters. They are 2-4 brief paragraphs long, and cover four points:

1. Opening, mentioning how you got their contact information.
2. Summary statement of who you are, and why you are contacting them
3. Request for an opportunity to meet, mentioning specifically what you would like to hear from them.
4. Closing thank you.

Subject line (if sending email): Georgia O'Keefe suggested I contact you.

Dear Dr. Vaughn,

I recently spoke with Georgia O'Keefe, who suggested that I contact you. I am a first-year pharmacy student at UCSF, and for the past few months have been speaking with a number of residents about their experience. Georgia briefly mentioned that you also considered residencies that were a good match for your career path in the pharmaceutical industry, and wondered if you would be willing to share some valuable advice on the subject.

Would it be possible for us to meet for perhaps half an hour? I would appreciate hearing about your current experience at Merck, residency experience at UCLA, and any advice you might have for a student.

Regards, Pablo Picasso

Let's look at how this color-coded sample covers all of the points of a well-written and concise letter:

Subject Line (if sending email): We met at the APhA conference last week

Dear Ms. Woolf,

It was a pleasure meeting you at the APhA conference last week. I found our conversation about the expanding role of pharmacists in health policy was most engaging, as it is one many of my fellow students and I have been discussing at UCSF. You mentioned that you would be attending the California based meeting in September, and I would welcome the chance to speak with you further about your experience as a health policy analyst for the Colorado state government. Would it be possible for us to meet?

Be well,

Akira Kurosawa

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Subject Line (if sending email): Follow up from meeting at AMCP conference

Dear Elvis,

Note: always use their title and last name (i.e., Dr. O'Keefe), unless they have given you permission to use their first name.

We spoke briefly last June at the AMCP conference in San Diego, and you graciously gave me your card and suggested that I contact you at a later date. I am a 4th year pharmacy student at the University of California, and for the past three months, I have conducted informational interviews with a variety with a number of pharmacists to learn about the range of professional opportunities available to someone with my training and experience.

I would appreciate the opportunity to continue our conversation about your experience as a pharmacist working for the Indian Health Services. Would it be possible for us to meet for half an hour, at your convenience? I will contact you by phone in the week in the first week of August to follow up on this email, but feel free to contact me via email as well.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Kate Hepburn

Subject Line (if sending email): Fela Kuti suggested I contact you

Dear Dr. Naipaul,

I recently met Dr. Fela Kuti at the ASHP conference, and he sends along his greetings. He suggested I contact you, describing you as someone with valuable advice to give from your own experience of working as a pharmacist for the World Health Organization in Qatar.

I am in my third year of my pharmacy program at the University of California, and am looking for opportunities to work internationally. I have previous short term volunteer experience in Bolivia through UCSF, but am currently researching more international opportunities as a pharmacist. Fela mentioned that you chose to work in Qatar for two years, and briefly described your job search experience as both challenging and rewarding. He also encouraged me to ask if we could meet for 30 minutes. I'd welcome any advice you can give about organizing your job search and your experience abroad.

Please feel free to reach me at your convenience at 415.111.2222, or via this email.

With warm regards, Octavio Paz

Subject Line (if sending email): Harold Pinter suggested we connect

Dear Dr. Holiday,

Harold suggested I contact you and sends his greetings. I am 2nd year pharmacy student UCSF, and met Harold at the American Cancer Society conference. He noted your extensive pharmacology research experience, and that you considered both east and west coast residency programs. He remembered that several aspects of your candidacy were unique, and suggested that you would have great advice to anyone considering residency.

I am visiting the east coast for a few days in March – could I invite you out for coffee and hear your thoughts about what to think about before choosing a residency program in our field?

Be well,

Lauren Bacall