Good Questions to ask in an Informational Interview

Once you get on the phone with an alumnus or other connection, here is a sample transcript of what the call could sound like:

**Introduction:** Thank you for taking the time to help me as I explore career options. I’m talking to a variety of professionals to get their ideas and advice about the best fit for someone with my skills and experience in today’s marketplace. Please know that I’m not looking to you for a job. The right position is my ultimate goal but right now, your advice and perspective is going to be of tremendous help to me.

**Skills summary:** In all of my academic work, jobs, and internships, I’ve always enjoyed using my skill in __________. An example of this is ___________________. When I was at ___________/while doing research for my thesis/ as manager of *Stuck in the Middle*, I successfully_______________. Most recently, I’ve developed a new skill in ________. Based on that description, I’m interested in _______ type of positions in your organization. What do you think?

**Questions you might ask:**
1. What does an entry-level professional in your position/organization/profession do all day?
2. Tell me about how you made your career decisions: why you chose this field, why you took positions, and why you left positions.
3. What does your company/industry look for in the people they hire?
4. What activities/classes or other parts of your college experience best prepared you for your career? What is the best decision you made as an undergraduate with respect to your professional life?
5. What skills or experiences are most impressive in your field? How would you recommend I get that experience?
6. I’ve noticed that your organization is stepping up its presence on social media. What media outlets—blogs, magazines, newspapers, journals, or Twitter feeds—should I be reading to be in the loop in this industry?
7. What organizations and online groups do you recommend I belong to, and what events should I attend?
8. A recent article in ______________ predicted major changes for the ______________ industry because of ______________. What do you think the future outlook is?
9. Would you be willing to review my resume and offer your opinion and advice?

**Closing (asking for referrals):** You’ve given me some great ideas: thank you so much! Who else in the field do you think I should speak with?

Be sure to send a thank you e-mail within 24 hours of talking—and even follow up with a handwritten note if the person has really helped you!