

# NETWORKING

## WHAT IS NETWORKING?

Networking is the process of asking people you know (and the people *they* know) for information, advice, ideas, support and maybe even job leads as you plan and pursue your career goals. It's as simple as 1-2-3:

1. Determine your goal(s) – What kind of information or advice do you need?
2. Identify appropriate people to contact – Who has this information for you?
3. Schedule meetings or attend events, preferably in person.

## WHY IS NETWORKING IMPORTANT?

Networking isn't just about collecting contacts—it's about building relationships that can lead to meaningful opportunities. Whether you're attending a career fair, reaching out to an alum, or chatting with a guest speaker, networking helps you gain insights, advice, and access to job openings.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Upwards of 85% of people find their positions through networking! That means your next opportunity might come from a conversation, not just an application.

## BENEFITS OF NETWORKING

- Gain insider knowledge about industries, roles, and organizations
- Discover opportunities before they're posted
- Receive career advice from experienced professionals
- Build confidence in professional settings
- Grow your support system and expand your network over time

## HOW TO START NETWORKING

**Start small:** Talk to professors, advisors, classmates, or alumni

**Join events:** Attend career fairs, info sessions, and networking mixers

**Follow up:** Send a thank-you email and/or LinkedIn request

**Practice your pitch:** Know how to introduce yourself clearly and confidently

## REMEMBER:

Networking is about connection, not perfection. Be curious, authentic, and professional. Your effort can open unexpected doors!

## EMAIL ETIQUETTE: AN ON-LINE INTRODUCTION

- Send a BRIEF email and request time to talk
- Maximize subject line: "John Smith Referral"
- Don't ask 'YES/NO' questions (e.g., "Are you hiring?")
- Proofread email ALWAYS (or ask someone else to read it)
- Assume your email will be printed, passed around, or filed
- Follow-up by phone whenever possible
- Don't expect immediate responses; follow up in a week or so by phone/email

## DRESS FOR SUCCESS

Making a strong first impression at a professional event or an interview can open doors. Your appearance is one of the first things people notice, and dressing appropriately shows respect, confidence, and readiness. Whether interviewing in-person or virtually, always dress for success.

### WHY DRESSING FOR SUCCESS MATTERS

- It builds confidence in yourself and trust from others
- It helps you feel prepared and professional
- It shows respect for the opportunity and those you're meeting

### WHAT DOES 'BUSINESS PROFESSIONAL' MEAN?

Business professional attire is more formal and is often expected at job interviews, presentations, or in corporate settings. It communicates polish, seriousness, and respect for the occasion.

### WHAT DOES 'BUSINESS CASUAL' MEAN?

Defined as being between professional and casual dress, it's essential to know which jobs require business casual dress. If you're unsure about whether to dress business casual or professional, err on the side of caution and dress business professional.

Business Professional	Business Casual	Avoid Wearing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tailored/well-fitting suit</li> <li>• Suit jacket, sport coat, blazer</li> <li>• Tie with minimal patterns</li> <li>• Professional blouse, button-ups, or tops</li> <li>• Solid colors or minimal patterns</li> <li>• Closed-toe shoes, loafers, flats, heels, and boots</li> <li>• Minimalistic jewelry</li> <li>• Matching belt and shoes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collared/button up shirt</li> <li>• Blouses</li> <li>• Slacks, chinos, khakis, and corduroy pants</li> <li>• Sweaters, cardigans</li> <li>• Dresses and skirts: not too short or too tight</li> <li>• Closed-toe shoes, loafers, flats, heels, and boots</li> <li>• Matching belt and shoes</li> <li>• Tie optional</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sweatpants or leggings</li> <li>• T-shirts with logos</li> <li>• No jeans or shorts</li> <li>• Flip-flops or slides</li> <li>• Crop tops or tank tops</li> </ul>

### Key Tips:

- Try on your outfit ahead of time to make sure it fits well
- Go easy on cologne/perfume and accessories
- Choose something that is clean and ironed/wrinkle-free
- Wear an outfit that fits; do not try to fit into something too small or too big or too tight or too loose
- Do not focus on fashion labels; they are not important
- Do not wear anything too bold. It is okay to include a small pop of color to show personality; however, too much can be distracting
- When in doubt, dress a little more formal than you think you need to

When considering your comfort level in gender expression, consider researching the employer's non-discrimination policies. Moreover, review the company on the [Corporate Equality Index \(www.hrc.org/resources/corporate-equality-index\)](http://www.hrc.org/resources/corporate-equality-index) to view its benefits, support, and protections for the LGBTQIA+ community.

## CONFIDENT BODY LANGUAGE

Your body speaks before you do! Whether you're meeting someone for the first time at a networking event or introducing yourself in an interview, confident body language helps build connection, credibility, and trust. The best part? You can practice and improve it.

### WHY CONFIDENT BODY LANGUAGE MATTERS

- It helps you appear self-assured—even when you're nervous
- It makes others more likely to engage with and remember you
- It reinforces your message and shows enthusiasm
- It helps you feel more in control and less anxious

### KEY ELEMENTS OF CONFIDENT BODY LANGUAGE

Do This	Avoid This
<b>Stand tall with your shoulders back</b>	Slouching or crossing your arms
<b>Make eye contact when speaking &amp; listening</b>	Looking down or avoiding eye contact
<b>Use a natural, relaxed smile</b>	Forced or tense expressions
<b>Use open hand gestures when talking</b>	Hiding your hands or fidgeting
<b>Lean in slightly to show engagement</b>	Leaning away or looking distracted
<b>Sit up straight with both feet on the ground</b>	Folding into yourself or tapping your feet

### WHEN YOU'RE INTRODUCING YOURSELF

- Smile and stand with a confident posture
- Make eye contact and greet with a clear, friendly tone
- Use a natural hand gesture or an appropriate handshake alternative
- Avoid looking at your phone—be fully present

### WHEN YOU'RE LISTENING

- Nod occasionally to show you're engaged
- Maintain an open stance (uncrossed arms, eye contact)
- Lean forward slightly to show interest
- Keep your phone and distractions out of sight

### BEFORE YOU WALK INTO THE ROOM

- Take a deep breath and do a quick posture check
- Try a power pose for 1–2 minutes to boost confidence
- Remind yourself of one thing you're proud of—it'll show in your energy

## THE ELEVATOR PITCH

The elevator pitch is a short introduction; it tells someone who you are, what you're good at, and what type of opportunity you're seeking. You can use it at networking events, career fairs, interviews, or even in emails.

The goal isn't to be perfect—it's to be prepared, clear, and confident.

### WHY YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH MATTERS

- It helps you feel more confident when meeting professionals
- It quickly communicates your strengths and interests
- It sets the tone for a meaningful conversation

### THE FOUR PARTS TO A GREAT PITCH

PART	WHAT TO INCLUDE	EXAMPLE
Who Are You?	Your name, school, and major (or current role)	<i>Hi, I'm Sam Husky. I'm a junior at the University of Southern Maine, majoring in Business Management, with an interest in Talent Acquisition.</i>
What Makes You Unique?	Skills, strengths, experiences, or achievements	<i>I've worked part-time in retail and helped run student events. I enjoy finding creative ways to connect with people and build engagement.</i>
What are Your Goals?	What you're looking for (internship, job, advice)	<i>I'm looking to learn more about Talent Acquisition, and hopefully, find a summer internship where I can build direct experience.</i>
Pose a Question	Invite conversation with a thoughtful question (see conversation starters on the last page)	<i>I'd love to hear about how you got started in your field and any advice you'd like to share with me.</i>

### ELEVATOR PITCH TIPS

- Keep it to **30–60 seconds**
- Speak with energy and confidence
- Practice—but don't memorize it word-for-word

### BEFORE YOU PITCH

- Write it out and read it aloud
- Practice with a friend or in the mirror
- Focus on being conversational, not perfect
- Be ready to adjust depending on the situation

## YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH

### A. Who Are You?

*Introduce yourself by sharing your name, what school you attend, your academic program or where you currently work.*

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### B. What Makes You Unique?

*Mention qualities you possess that are unique and meaningful. This is also a place to talk about your accomplishments.*

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### C. What Are Your Goals?

*Let the person know what you are looking for: information about a career, internship opportunities, etc.*

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### D. Pose a Question

*Invite conversation with a good conversation starter (see below).*

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## CONVERSATION DO'S & DON'TS

First impressions aren't just about how you look—they're about how you connect. A great conversation during a networking event or interview can leave a lasting impact. Practice active listening, curiosity, and clarity to build strong professional relationships.

### WHY CONVERSATION SKILLS MATTER

- They help build rapport and create genuine connections
- They show respect, professionalism, and interest in others
- They help you feel more comfortable and engaged in new settings

## CONVERSATION DO'S & DON'TS

DO THIS	AVOID THIS
Smile and introduce yourself clearly	Mumble or avoid introducing yourself
Ask open-ended questions (e.g., "What led you to your role?")	Ask yes/no or overly personal questions
Listen actively and make eye contact	Interrupt or wait for your turn to talk
Keep the conversation two-sided	Overshare or talk only about yourself
Show curiosity about the other person's work	Complain or speak negatively about others
Use professional language	Use slang, buzzwords, or acronyms without explanation
Wrap up respectfully (e.g., "It was great speaking with you...")	Walk away abruptly or without thanks

### BEFORE THE CONVERSATION

- Prepare a few go-to questions and topics
- Practice your elevator pitch
- Take a few deep breaths to calm nerves.
- Remember: you don't have to impress—just connect

### EXAMPLES OF CONVERSATION STARTERS

- "What brought you to this field?"
- "What do you enjoy most about your role?"
- "I'm exploring careers in [your major]—any advice for someone getting started?"
- "Have you attended this event before?"
- "How did you get started in your career?"
- "What's a typical day like in your role?"
- "What skills or qualities do you think are most important for success in your field?"
- "Are there any projects you're currently excited about?"
- "What do you wish you had known when you were starting out?"
- "Are there any professional organizations or events you'd recommend I check out?"

## EXIT STRATEGIES

*How to Wrap Up a Networking Conversation without Being Rude*

Networking isn't just about starting strong—it's about ending well. Knowing how to exit a conversation with confidence and courtesy helps you leave a positive impression and keep the momentum going.

## YOUR EXIT GOALS

- Leave the person feeling respected and appreciated
- Make room to meet others or continue exploring
- Create an opportunity for follow-up

## THE PLAN

- Look for a pause
- Give a compliment
- End with a polite closing statement
- Next steps to connect

## SAMPLE EXIT LINES

- "It's been great talking with you—thank you for sharing your experience. I don't want to keep you from meeting other people. Do you have a business card? I would love to follow up at a later time. Thank you again."
- "Before I go, I'd love to introduce you to my classmate—they're also interested in your field. May I contact you through email or LinkedIn?"
- "Thank you for speaking with me, I'd love to stay in touch. May I connect with you via LinkedIn? Thanks again for speaking with me."
- "I don't want to take up all of your time. I know we're all here to network. It was great chatting with you and getting to know you a bit. May I follow up with you? Do you prefer LinkedIn or email?"
- "Thanks so much. I don't want to monopolize your attention here. How about I send you an email to arrange a time for a brief call?"

## QUICK REMINDERS

- End with a smile and a thank you.
- Don't just walk away—say something.
- You're not being rude—you're being professional.

## WHAT TO AVOID

**Making excuses:** Don't pretend to get a phone call or need a drink, as people can often see through insincerity.

**Abruptly leaving:** Signal the end of the conversation rather than just walking away.

**Giving a vague or sales closing:** Avoid asking for a job or making an immediate sales pitch.