

FAQs

NETWORKING

For International Students

WHAT IS NETWORKING?



Networking is making new contacts, exchanging information, and building relationships. It can help generate leads, advance your career, and meet people who may be able to help you in the future.

WHY SHOULD I ATTEND A NETWORKING EVENT?



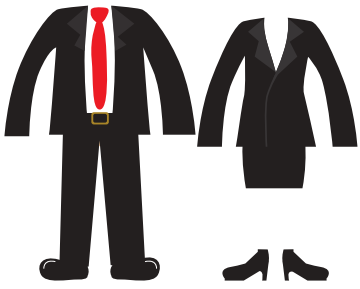
People attending a networking event are all interested in expanding their network. Ideally, it is a chance to meet a number of people in your industry/field under the same roof, all at once.

I'M SHY AND NETWORKING EVENTS MAKE ME NERVOUS. WHAT CAN I DO?



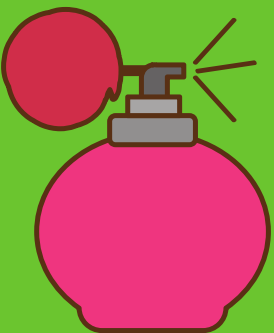
Keep calm, smile, look approachable, and focus on the fact that people are there to make new connections, just like you. If you are too nervous, the first time you attend an event you could partner with a colleague or friend and approach people together as a team. The next time, you will feel more confident attending on your own.

WHAT IS THE DRESS CODE FOR A NETWORKING EVENT?



Dress comfortably, but professionally. Your clothes should be more formal than what you would normally wear if you were going to class. Some event descriptions specify the dress code. If you are unsure, business casual is usually a good choice.

ARE NETWORKING EVENTS SCENT FREE?



Many venues/organizations have a scent free policy. Please note that standard hygiene practices are also expected (e.g. use of shampoo, deodorant, etc.). Make sure you avoid any scented products, as they may cause allergic reactions to others.

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IS NETWORKING ONLY FACE-TO-FACE OR ALSO ONLINE?

Networking happens also online. Email introductions and the use of LinkedIn are great examples. LinkedIn can also help maintaining your network of contacts after an in-person encounter (to follow up, share updates, etc.)



WHAT SHOULD I BRING TO A NETWORKING EVENT?

Helpful networking tools include:

- business cards
- your updated resume
- a notepad and pen
- a professional bag/folder to hold your tools



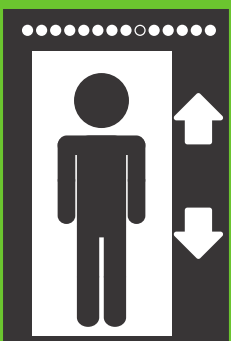
SHOULD I GIVE MY BUSINESS CARD AND RESUME TO EVERYONE I TALK TO?

Not necessarily. Give your resume if someone asks for it (e.g. because their organization is hiring). Business cards are usually exchanged at the end of a conversation, before saying goodbye.



WHAT SHOULD I SAY TO INTRODUCE MYSELF?

The elevator pitch is a great technique to introduce yourself at a networking function (or even in the hallway or elevator).



WHAT IS AN ELEVATOR PITCH?

It is a 30-second-speech explaining what makes you unique. It should attract your audience's attention and make them want to know more. You can use the PAWS technique to craft your elevator pitch (P = personal, A = academic, W = work, S = skills).

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SHOULD I SHAKE HANDS DURING INTRODUCTIONS?



In Canada it is normal practice to shake hands when meeting for the first time (and usually before departing after the first meeting). At a networking event, it is important to shake hands if the offer is extended.

WHAT ELSE SHOULD I TALK ABOUT?



Common small talk questions such as "Where are you from?" or questions related to your current situation (school, work) or shared experiences are all good options.

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE I SHOULD KEEP IN MIND?



Eye contact is very important. Also, listen attentively to others and avoid interrupting them.

SHOULD I TALK TO EVERYONE AT A NETWORKING EVENT?



No, it would be unrealistic. Set a realistic goal for the day: e.g. how many people would you like to connect with? If you are nervous, start small (e.g. 2 or 3 contacts). A clear goal will keep you motivated and reduce nervousness.

HOW CAN I JOIN THE CONVERSATION IF PEOPLE ARE ALREADY TALKING IN GROUPS?



Find a timely moment to approach the group and join it. Without interrupting any previous conversations, smile and introduce yourself (e.g. Hi, I'm Jane, would you mind if I join you?). Another great way to approach the group is to provide a comment on the topic they have been discussing.

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WHAT SHOULD I DO AFTER A NETWORKING EVENT?

Review the business cards you have collected. Follow up electronically with the contacts you made (via email or by sending them a LinkedIn invitation)



I DID NOT MAKE AS MANY CONNECTIONS AS I HOPED.

Polishing your networking skills takes time and practice. Do not get discouraged! As a next step, start researching other networking opportunities.



WHAT IS AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW?

It is a meeting with a contact who can help you learn about a career, industry or particular company. It provides you with a first-hand, personal account of what it is like to work in a particular position or organization. Remember that you are not asking for a job, but for insight!



WHY SHOULD I ASK FOR AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW?

It can be a great way to get insight from someone you met at a networking event, and find out if a position/company matches your own interests, skills, and career goals.



HOW SHOULD I ASK FOR AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW?

You may say "I'd welcome the opportunity to meet with you at your convenience to learn more about your organization as somebody aspiring to work in your field." In Canada informational interview are common, and many people will be happy to meet with you. Do not get discouraged if a contact does not respond affirmatively. Working professionals are busy, and you may be able to schedule an interview with another contact.