

What is Networking?

Networking consists of meeting and staying in contact with professionals and other people, usually within your field or industry. Your relationships with these individuals can later be used to help you achieve a goal, such as finding a new job, changing careers, and securing a raise or promotion.

The Benefits of Networking:

- You'll have connections in place by graduation
- It sharpens your interpersonal skills and builds confidence
- Enhances your personal brand for job searching
- Provides you with access to the "Hidden Job Market"
- It can lead to mentoring opportunities

6 Essential Networking Tips for Students and Recent Grads

Networking requires preparation and practice. It can be challenging to market yourself and establish professional contacts, but it can be made easy. To succeed at building connections — whether online or at networking events — you need to be confident and prepared. Use these tips to enhance your networking abilities!

1

Identify Your Goals

To get the most out of networking, you need to set career goals. **Understanding what you need and what you're looking for will help you prepare for the event.** Career goals may include switching careers, finding interview opportunities, or simply growing your professional network for future endeavors.

2

Craft Your Elevator Pitch / 30-Second Commercial

An elevator pitch is a brief summary of your professional history, your future plans, and what you can offer others. This is the pitch you'll use in conversation when trying to establish a connection with somebody, whether at a networking event or elsewhere.

Ex: "My name is Taylor Smith and I'm currently pursuing my Master of Nursing degree at United States University concentrating in FNP. I have worked in healthcare as a Registered Nurse for the past few years and recently completed clinical rotations with Alvarado Hospital Medical Center in their labor and delivery unit and emergency department and gained skills in crisis management, patient care, and emergency medical services. I'm excited to use these skills in my future career as a Family Nurse Practitioner."

3

Dress the Part

Dressing professionally for networking events can put you in the right mindset to build relationships and help you make a good impression. Recruiters and other professionals meet with a lot of students during networking events, so making a good impression is critical.

4

Gather Your Materials

Preparing for a networking event includes creating and bringing materials like resumes and/or business cards. Recruiters connect with colleges looking for future employees. Being prepared with a resume and/or business cards on hand tells recruiters that you're a serious candidate and genuinely interested in pursuing a career with them. It also helps recruiters remember your name!

5

Be Proactive

It's important to show initiative at networking events by doing your research and preparing ahead of time. Networking requires a proactive and growth mindset. For example, do research on companies or individuals you know will be in attendance. Expand your network by joining alumni and professional associations, nonprofit boards, and online and in-person affinity groups.

6

Follow Up

Following up with new connections is one of the most important — and often most neglected — components of networking. Doing this allows you to maintain an ongoing, mutually beneficial relationship. Start by organizing the contact information you collected. Then, send personalized messages to each individual you met, either via email or through an online network like LinkedIn. Effective strategies include referencing specific information they shared with you, asking a question they're uniquely prepared to answer, and thanking them for any advice they gave you. You might also suggest a second meeting or say you hope to see them again at a future event.