

What Is Networking?

Networking is the process of connecting with people and gathering new information to expand your knowledge about career opportunities as well as your options for professional growth. In making connections, you are naturally exchanging insights and mutual contacts. You can think of this as asking for [AIR \(Advice, Information and Referrals\)](#). This is valuable at every stage of your career development.

Expectations

When connecting with new or old contacts in your network, it is essential to treat each relationship with care. Here are tips for treating your network with care:

- *Be intentional.* Before reaching out to someone, establish your purpose for contacting that person. What advice, information, and referrals do you hope to gain from making a connection?
- *Be respectful of your contact's time.* Clearly communicate your purpose for reaching out to someone. Provide an overview of your background and interests through your [elevator pitch](#) or [personal infomercial](#).
- *Remember that networking is not only about getting a job.* Although learning about a job from someone would be great, keep in mind that other advice, information, and referrals are still valuable for your career growth.
- *Be mindful of how you present yourself.* The message that you send someone is not only about content; it is also about tone, body language, and other non-verbal cues.

Sample Message-Requesting A Meeting/Conversation

Keep your note as brief as possible. Say who you are, what your interests are, and why you want to learn from that individual. Here is a sample message:

Dear (Name),

I hope you are doing well. I am a student at Simmons University and will complete my (Name of Degree Program) next semester. I would like to learn more about (Name of Academic Field, Industry, Skill Set, and/or Other Interest). Based on your experience with (Information You Learned from the Contact's Online Profile or Other Referral Source), I am wondering if we could connect in person or by phone for 30 minutes to learn more about what you do in this field. I would appreciate any insights you could provide.

*All the best,
(Name)*

Preparing For The Meeting

Prior to meeting with a networking contact, it is important to take some time to prepare. You should plan to do research on the person you will be speaking with using online resources such as Simmons Network, LinkedIn, or Handshake. Take some time to review their educational background, internships and career trajectory, which will help you develop a list of questions for them.

Before your meeting, make sure you practice your elevator pitch. Next, you should [prepare specific questions](#) you would like to ask this contact, as well as draft the [agenda](#) of your meeting. Finally, prepare the same as you would for an actual job interview by dressing professionally, arriving on time, and being polite and professional.

Next Steps And Follow-Up

Effective networking means building a relationship over time by keeping in touch regularly and exchanging information, advice and contacts. Be sure to:

- Send an email thank you note within 24 hours mentioning what was particularly beneficial from your meeting. (See sample below)
- Set an appointment with yourself on your calendar to make a follow-up call or email to the contact. Then do it!
- Keep your contacts informed. If your original contact referred you to someone who was helpful, send him/her a quick note with that information.
- Reflect on what you learned from the meeting, what else you need to know, and determine action steps for the future.

As a networker, it is natural to view networking as an activity that helps you learn more about opportunities for you, whether you are exploring majors, careers, or specific job or internship opportunities. Over time, however, it will become clear to you that networking is indeed a two-way street. Those who help you now may seek your assistance later. It is wise to stay in touch with people and maintain your network. For example, if you stumble across an interesting article that reminds you of your mentor - send it to them! It communicates to them that they are on your mind, and that you want to stay connected. Your network of contacts is one of your most valuable assets. Treat it with care.

Thank You Note

After making a new connection, it is critical to send a follow up thank you note to express appreciation for that person's time. This should be sent through email. Review a sample thank you note below. It can be helpful to take notes throughout your networking conversation to refer back to when writing your thank you note.

Dear (Name),

It was so nice to (meet/speak) with you today! Thank you for taking the time to answer my questions and talk about what it is like at (Company)—it seems like a very interesting place to work. I especially loved hearing about your experience at Simmons and [something you enjoyed talking about].

I look forward to staying in touch as I continue (my internship search/figuring out my next step). I definitely plan to use your advice to (piece of advice that stuck with you). I look forward to seeing you when you are back on campus in the fall for the Alumnae/i Career Panel; I will make sure to come say hello.

All the best,

(Name)

Additional Networking Resources

- [Simmons Network Resource Guide](#)
- [Networking: Asking for AIR \(Advice, Information and Referrals\)](#)
- [Informational Interview Agenda](#)