The Art of Small Talk
Most networking begins through casual everyday conversation. Strike up a conversation with the people you meet in your normal routine. You never know who may have an aunt or a brother or colleague in your field.

The Right Approach
Networking conversations can go bad quickly if the person can tell you are more interested in gaining information like contact names than learning from the experience of the person to whom you are speaking. Be respectful and remember that you have much to learn from each person you meet. Thank everyone.

Networking at Hope
The Office of Career Services helps students network through:
• individual office appointments matching students to alumni for networking conversations
• career panels of professionals working in related fields
• on campus networking events with professionals
• networking events held in cities that interest a number of upcoming seniors

How Do I Start?
Call the Office of Career Services at x7950 to schedule a networking appointment or learn more about upcoming networking events and career panels.

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Why is Networking Important?
According to a recent survey of the Department of Labor, networking accounts for at least 69% of all annual hires. Networking is the BEST way to find a job or internship. Throughout your life you will make networking contacts that develop into relationships including friends, colleagues, and professional prospects.
The First Impression

How to Structure a Networking Conversation

• Introduce yourself and establish rapport
• Ask questions to learn about the person you are meeting
• Create a connection between the two of you ("It sounds like we have a lot of the same ideas about our fields of interest.")
• Wrap up the conversation with a promise to keep in touch and then do so by following up.

The Importance of Follow-Up

The #1 Rule of Networking is to stay in touch!

• Write a brief thank you note to those you meet
• Follow-up when you say you will. Opportunities for follow up include:
  ◦ sending a revised résumé
  ◦ sending a note to thank them for a referral you have contacted
  ◦ scheduling another one-on-one conversation
• Keep track of your correspondence with each person in your network, including dates and details of answering machine messages and telephone conversations; questions and answers from information interviews; notes from office visits; and dates you have agreed to follow up, etc.

Information Interviewing

How is networking different from information interviewing?
Information interviewing is a piece of the networking process. In an information interview you have the opportunity to explore your field of interest through a structured, longer conversation with someone already working in that field.

What do I need to know to have a successful information interview?
Sometimes the phrase "informational interviewing" may sound uninviting to your network contacts as it sounds very similar to an "interview" for an employment position. You may wish to ask for an "information meeting" instead. Please remember to use the information interview as an opportunity to gather information and seek advice, not to ask outright for an internship or employment opportunity. It is often appropriate, however, to ask the person you speak with for advice on ways you might pursue employment or internship opportunities in your field of interest and give specifics about your search.

Getting Ready
Before you jump into this valuable exercise, you will need to have a solid understanding of who you are (self-assessment) and a basic understanding of your fields of interest (career exploration). in order to answer questions from the professionals you meet If you have not explored these issues, please see the Career Counselor in the Office of Career Services to begin this process.

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Information Interviewing (con't)

Steps for Arranging your Information interviews

1. Compile a list of questions that you would like answered.
   • Sample questions are listed at the end of this handout.
   • Questions can also come from your self-assessment and career exploration activities.
   • Try to use open-ended questions.

2. Arrange a meeting time
   • Arrange a mutually convenient location or time. Try to meet the individual at his or her office, if possible.
   • If the meeting is arranged in a public place, remember to provide a picture or professional description of yourself, so the professional can find you.
   • A phone conversation is also appropriate. However, if in differing time zones, make sure to confirm the time he or she is available to talk.

3. Be prepared when you meet
   • Prioritize your list of questions.
   • Start with a topic that is easy to discuss and build rapport.
   • Remember to listen! Avoid interrupting the person speaking.
   • Make brief notes during the conversation.
   • Give the professional the opportunity to ask you questions at the end of the conversation.

4. Send a thank you note
   • Thank the professional for setting aside time to meet with you.
   • Mention one or two things that really stood out as valuable information that you gained.

Networking
Do's and Don'ts

Do....
• Thank your network partners and keep in touch with them
• Develop lasting relationships, not just contacts
• Always look for ways to help the people in your network
• Remember to ask two important questions, "What is your story?" and "What advice would you have for me as I consider entering this field?"

Don't....
• Brag or exaggerate the truth in your conversations
• Spend too much time in unfocused conversation; appreciate your partner’s time
• Gossip or share inappropriately with network partners; stay professional and relevant
• Allow your networking relationship to become one-sided
• Ask personal questions or questions about money/salary
• Even think about asking for a job; keep the focus on gathering information and advice
• Forget to thank your network partners and keep in touch with them
The Next Step
Networking is a continual life long process. When you are networking always ask for the next step in gaining information about your field.

- When casually networking, ask for an information interview
- After an information interview, ask if you can visit an individual's office or job shadow someone in his or her organization
- When visiting an office, offer to voluntarily help out with a project or need his or her office may have, or ask if he or she might consider hosting you as an intern
- While serving in an internship, inquire about potential full-time job opportunities and display an interest and passion in working for the organization

Making Networking Events a Success

- When attending a networking or other professional event, you will meet lots of people in a very short time and will want to remember some information about them. Wear something with pockets so you have a place to stow business cards. Come prepared to jot notes in a small notebook or Blackberry. Consider creating and bringing your own business cards.
- Most networking events involve food, drink, and lots of handshakes. Consider balancing a notebook under your plate or keeping your Blackberry in a pocket. Don't carry both a drink and a plate at the same time. You will need at least one hand free at all times in order to shake hands with people you meet.
- Your dress should be professional, sharp and modest.

Sample Questions
Professional Journey
- Would you describe your current role and your professional journey?
- What advice would you have for me as I consider entering this field?

What Work is Like
- What skills are required in your position on a day-to-day basis?
- What parts of your job do you find most challenging?
- What do you find most enjoyable?
- Which seasons of the year are busiest in your job?
- Does the work involve frequent travel or late nights?

State of the Industry
- Is this field growing?
- What developments, new technology, etc., could affect future opportunities?
- Why do people leave this field?
- Who are the most important people in the industry today?
- How does your company compare to others in the same industry?

Money and Advancement
- What do you think is the earning potential for this field?
- How, and how often are people in this field promoted?
- What is the background of most senior-level executives?