

## Networking Skills

### What is Networking?

Networking is building and maintaining relationships with people who do things that interest you. Networking gives you information and advice on career fields. It can help you make career decisions by learning about careers from people who do them, and/or it can help you get advice on finding jobs in particular fields. Networking is a process in which you ask others for help, just as they have done in building their careers. It can often generate job leads that are not advertised. Networking is not asking others for a job, or to find a job for you. It is asking others for advice, suggestions, and getting to know people in your field to hear about job openings.

### Why Network?

Networking makes life easier. You network everyday already from finding out the best pizza place in town, to locating an apartment, to getting the best teachers. Whether you are looking for your first job, exploring career options, researching graduate schools or trying to move to California, networking can help. It can boost your confidence and knowledge and introduce you to possibilities you didn't know existed. It teaches you about career fields and gives you the inside scoop on what is going on in your desired field.

### Who Can I Network With?

All you need is one person to start a network. Make a list of potential people to contact. You can start by networking with people such as:

- family
- friends
- current and past coworkers
- professors/staff
- career services office
- hairdresser
- neighbors
- clergy
- friends of family
- family of friends
- people you volunteered for and with
- alumni
- career counselors

- your doctor/ lawyer/ veterinarian/
- landlord
- local storekeepers
- church members.

### How to Increase Your Network

- Attending professional conferences/workshops in your desired field
- Hang out at places where people in your field gather
- Take classes or courses with professionals
- Join professional associations. Get on mailing lists, read newsletters and journals, and ask for lists of members.

Start keeping a list of people you hear about through the news or media that do things you are interested in as potential people to contact. For example, if you read a magazine article about something that interests you, contact the author and say, "I just read your article about X and I was interested in learning more. Would you be willing to meet with me for a few minutes so I can find out more?"

### How Do I Network?

#### The Informational Interview

Once you have brainstormed a list of potential contacts, one excellent networking tool is the informational interview. An informational interview is a meeting in which you talk to people who are working in career areas you are interested in. You are the interviewer, and you get to ask questions about the career you desire. You are not asking for a job! You are asking for information and advice. Informational interviews are best done in person, but phone interviews can be used if the person you are interviewing is a distance away.

Informational interviews provide you with the opportunity to explore career fields, discover what skills are required for certain jobs, observe the work atmosphere and people, and ask questions about what is important to you in a job. Just one informational interview can start your network because each person you talk to can refer you to other professionals.