

# Networking Basics

## What is Networking Really?

Professional networking is like building a web of valuable connections in your chosen field or industry. Just as social networks help you stay in touch with friends and family, professional networks help you connect with people who can support your career goals. It involves meeting and getting to know professionals, experts, and peers who can offer advice, guidance, job opportunities, or collaborate with you on projects. It is a crucial skill for professionals at all stages as it can significantly impact your career prospects. Building and maintaining a professional network can open doors to job opportunities, provide guidance from experienced professionals, and help you stay updated on industry trends.

## Networking Basics

### Start Early

Don't wait until you graduate to begin networking. Start while you're in college. Attend career fairs, seminars, workshops, and join student organizations related to your field of interest. College is an excellent place to make initial connections.

### Build a Professional Online Presence

Create a professional online presence on platforms like LinkedIn. Upload a well-written profile, a professional photo, and showcase your skills, experiences, and achievements. Connect with classmates, professors, and professionals in your industry.

### Schedule Career Conversations

Reach out to Denison Alumni and other professionals for informational interviews. This is not a job interview but a chance to learn about their career paths, industry insights, and advice. It's a great way to build relationships and gain knowledge.

### Be Genuine and Show Appreciation

Authenticity matters in networking. Be genuinely interested in others, listen actively, and offer your help when appropriate. Building relationships is about trust and mutual respect. After making a connection, follow up with a thank-you email or message.

### Network Continuously

Networking is an ongoing process. Keep expanding your network, even after you land your first job. Stay connected with your contacts and nurture these relationships over time.

Remember that networking is not just about collecting business cards or LinkedIn connections. It's about building meaningful relationships based on trust and shared interests. The connections you make today can shape your future, so invest time and effort into developing your professional network.

# Networking in Person

## First Impressions Matter

- What are you wearing? Is it appropriate for the setting you are in?
- What are you eating? Is the timing right? Avoid hovering at food or drink stations.
- Have a nice, firm handshake. Not too tight and not too soft.
- Wear your nametag on your right side - when you reach for a handshake, your nametag will be clearly in the line of sight.
- Introduce yourself with your first and last name. It will be hard for people to connect with you later without your last name.

## Conversation Starters

- Introduce yourself and share your name, your major(s) and class year.
- Ask questions. People like to talk about themselves and you are trying to build a relationship, so start to build an authentic connection. Try questions like:
  - When did you graduate from college/Denison?
  - What was your major?
  - How did your Denison experience prepare you for your career?
  - What do you wish you would have known when you were in college?
- Share information about yourself. Nobody can help you if they don't know what you want to do. Consider sharing information about your career goals and the questions and unknowns you have related to those career goals.

## Conversation Closers: Know When and How to Exit

- End with something along the lines of
  - "It was really nice to meet you."
  - "I hope we can connect again to talk more about \_\_\_\_\_."
  - "May I write down your contact information" or "Do you have a card?"
  - I enjoyed talking with you, perhaps we could continue this conversation? Do you have a preferred way in which I contact you?"

## Additional Resources

### Ask a Denisonian

You are part of a community of alumni committed to your success, and with Ask a Denisonian, you can access their help and guidance. You simply fill out a short online form with your name, your email, and your question, and the platform will search Denison's existing alumni data and utilize artificial intelligence to find the best experts that are most likely to assist you based on experience, availability, location, and other factors. The matched alums will receive an email with your question and within a few days, you can expect an answer from a fellow Denisonian.

### Knowlton Connect: Network with Confidence

Visit [KnowltonConnect.Denison.edu](https://KnowltonConnect.Denison.edu) and navigate to the Career Planning drop-down. From there, select Networking with Confidence for more information and resources.

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