



# Networking

*Learn how to build connections and establish mutually beneficial relationships.*

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## What is networking and why do I need to do it?

Networking is all about cultivating mutually beneficial relationships, often with a professional focus. At its worst it can seem to be about schmoozing and using other people, but at its best it can be about being authentic and establishing genuine connections with others that have things in common with you. By building this community we can leverage our mutual strengths and connections to get farther than any of us could have gotten individually.

### 5 simple steps to get started

- 1. Start with your current contacts** (map out who you know and from where). You will be surprised who they know!
- 2. Conduct information interviews.** Read our [tipsheet](#) for more advice.
- 3. Join a professional association** (or two). Find them in Associations Canada, available in the Career Information Area.
- 4. Participate in an online community** – take the LinkedIn & Social Media workshop for more.
- 5. Get involved here on campus.** It can be a great way to make new connections!

## Where can I network?

Networking happens in all kinds of ways, formal and informal. It could be through a casual chat with your neighbor or classmate, or more formally at a career fair or conference. To find out about formal events check the Career Services website to learn about our [career fairs](#) and [information sessions](#), talk to your department and classmates about conferences, and just generally keep an eye open for any interesting events where you might make a connection.

The benefit of formal events is that you usually have a little more time to prepare yourself in terms of researching who is attending to think about who you want to speak with, questions you want to ask, and what you might want to share about yourself. For more advice, check out the [Career Fairs tipsheet](#).

## Make a plan to make it happen

As with most good things, networking takes time. To build a healthy network requires ongoing effort to build and sustain connections – you can't just do it at the last minute! To make this happen intentionally, it often helps to make a plan. Think about what areas you want to explore (in terms of careers, geography, and specific organizations), who you can connect with about this, and how to talk to them. Grab a copy of "[My Job Search Plan](#)" to help you frame your thinking.

## Power up your conversations by being prepared

- 1. Know what interests you and what you can offer.** Be able to describe it succinctly in a way that's positive, memorable and gives a snapshot of you in action. Here's one example:

*"My name is Helena Javitz. I'm interested in production-related work in the food and brewing*



*industry. I'm currently studying chemical engineering, I have one summer of directly-related experience in quality control and I recently completed a major project on yeast culture enhancement. I would like to talk to you for some advice on careers in this area."*

2. **If you're after information about trends in a field of work, the nature of a profession, or advice from knowledgeable workers on career direction, say so.** Be prepared with specific questions. Look at the [Information Interviews tipsheet](#) for ideas about what you could ask.
3. **Help people remember you.** Give them a "contact card" with your name, address and phone number. (A local printing/copying business can provide you with an inexpensive supply.) Mention what you are doing at Queen's University (in your program, volunteer work or extra-curriculars) to remind them of the context. If you have been referred by someone, say so.

## Top 6 Tips for Building Your Network

### 1. Start early

It takes time for people to get to know you well enough to feel comfortable referring you to others or to give you the kind of information you need to make solid career choices. Don't wait until school is over to start cultivating your network. Take advantage of opportunities available to you right now in the form of clubs or student memberships in associations. Choose essays or projects where you can investigate or work with organizations within a sector that interests you.

### 2. Be open-minded

Sales clerks, taxi drivers, and your aunt's second cousin can be just as helpful to you as a director of marketing. Networks are different from bureaucracies. In a bureaucracy there is a hierarchy or a ranking, but in a network everyone is equal. The focus is on exchanging information.

### 3. Set realistic and achievable goals

No matter how good your network is, other people cannot make things work out perfectly for you. You won't always find exactly what you are looking for, but you'll always learn more.

### 4. Don't be afraid to ask

In your summer work as a receptionist or in a restaurant wait staff position, you probably got to know some of the customers or sales representatives quite well. Perhaps a few gave you their business cards, telling you to call if you needed anything. You do now—you need information. So, don't dismiss their offers of help—call them. Most people like to help others.

### 5. Give as well as receive

Networking is a two-way street. People are more inclined to help you, if you help them. If a friend is looking for information about a career in journalism and you happen to know someone that could help, offer to introduce them. Think of the information, knowledge or skills you have that could be useful to someone else, and share it.



## 6. Say thank you

Express your appreciation. If someone has helped you, let him or her know that you are grateful for their time and assistance. You can simply say thanks, or you can send an email, leave a voice mail or write a letter.

### Want to learn more?

Check out our [Effective Networking workshop](#) to refine your understanding and start developing your networking skills – practicing helps build the skills and make it less stressful! For more in-depth explanations check out books like Highly Effective Networking in the [Career Information Area](#).