



Indiana State  
University

*More. From day one.*

# Career Center

## NETWORKING SKILLS



*Helping you reach personal  
and professional success*

<http://career.indstate.edu>

## BUILD A PROFESSIONAL NETWORK

Although you should always use every job search resource available, networking will expose you to the largest number of job opportunities in the shortest length of time. Because 75-80% of the job openings are never advertised anywhere, the **key** to finding a good job is **networking!** And since networking takes time you should begin developing your professional network as early as possible in your college career. Networking involves building and keeping relationships and it should be beneficial to both parties.

### THINGS YOU CAN DO TO DEVELOP A PROFESSIONAL NETWORK WHILE IN COLLEGE

Get work experience while in college; even short term and volunteer work experience, as well as internships and co-ops and summer jobs, are valued by employers. These work experiences allow you to network with professionals in your field.

#### Volunteering

##### Attend the ISU Volunteer Fair.

You will find many organizations that could use your assistance at the fair. You will learn many skills while volunteering that will transfer to your job. In addition you will get to know volunteers from many career areas who may help you secure a job later.

#### Internships/Co-ops

Students interested in **internships and co-ops** should contact the Career Center in the Student Services Building, second floor (just above the Health Center). Counselors in the Career Center can assist in your search for a good internship. The Career Center receives many notices of internships from organizations throughout the U.S. In addition, there are directories of internships in the Career Center Library. Stay in contact with the people you met through your **internships and co-ops**. They could be good contacts for your future job searches.

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## Career Fairs

**Career Fairs** are another good way to make contacts. They allow you to meet a lot of people in a short period of time.

- Research employers who are attending the Career Fair.
- Dress professionally.
- Bring resumes to share with employers.
- Ask employers appropriate questions.
- Collect business cards. (Write notes on the back to help remember things about each person.)
- Send thank you notes.
- Follow-up with a telephone call to the people you meet at these career opportunity fairs.

### Attend ISU Career Fairs:

- Career Opportunity Fair (Fall and Spring semesters)
- Criminology Fair (Spring semester)
- Student Employment Off-Campus Career Fair
- Teacher Recruitment Fair (Spring Semester)

Career Fairs are also hosted by large organizations, cities, other colleges, professional organizations, and professional career fair organizations.

## Extracurricular Activities

Activities that you participate in outside of the classroom are an excellent way to explore career interests, develop skills, and begin building a network. **Clubs and organizations** are a good way to make contacts. In the areas of recreation, sports, fitness, and physical education participation in clubs, organizations, and recreational activities is particularly important. Not only are they a good source of contacts, but employers will expect to see these things on your resume. For a list of ISU clubs and organizations see the ISU web site or contact ISU Student Activities and Organizations.

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### Professional Associations

Join **Professional Associations** in your field while you are in college. They are one of the best ways to get to know people employed in your field. **GET INVOLVED** so that professionals in the associations know who you are.

- Attend local, regional, and national meetings as often as possible.
- Arrive early and attend a newcomer's session.
- Join a committee.
- Give a presentation.
- Assist with the newsletter (to keep your name in front of colleagues in your field).
- Attend hospitality sessions.
- Have lunch and dinner with people you don't know rather than with friends.
- Bring plenty of business cards.
- Obtain business cards and record information about the person on the back for future reference.
- Attend workshops and clinics in your field.
- Attend sessions and ask questions.
- Join a "**listserv**" (e-mail discussion by practitioners in your field) from your professional association.

**Professional Associations** are an extremely important source of networking for beginning and advancing your career. Talk to your professors to find out which **professional associations** they would recommend that you join. Several Internet addresses with links to these organizations are listed in this handout. Get copies of membership directories from a library or the Internet.

### Contact List

**Make a list of people you know** and let them know you are graduating and the kind of work you are looking for. Most people want to help. News about most jobs is spread by word of mouth.

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- Family
- Friends
- College classmates
- Alumni (stay in contact with friends in your major who graduate.)
- Faculty - high school and college
- Coaches
- Colleagues at work
- Professional Association acquaintances
- People from social organizations
- Church members
- Career Counselors

Contact people who work for companies/organizations that you wish to work for or who know people who work for your targeted companies. Ask them for advice and ask them to tell you if they hear of a job opening in your field. However, do not assume that they know your qualifications. Give them a copy of your resume. Be clear about what you want them to do for you:

- Distribute your résumé, your business cards.
- Give you names of key people at targeted employers.
- Introduce you to a person able to hire.
- Tell you about new projects at the targeted employers.
- Give you advice on how to approach a specific employer.

Be sure to visit any employers they suggest even if they do not have any current openings.

## **RESEARCH EMPLOYERS**

**Make a list of companies/organizations you want to add to work for and the names of people that have the power to hire.**

Be sure to research these organizations well before you do an informational interview. Use the **Career Center Library and Internet** to find information about companies/organizations.

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### Prepare For Your Informational Interview

- Develop a well-written resume.
- Learn as much as possible about the organization before the interview.
- Find out the names of the persons who can hire in your field - managers, directors, and department heads.
- Learn as much as possible about the person you will interview.
- Learn the professional jargon in your field.
- Ask questions that show that you did your research.
- Develop a list of questions that you want to ask.
- Dress as you would for a job interview.
- Make sure you have accurate directions to the place where the interview will be conducted.

### Arranging Informational Interviews

Informational interviewing is an excellent way to learn about organizations, typical positions and to develop contacts for your future job search.

- Contact the people who do the hiring - department heads, managers, and directors rather than personnel.
- Write a letter to make an appointment for an interview to obtain job information, advice, and referrals.
- Be sure to tell the person you want to interview the name of the person who referred you.
- Follow the letter with a phone call to schedule an appointment.

According to Richard Bolles in *What Color is Your Parachute?*, this leads to a job for 86 out of every 100 job hunters who try it.

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## SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

- How did you find out about this job?
  - What do you like most/least about your job? Why?
  - If you were starting over what would you do differently?
  - To which professional organizations do you belong?
  - Where are the best job opportunities with this field?
  - If I enter this field, what can I do to make myself more marketable?
  - What criteria do you use to evaluate a candidate when interviewing someone in this field?
  - What are the trends in this field and how does the future look for this field?
  - What can I do to improve my resume?
  - Can you suggest names of people that I should contact to get additional information about this field? How can I contact them? (Always ask if you can use your referrals name.)
  - What might be the best way to approach prospective employers?
  - Is there anything I can do for you? (Remember networking is a two-way street.)
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**Nametag**

- Right side.

**Handshake**

- Firm and confident.

**Self-Introduction**

- Prepare ahead of time to keep it smooth.
- Name, major, year in school, etc.
- Short and sweet.

**Opening Line**

- A way to “break the ice.”
- Think of your setting, who you know, or why you are there.
- Professional Conference Example: “That last speaker was just outstanding, don’t you think?”
- Wedding Example: “I’m the bride’s college roommate. How do you know the couple.”

**Conversation Starters**

- Pick up a newspaper for whatever city you are in so that you can have some material to start your conversations.
- You can also start a conversation by commenting on the facility, the food, the organization, the guest of honor, the charity/community benefiting from the event, or the weather... Just try to keep it positive.

**Conversation No-Nos**

- In a networking situation, you want to do everything you can to avoid offending anyone. Thus, stay away from such topics as religion, politics, and controversial issues in the news.
- It is also suggested that you refrain from using profanity or cracking crude jokes.

**Merging Into a Conversation**

- Avoid approaching two people in an apparently intense or intimate conversation.
  - Approach groups of three or more, positioning yourself close to the group.
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### **Merging Into a Conversation**

- Begin by making facial feedback to various comments. Once you feel “included” by verbal acknowledgement or eye contact, join in the conversation.
- Be open to others that want to join in.  
Be a host, not a guest, as soon as possible: It says a lot about someone when he/she takes the initiative to introduce a new person to the conversation.

### **Merging Out of a Conversation**

- Make a “graceful exit.”
- It is easiest to exit immediately after finishing your comment.
- What to say: “Excuse me; it has been great talking with you.”  
Or “Excuse me, but I think I see my boss/client/partner/spouse/mother-in-law.”  
Upon leaving the conversation, visibly move to another part of the room to show that you really did have someone to see or something to do and that you didn’t just leave the conversation because you were bored.

### **Giving out a Business Card**

- Ensure that your business card has all of the important information on it—who you are and how to contact you.
  - It is important to devise a way to keep your business cards crisp and looking nice.
  - If you are not yet comfortable with giving someone your business card, a good way to do so is to ask the individual with whom you are speaking for his/her business card first, offering you the opportunity to give yours out in return.
  - What to say: “I have really enjoyed speaking with you tonight. May I have your business card so that we may keep in touch?”
  - Once you receive a business card, it is a good idea to write something on the back that will help you remember the individual. Writing where you met, what the individual looked like, and what you spoke about can be helpful.
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### Orient Yourself

- In most situations, the following will be present:
  - Utensils: salad fork, entrée fork, dessert fork, dinner knife, two teaspoons, and soup spoon.
  - Dishes: bread and butter plate, coffee cup, saucer, water glass, and iced tea glass.
  - Napkin
  - Your beverages are on your right.
  - Your forks and bread and butter plate are on your left.

### Napkin

- When everyone is seated, place the napkin on your lap with the folded edge toward you.
- If you leave during the meal, place the napkin on your chair. This indicates you are coming back.  
At the end of the meal, fold and place the napkin neatly on the table. This indicates you are finished.

### Utensils

- Use utensils progressively from the outside to the inside.
- If you drop a utensil, leave it on the floor. Request a clean utensil from the server.  
When finished eating, place utensils horizontally on the plate to indicate to your server that you are finished.

### Ordering

- During an interview meal, it is NOT suggested that you order any alcohol.
  - Order in moderation when the bill is being paid by someone else. If in doubt, ask your host for his/her recommendation on a favorite entrée.
  - Foods to avoid, especially during an interview meal:
    - Anything with bones (ribs, some types of poultry)
    - Spaghetti and other similar items  
Anything that cannot be easily eaten with utensils.
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## Eating

- Everyone should be served before eating begins.
- Politely refuse anything that you do not wish to eat. (i.e., “*I don’t care for any, thank you.*”)  
Cut no more than three pieces of meat at a time.
- When removing items from the mouth (pits, grizzle, etc.) what goes in with the fork, comes out with the fork.
- Pace your eating. Be neither faster nor slower than your colleague(s).
- When you start the serving dish at the table, pass it to the person on your right and wait to serve yourself last.

## Course Specifics

### *Soup*

- The soup is eaten with the soup spoon.
- At a formal table, refrain from blowing on the soup, but instead cool the soup by gently stirring.
- When eating soup, spoon the soup away from your body. This reduces the chance of dripping it onto your clothes.
- No matter how large the vegetables in the soup, never use a knife or fork. Always place the soup spoon on the soup saucer—not the table or in the bowl.

### *Beverages*

- When you squeeze your lemon, gently shield your neighbor from flying juices or seeds. Place used lemon on coffee saucer or in glass.
- Use your first teaspoon to stir your beverages and place it on your coffee saucer after use.  
Use no more than three sweetener packets in your beverages.

### *Community Items*

- These items are at the center of the table and belong to everyone. They include: salt and pepper, creamer and sugar, rolls, salad dressings, etc.
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## Course Specifics

### *Salad*

- This course is eaten with the salad fork located on the left. (It is smaller than the other forks.)
- This is the first course where the knife may be used—be sure to save your knife on the bread and butter plate for your entrée.
- It is acceptable to ask for a new dinner fork if one is not provided.
- Lettuce is often of varying sizes—shredded, torn, or in large sheets. Cut as needed.
- Beware of cherry tomatoes—there is no good way to cut them. They squirt and roll easily.

### *Rolls*

- If you are nearest the rolls, offer the rolls to everyone and take yours last. (Pass to the right.)
- Rolls are meant to accompany your meal. Refrain from dunking them in soups and sauces or using them to shovel food onto your fork.
- When eating bread, break off a bite-sized piece and butter it individually.

### *Sorbet*

- Sorbet is served in very fine restaurants and is made of frozen fruit juices. This course is intended to cleanse the palate, eliminating the vinegar taste from salad dressings before the entrée.
  - For this course, use the extra teaspoon.
  - If the sorbet is frozen solid, gently stir it and eat around the edges while the inside thaws.
  - It is appropriate to hold the base of the sorbet dish if needed.
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### Miscellaneous

- Once a piece of silverware goes into your mouth, it should never be placed on the table or linens. Always place it on a plate or saucer.
  - Try every food item unless you are allergic.
  - Never salt or pepper your food without tasting it first.
  - Be careful to not put too much food into your mouth—in an interview situation, questions can be asked at any moment...you don't want to have a mouthful of food when a question is asked of you.
  - Rolls and beverages are usually the only things you get “seconds” of.
  - Seating of Females
    - Business: In a business setting, it is not suggested that a man pull out a chair for a woman.
    - Social: In a social setting, it may be proper, for the man to pull out a chair for a woman.
  - When in doubt, follow the lead of your host.
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## **Career Center**

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