

# GUIDE TO networking & informational interviews

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ONLINE INTERACTIVE BOOK 



# the goal of networking

Networking is the process of making connections and building relationships among individuals with similar career interests. While developing a network can seem intimidating, it is important to remember that it takes time to develop quality relationships. A strategy of networking can be to get to know new contacts as you would a friend, through common interests and genuine conversations.



## Tip!

A good way to start is to network with people you already know: family, friends, professors, internship supervisors, and others.

**myth:** *“Networking is about asking people for jobs.”*

**truth:** Networking is about building relationships that support your professional growth and can sometimes lead to job opportunities.

## Why people want to network with you.

There is a common myth that people won't want to meet with someone they don't know. We've all been there, and sometimes it can be intimidating to reach out to someone we don't know. However, what we have actually seen is that people enjoy meeting with aspiring professionals! Many people remember what it was like when they were starting out in their career, and they enjoy giving back.

As society becomes more interconnected, networking allows professionals to create meaningful relationships, increase their knowledge of opportunities within their field, and gain relevant industry information. Professionals today are interested in engaging in their field and creating the momentum needed to design a life that is meaningful, joyful, and fulfilling. By seeking out professional relationships and expanding our network, we are giving traction to our professional career goals.

## Where do I start?

Research yourself! Know your passions, skills, strengths, direction, and why you are interested in this field. Who am I? How can my experience get me to my goals? What are my strengths? What makes me stand out?

The answers to these questions help us develop our **professional identity**. In developing our professional identity, we can learn how to confidently speak about ourselves within our intended field. Understanding ourselves and knowing how to communicate our passions, interests, and skills is an important piece to building connections with peers, mentors, and colleagues in our career field.

**What about your career field do you want to learn more about?**

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**Think about what drew you to your major and this career path.**

**How do you want to impact this field?**

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**What makes you unique?**

*(Think of your experiences, involvement, projects, etc.)*

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**What are your strengths? What do you do really well?**

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## DEVELOPING YOUR *PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY*

Why are you interested in this career field?

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What are your future career goals and what could you do to develop them?

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**myth:** *“Networking is for extroverts only.”*

### **truth**

**Networking is for everyone!**

Extroverts and introverts both bring unique skill sets to the table that can make them great at networking with others.



# your network

## Who Can I Network With?

Now that you've developed your Professional Identity, you can start using that information to expand your professional network. But how do you go about doing that? Networking can be formal or informal and happen just about anywhere - class, club meeting, grocery store, social media, concert - anywhere! In knowing yourself, you can decide what setting you feel most comfortable networking.

## inner circle

The easiest place to start networking is with those closest to you. This could be family, friends, or even neighbors! It's possible they might know someone in your field, and talking to family and friends gives you the chance to practice these conversations. Who do you know in a career field you're interested in? Who do you want to learn more about? Who might be able to provide some insight? It's important to note that you may not be able to think of anyone in your inner circle related to your direction, and that's okay.

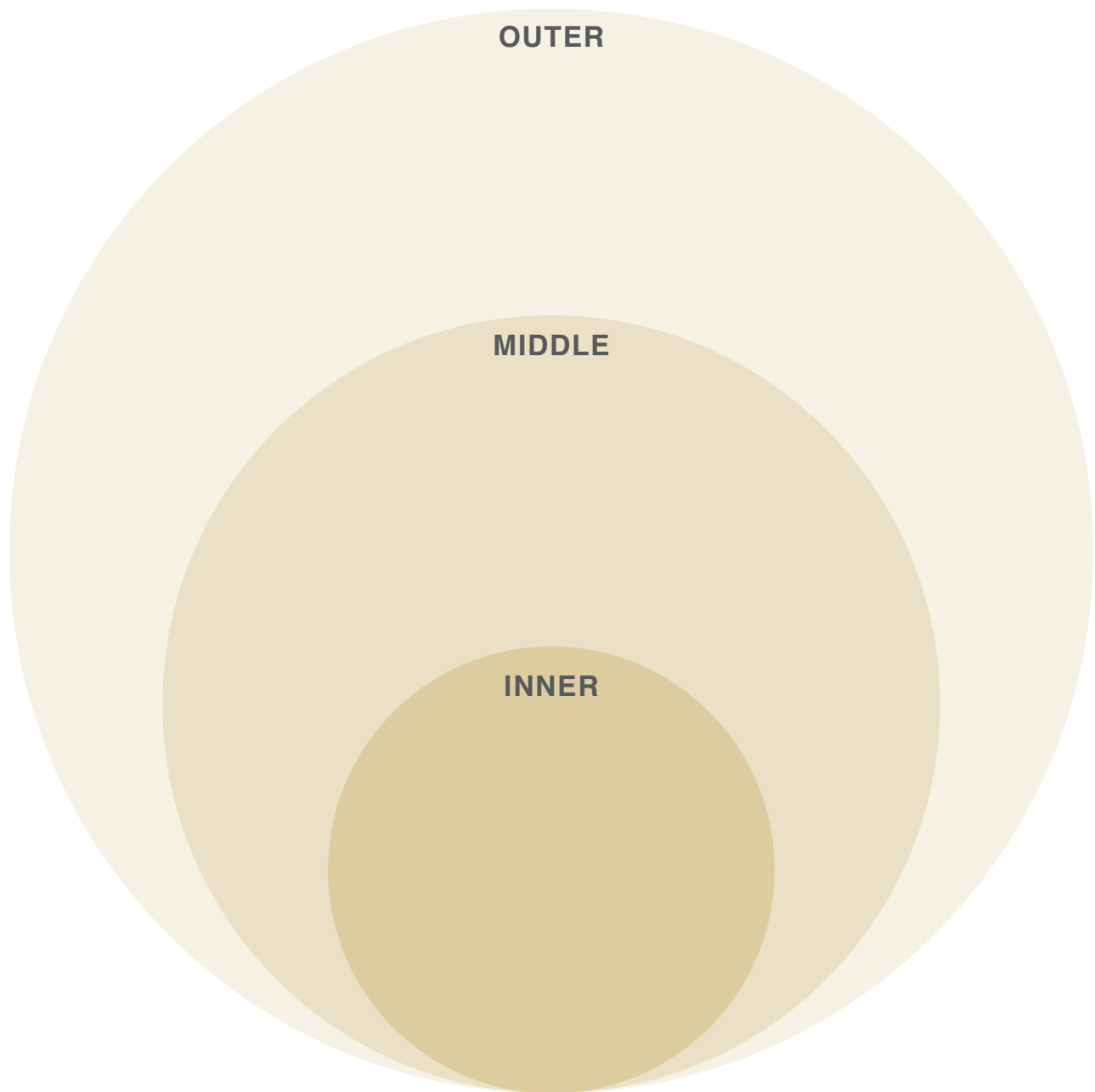
## middle circle

After you have determined your closest connections, you can start to expand your circle a bit. Your middle circle includes those you may see on a regular basis but who are not as close as family and friends. Middle circle connections could include professors, teaching assistants, work supervisors, club leaders, etc. Think about who you want to learn more about, who might have additional information about your intended career, or who could help you determine the steps to get there.

## outer circle

Lastly, you can focus on your outer circle connections. This circle includes people who you may have only met once or not at all, but that you think could provide some valuable insight into your career path. Look for people doing the job you want to do. Consider friends of friends, alumni, professionals on LinkedIn, etc.

*Use the circles below to list your potential connections.*



**Well done!** You have now developed your professional identity AND made a list of potential connections. Now how do you actually connect with them?

**Ways to Build Connections:**

- Invite them to get coffee
- Schedule a phone call
- Ask for a few minutes to chat
- Send a LinkedIn message
- Ask campus contacts for referrals
- Conduct an informational interview

# What is Informational Interviewing?

As you consider ways to connect with other professionals in your field, you might think about conducting an informational interview. Informational interviews are essentially an interview in reverse. These opportunities allow you to ask questions of a professional in a potential career field rather than them asking questions of you.

Informational interviewing is often considered the “most fun” type of networking because it takes all the pressure off both the employer and the job seeker. An informational interview is a process in which the job seeker interviews a professional in a position, industry, or field the job seeker wants to learn more about.

These interviews can be conducted in person, over the phone, or via video chat, and require a genuine commitment from the job seeker. In these interviews you can gather information about an industry and specific careers in that field and get advice on your personal and professional development. It is important to communicate your curiosity for the field and a goal for each informational interview.





# ARRANGING THE INTERVIEW

Informational interviews can be set up over email, phone, or in-person. If you have never met this person before, consider writing an introductory email to begin your connection.

## building an introduction email

1. Begin with an introduction of yourself and what inspired you to connect with them.
2. Briefly talk about why you are interested in meeting with them and learning more about their career and the company they work for.
3. Reassure them you only want 15-20 minutes, are flexible with scheduling, and understand they are busy.
4. Add in options for next steps and ways they can reach you.
5. Thank them for their time and consideration to meet with you.

### SAMPLE EMAIL

*Hello Enzo,*

*My name is Elena Lopez and I am a sophomore at the University of Colorado, Denver. My professor, Dr. Renee Thompson, recommended that I connect with you to learn more about your career in the medical field. I'm currently majoring in Biology and am considering pursuing my degree in Medicine. I have really enjoyed my anatomy and physiology courses at CU and getting to learn more about how the human body functions. To learn more about the field of medicine, I wanted to reach out to you to see if you would be interested in meeting with me to discuss how and why you became a Family Medicine Practitioner. I understand that your schedule is extremely busy and would only be asking for 15-20 minutes of your time. I can be flexible with scheduling and am open to meeting virtually, over the phone, or in person.*

*If you would be willing to meet with me, please let me know a day and time that works best for you. I can be reached by phone or email at 555-123-4567 or elenalopez@cudenverschool.edu.*

*Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you.*

*Sincerely,*

*Elena Lopez*

# PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

When you are ready to begin preparing for an informational interview, you should consider what information you might need in order to guide the conversation. What made you want to reach out to this person? What information are you looking to gain from your conversation? What questions would help you in your career journey?

**Below are some additional considerations:**

- Research general information about the job and professional that you are going to meet with
- Review and examine your interests, personality, skills, values, and goals in relation to this field
- Develop a set of questions that will help you gather important information about this job/company
- Determine the appropriate attire for your informational interview based on who you are meeting with and the setting
- Be prepared to share your resume during your interview, if asked
- Arrive 10-15 minutes before your scheduled interview, if meeting in-person
- Aim to develop a genuine connection with your interviewer. Networking doesn't have to be scary! Use your genuine curiosity about their career journey to get to know them.

Schedule an appointment in Handshake to discuss these with our Career Counselors!



**Research the job and professional**



**Review your goals and values**



**Develop a list of questions**

# SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

1. How did you get started in this career?
2. What jobs and experiences have led you to your present position?
3. What are the duties/functions/responsibilities of your job?
4. What skills are necessary for a successful career in this field?
5. What percentage of your day is spent working with people?
6. What kinds of problems do you encounter?
7. What part of this job do you personally find most satisfying/challenging?
8. What do you like and not like about working in this field?
9. What do you know now that you wish you had known before you entered this field?
10. How does a person progress in your field? What is a typical career path in this field or organization?
11. How has your job affected your lifestyle?
12. What were the keys to your career advancement/success?
13. Who else would you recommend for me to connect with?



**Use the space below to brainstorm 3-4 additional questions you might ask during your informational interview.**

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## DURING THE INTERVIEW

### tips and strategies to prepare for your interview

- Remember that you will only have a short amount of time to meet with them, so you want to make sure you are attentive to their advice while keeping track of time.
- Be respectful of the individuals you interview and stress that you are only seeking career information, not a job.
- Remember to differentiate between your interests in the occupation and how you feel about the person you interview. For example, meeting with someone overly euphoric or burnt out in their position could affect how they talk about their experience. You may want to consider interviewing another person in a similar position to verify that you have received an accurate perception of the field.
- Create a list of questions prior to your interview so that you can showcase your preparation and engagement in the conversation.

### Following Up

After an informational interview, write or type a brief thank you note to the person. Not only will this demonstrate gratitude, but this will also leave a positive impression. It's also important for you to evaluate and synthesize the knowledge and information from the informational interview in order to obtain new thoughts and ideas about that career. If you built a strong relationship, be sure to keep in touch with this professional as they can help mentor you in the field and be a professional contact in the future. Lastly, connecting with this professional via social media can be a great way to stay up to date on what your new contact is up to.





# congrats!

YOU LEARNED ABOUT NETWORKING AND  
INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

At LynxConnect, we're here to support you throughout the employment process!  
Schedule an appointment in **Handshake** to talk with a professional.

Have some quick questions or would like faster assistance from a peer instead?  
Choose "**LynxConnect - Peer Career Advisor**" in Handshake for appointment options.

## need more help?

CONTACT THE CAREER CENTER:

**CU Denver Career Center**

Tivoli Student Union, Suite 439 | 303-315-4000 | [ucdenver.edu/lynxconnect/career-center](https://ucdenver.edu/lynxconnect/career-center)