



MAKING CONNECTIONS


FIND OUT ABOUT DIFFERENT CAREER OPTIONS, POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS AND USING YOUR CONTACTS TO JOB HUNT EFFECTIVELY.

So why make new connections?

Just by speaking to and reaching out to new people you might be able to:

- Gain first-hand industry knowledge from current professionals.
- Improve your visibility and career progression in a particular field.
- Demonstrate your skills, commitment and initiative.
- Find voluntary work or work experience.
- Access positions that are never advertised: the 'hidden' job market.

5 ways to make new connections

1. **Who do you already know?** Think about friends, family and academic staff. Who might they know?
2. **Use alumni.** Who is working in your area of interest? Many universities have alumni networks and groups you can join, or try a LinkedIn search. Then send them a brief introductory message or email.
3. **Attend a careers event.** Ensure you research the speakers/companies well, and be ready with some questions that can't be answered just by looking at their website. Be sure to make a note of anyone's name and follow up with a thank-you note or email.
4. **Go straight to the source.** If there's a company you'd love to work for then find a person in a department doing something that sounds interesting, and contact them.
5. **Informational interviewing.** Can a new connection spare some time to answer some of your questions in person or over the phone? Perhaps offer to buy them a coffee? 

Useful questions to ask

- How did you get started in your career?
- What does your job look like on a day to day basis?
- Are there any particular types of experience or courses that would be helpful to get into this area?
- How can I make my application stand out?
- What type of professional and personal skills does it take to succeed in this kind of work?

How to feel more confident

- Be ready to talk a little about yourself, but don't feel the pressure to 'sell' – just stick with the facts.
- The best way to be interesting is to **be interested** in what others have to say – practise the art of 'active listening'.
- Make eye contact – if this feels awkward, then try looking at their eyebrows instead!
- Don't create physical barriers such as folding your arms or hugging a pile of brochures.
- Remember to breathe. If you make your out-breath longer than your in-breath you will feel more relaxed.

See 'Getting LinkedIn with employers' PAGE 23

See 'Why events are essential' PAGE 20