



# 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