



CAREER NETWORK

BUILD AND MAINTAIN A NETWORK OF PROFESSIONAL CONTACTS

Our network includes friends, family, classmates, instructors, and coworkers, all of whom can help us explore careers and find opportunities. Building a professional network is crucial in today's job market, as the best insights come from those already in the field.

Ways to grow your network include connecting with professors and classmates, joining relevant organizations, doing internships, and participating in informational interviews or job shadowing.

Informational Interviews and Job Shadows

An informational interview is an informal 30-minute conversation with a professional in a field of interest. While ideally conducted on-site to observe the work environment, it can also be done by phone or video. These interviews provide firsthand insights into a career, offering valuable tips and industry knowledge.

A job shadow involves observing a professional at work for a few hours or days. Both are great for researching careers and expanding your network, but neither is intended to find job openings or serve as a job interview.

Find Industry Professionals

- Reach out to your network—friends, family, instructors, and classmates—to see if they know someone in your field.
- Use the Career Mentoring Network in College Central: www.collegecentral.com/sierracollege.
- Explore LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com to connect with professionals, including Sierra College alumni.
- Use Google to find local business organizations and professionals in your field. Send them a friendly email—tip: use our sample contact script.

Sample Contact Script

"Hello, my name is _____. I'm a student at Sierra College, and I'm reaching out regarding the _____ opportunity. I have an interest in _____. Would you be available to arrange a meeting?"

If yes: Proceed with scheduling the meeting and ask about appropriate dress, directions, and parking.

If no: Ask, "When would be a good time to follow up?"

Via email: You can suggest a few days/times or ask them to propose their availability.

Sample Questions

1. How did you get started in this job?
2. What training or education did you have before starting this role?
3. What skills, education, and experience are essential for entering this field today?
4. Where is the best place to receive training in this field?
5. Are there any new trends or directions emerging in this industry?
6. What is the job outlook for this field in the next five years?
7. How has your role changed since you first started?
8. What are your primary responsibilities?
9. Can you describe a typical day in your job?
10. What is the earning potential in this field? (Avoid asking personal salary details.)
11. What do you enjoy most about your job?
12. What is the most challenging part of your job?
13. What advice would you give to someone looking to pursue this career?
14. As a student, what can I do now to prepare for this career?
15. Is there anyone else in this field you would recommend I reach out to?

Write down two of your own questions before your interview!

Question #1: _____

Question #2: _____

HELPFUL TIPS:

- **Be prepared and dress professionally for in-person meetings.**
- **Respect their time by arriving on time and sticking to the agreed-upon meeting duration.**
- **Come with prepared questions.**
- **Ask if you can reach out again in the future for additional questions or recommendations for others to speak with.**
- **Always send a thank-you note—time is one of the most valuable things people can share.**