

Writing to Networking Connections Worksheet

The importance of a positive first impression cannot be overstated. These first communications to potential connections should be focused on finding common background, interests, goals, or projects, or your desired future career space. Having identified this connection, you can leverage that to get their attention to accept your connection and/or to be willing to meet (phone, virtual, or in-person) to learn more about their career story and answer questions you have.

Connecting with someone who is ahead of you on a career path you're interested in for informational interviews is a great way to learn about a potential career path, connect with someone in that path who may know of opportunities later, and to leverage the deeper understanding of the role in your cover letters and interviews during your job search.

Key components to communications with new connections:

- An engaging introduction including subject line: you want to grab their attention right away,
- A clear statement of your need or request, and
- A concise closing, possibly refining or reiterating request.

Engaging Introductions:

Subject line: you may wish to leave this to last after you've written the middle section of the note. Examples: *Informational Interview Request; Connect to learn about (job title); Connection Request, Referred by (name), etc...*

Greeting: your choice, but be professional and acknowledge appropriate titles. Example: *Hello, Dr. Jones!; Dear, Dr. Smith,; Greetings, Dr. X,*

Introduction statement that grabs attention: comment on common connection where possible, e.g. statement that provides context in which you met. Example: *My name is *** and I'm (insert something about your background that overlaps) or we met at (fill in the details). OR I came across your name (through mutual connection / alumni network / UPitt Career Club / LinkedIn search and their job title fits your career path aspirations, etc...).* You can add a statement to provide clarity: example, *I am exploring a career in (insert sector) following my training in (insert field).*

Clear statement(s) that clearly include a request or question: Initially this could just be a connection request, example, *I'd like to connect*. Simple and to the point.

OR a specific request to meet with the other person to listen and learn: e.g. a request for an informational interview. Example: *I'd love to (hear more about your career path OR get your career advice, etc) for 15-20 minutes over coffee. I'm currently working at (insert place or role) but I have an interest in (insert new career path). As I have (researched / connected with colleagues), I am more interested in this career path as an opportunity for growth. (Bonus: I want to learn... - very specific requests!)*

If they are at a specific company you're interested in working at, you could include additional details about why you're connecting: example *I have found / most people I talk with ... that a great company for (in field/geographical area) is ABC Company. I would like to learn more about your position / career path... (include transition from field of study if relevant) and what motivated you to choose ABC Company. I'd especially like to hear about how you made the transition after (graduation, previous role, etc). (Bonus: I want to learn ...)*

Concise closing: Again, be professional. Examples of closing statement(s): *I would like to meet for (virtual) coffee (perhaps: or at your office or wherever it is convenient). I am flexible and happy to work around your schedule.* OR *Would it be possible for us to meet?* Examples: *Sincerely, Regards,* etc... and your name.

Tips:

- Keep it brief!
- Tailor your message to the person you are writing to.
- Use Grammarly if you are writing directly in LinkedIn. Spelling is crucial.
- Use confident language.
- Follow up if you said you would do something.
- Don't follow up too much or too often.
- It is ok to have a mutual connection introduce you.
- If you are sending an email outside of a normal workday, schedule the timing so it shows up in the morning.

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