

Strategies for Conversing with New Network Contacts

Purpose: Use this job aid as a guide to the strategies for conversing with new contacts.

Knowing what to talk about when you meet someone new is often difficult. By being prepared, you'll be more confident when you need to converse with a new contact. Two strategies can help you build rapport.

Strategies for conversing with new contacts

Prepare a list of icebreakers	Observe the person for cues
You can discuss the purpose of a get together because you know you'll have that in common with everyone you meet there.	Observation can be a great way to find an icebreaker that will get conversation started. For example, you could watch what the other person is reading, doing, or wearing.
Current events in the news are of interest to most people and are a good way to make small talk. However, it's best to stay away from politics and other potentially sensitive issues.	People often give clues about common interests as they talk. Perhaps you'll uncover a charity you're both involved in or that your children attend the same school. By pursuing these topics, you'll find the conversation flows easily.
You can probably talk about something you're interested in with enthusiasm. Make a list of your interests – even if it's something you don't know much about, you can ask others about these topics to get the conversation going.	
Every city has cultural events, such as music festivals, going on at any given time. These are great topics of conversation.	
Have a list of standard open-ended questions you can ask. When you exhaust one topic, move on to the next topic on your list. Here are a few examples of open-ended questions to get you started: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Where are you from?• What line of work are you in?• What do you like most about your job?• What do you do for fun?	

Course: Building Your Professional Network

Topic: Building Rapport with New Network Contacts