

The background features a series of concentric, light gray circles of varying thicknesses, some of which are broken or incomplete, creating a sense of movement and connection. These circles are centered on the left side of the page and extend towards the right.

UF CAREER CONNECTIONS CENTER

Building Connections Guide



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Professional Communications Guide

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Professional Communications Guide

Communication is the ability to effectively exchange thoughts and ideas with others through listening, speaking, writing, and nonverbal interactions. Your communication, whether it be in-person or via phone/e-mail is one of the first opportunities to showcase your strengths and value to a potential employer or graduate program. If you are graduating soon, be sure to use an e-mail address that you will still have access to when communicating via e-mail.

Networking Correspondence

Sample E-mail for Informational Interview

Dear Mr./Ms. _____,

I am a second year Math major at the University of Florida interested in discovering more about the industry. I found your information through a LinkedIn search of the Miami metropolitan area and saw that you are also a Gator alumni. Through thorough research, I know that [Organization X] is a leading innovator in big data and I hope to be in a career with the same type of values of creativity, analytical thinking, and research.

Would you be open to having a brief 10 minute phone conversation to discuss career paths and what advice you have for stepping into the field of analytics? I understand that you are extremely busy and appreciate any time you may be able to offer.

My contact information is included, and I look forward to speaking to you in the near future. Thank you for your consideration and time.

Best,
Your Name
Your UFL email (or professional email)
123-456-7890

Sample E-mail to Say Thank You

Dear Mr./Ms. _____,

I wanted to thank you for taking the time to meet with me this past week. The advice you gave about working in the field of journalism was helpful, and per your recommendation I reached out to Dr. _____ and we have a meeting scheduled this month.

Additionally, I have enthusiastically pursued career opportunities at [Organization X], [Organization Y], and [Organization Z]. I would love to continue to update you on my career path in the future and appreciate having you in my network of connections.

If I can ever help you with anything, please do not hesitate to reach out. Again, thank you for your time and valuable insights.

Best,
Your Name
Your UFL email (or professional email)
123-456-7890

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Business Cards

Business cards are beneficial for students for many reasons. They are an easy way to exchange information at conferences or impromptu meetings, standing out among other candidates, and establishing your personal brand.

<p>FIRST NAME LAST NAME firstname.lastname@ufl.edu 123-456-7890</p> <p>University of Florida College of Public Health and Health Professions Bachelor of Health Science, May 20XX</p>
<p>Seeking position as a Certified Nursing Assistant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• CPR/AED Certified• Language skills: Spanish (fluent) <p>https://www.linkedin.com/in/alberta-gator</p>

Letters of Recommendation

Dear Mr./Ms. _____,

I hope you have been doing well since our research in the Speech and Hearing Lab has concluded. As one of my mentors and someone who has helped shape my career path, I am writing to see if you would be interested in providing a letter of recommendation for my application to graduate programs in the field. The deadline to receive all recommendation letters is October 15, 20XX and I wanted to give you ample time because I know that you have a busy workload and schedule.

My resume and personal statement are attached to this email so you are able to see the other involvement and leadership I accomplished while also being an assistant in your lab.

Please let me know if you are also interested in providing this letter of support and if there are any other documents or materials you may need to help you with this.

Best,
Your Name
Your UFL email (or professional email)
123-456-7890

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The Job Search

Throughout your job search process, it is ideal to communicate via phone or in-person. E-mail communication can be used for follow-up after initial conversations.

Sample E-mail for Upcoming Interview

Dear Mr./Ms. _____,

I am a Psychology student at the University of Florida, with a concentration in neuroscience. While reviewing the website for internship opportunities at [Organization X], I saw a position posted in your department. I am extremely interested in the position and would like to learn how I can stand out in comparison to my fellow candidates.

Will you be willing to fit me in your schedule for a brief phone call to discuss the environment at [Organization X] and experiences you or participants have had with the internship program?

My contact information is included, and I look forward to speaking to you in the near future. Thank you for your consideration and time.

Best,
Your Name
Your UFL email (or professional email)
123-456-7890

Sample E-mail Asking for Additional Time to Accept an Offer

Dear Mr./Ms. _____,

Thank you for offering me the position of Management Intern at [Organization X]. The position aligns very closely with my career goals and I am grateful for this opportunity. I am writing to let you know that I have a previously scheduled interview, and ethically, it is important to me to honor this commitment. In order to make an educated decision, I was hoping to be granted an extra week to confirm or deny the employment offer at [Organization X].

Please let me know your thoughts and if you need anything else from me in the interim.

Best,
Your Name
Your UFL email (or professional email)
123-456-7890

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The Job Search

Sample E-mail Asking for an Accelerated Offer Timeline

Dear Mr./Ms. _____,

Thank you again for the opportunity to interview with [Organization X] for the position of Associate Consultant. This position continues to be the most aligning with my career goals and where I truly feel I can bring my strengths of leadership, research, and community service to contribute to the organization.

I wanted to inform you that I have received an offer from another organization and have been given a deadline to respond. The position at [Organization X] is my preferred choice, and I am hoping to receive an offer from you before having to make a decision with the other organization.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am looking forward to hearing back from you.

Best,
Your Name
Your UFL email (or professional email)
123-456-7890

Sample E-mail for Accepting a Job Offer

Dear Mr./Ms. _____,

Following up to your call earlier today, I am writing to express my excitement and gratitude about accepting your employment offer at [Organization X] today, November 21, 20XX. I am looking forward to being part of the team and to be part of the [Organization X] community. Thank you again for the opportunity.

As discussed, my starting salary will be [\$45,000] with health, dental, and life insurance benefits provided immediately. I look forward to starting employment on January 13, 20XX and would be happy to provide any additional documents necessary prior to then.

Best,
Your Name
Your UFL email (or professional email)
123-456-7890



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The Job Search

Sample E-mail for Declining a Job Offer

Dear Mr./Ms. _____,

Thank you very much for extending the offer of Risk Analysis Intern at [Organization X]. I have appreciated your time in discussing the position with me during the interview process and having the opportunity to meet you and your colleagues.

The position is interesting to me in many ways when I think about how I could grow in my career and develop as a professional. However, after a challenging decision, I believe it is best to decline the offer based on next steps that are more appropriate for my career path.

Again, I am grateful for your time and consideration and hope to cross paths with you in the future.

Best,
Your Name
Your UFL email (or professional email)
123-456-7890



Informational Interviewing

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Informational Interviewing

An informational interview offers you an opportunity to gather information about a career field, job, or employer in which you are interested. The purpose of an informational interview is to expand your understanding, not to ask for a job or internship.

Conducting an informational interview will help you actively:

- Secure firsthand information about industries, jobs, work responsibilities, career paths, work settings, and organizational cultures
- Build contacts and referrals for your personal network (increasing your chances of securing employment in the future)
- Increase your self-confidence and interviewing skills
- Gather insight for stronger career decisions

Ways to conduct an informational interview:

- In-person (ideal)
- Phone
- Skype

Make sure to ask your contact for the most convenient way to conduct the interview.

Important Tips to Remember:

1. This is not the time to ask for a job or internship – Focus on gathering information
2. Most Informational Interviews last 20-30 minutes – Keep the conversation brief and friendly
3. Professionalism & Reliability are essential
 - a. If you must cancel your interview, call or email 24 hours prior and reschedule at that time.
 - b. Arrive early – Prepare for traffic and parking
 - c. Begin and end the interview with a “thank you” and a handshake
4. Dress appropriately – Business Casual is ideal
5. Conduct several informational interviews – patterns about the industry, occupation and/or career field



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Step I: Getting Started – Finding Contacts to Interview

The first step is to find people to interview. The goal is to find someone in a desired industry, organization, job, or career field. Typically, the best place to start is with your personal network. This may include family, friends, roommates, past employers, and/or professors. Ask these contacts for the names of people within occupations or organizations that interest you.

Additional resources to help you secure contact names include:

- Gator Network
- Organizational websites/literature
- Professional/trade association chapters
- Chamber of Commerce directories
- Gator CareerLink Employer Directory
- LinkedIn Alumni Feature – Search for UF alumni by organization, major, location, industry, job, and/or skills.

After identifying the person to contact, request an appointment via email, telephone, or through the source who helped you secure the contact. If calling or emailing, use professional language, state who you are (including that you are a student), why you are contacting them, clearly state that you are not seeking a job at this time, but gathering career information, and ask if they are available to talk with you for 20-30 minutes.

Activity: Create your network web - Friends, professors, or relatives, can help introduce you or arrange an informational interview for you. Start by identifying who is currently in your network

List those in your network to initially contact:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

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Step II: Prepare for the Interview

Always prepare before an informational interview to ensure that you make a professional first-impression. Prepare by:

Conducting preliminary research on the respective field or organization:

- Gather facts in order to formulate intelligent questions
- Avoid asking questions easily answered on the company's website or LinkedIn profile

Developing a list of open-ended questions, avoiding yes/no answers that often fail to stimulate more response and discussion. Topics to consider include:

- Career choice and goals
- Education o Work/life balance and their career progression
- Organizational culture o Day-to-day responsibilities
- Technical skills o Making informed career decisions

Preparing for

- In-Person Interview: Consider issues related to traffic and parking
- Virtual Interview: Ensure technology is working adequately, secure a quiet space, and make sure the background behind you is clean and distraction free

Step III: Conduct the Interview

Start the interview by building rapport. Ask questions about their day before jumping into the interview. Once rapport has been established, then:

- Restate your purpose for the interview
- Share insight as to why you are seeking career information and the general types of questions you will be asking

Take notes - If you want to record the conversation, make sure to ask permission first.

Be prepared to answer questions about yourself:

- Education, background, and career ambitions

Offer to share your resume to help them understand your experiences and qualifications

- Ask for feedback

Additional questions to consider:

- Ask for a business card (if necessary) to follow up
- Ask if you can connect with the person on LinkedIn
- Ask if there are articles, professional associations, websites, or books that might help you learn more
- Ask who they recommend you talk with next

Step IV: After the Interview

Send a hand written card or email thanking the contact for their time

- Refer to some portion of the conversation and why the advice that was given was helpful to you



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Sample Questions

- How did you get into this career field/industry?
- Which majors are most successful with securing employment in this field?
- How would you describe a typical day/week on the job?
- What is your job like?
- What kind of decisions do you make?
- How did you get your job? Why did you decide to work for this company/organization?
- What are the most satisfying aspects of your job?
- What frustrations or drawbacks do you experience at work?
- How would you describe the work environment such as work, pressure, deadlines, and routines?
- What are the essential skills to be successful in this line of work? How did you learn these skills (e.g., training programs, classroom, on the job)?
- What are the key software programs in the field?
- How much time do you spend alone? Interacting with people? Writing reports? Reading job-related publications?
- What's an example of a problem that you help solve at work?
- How does your career affect your lifestyle (the amount of time you work vs. time for leisure, traveling, family, outside interests)?
- What are the latest developments and primary issues impacting this field today?
- How do you see jobs in the field changing over the next five to ten years?
- What educational degrees, licenses, or other credentials are required for entry and advancement in your kind of work? Are there any which are preferred or helpful?
- What are the trade/professional groups to which you belong and which do you find most beneficial to your work? What is your advice about getting involved with these organizations as a student?
- What other career areas do you see as being related to your work?
- What other functional areas within the organization do you collaborate with the most?
- What personal, characteristics, personality traits, values, strengths, and/or interests do you believe are necessary or helpful for success and satisfaction in this occupation (or organization)?
- How do people learn about job openings in the field?
- What do you wish you had known about this career field before you entered it? What about your current employer?
- How is this organization structured? What kinds of entry-level jobs are typical for this career field or employer (e.g., typical titles, responsibilities)?
- What is your organization's leadership/management philosophy? How does this differ from other organizations in this field/industry?
- What is the typical career progression in this field? What are the keys to advancement?
- What books/periodicals/websites that you would recommend?
- What special advice would you give to a young person entering this field, industry, or line of work?
- What is the next step in your career?
- Who else do you recommend I talk with about careers in this field?

Important Conversations Practice Sheet

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Important Conversations Practice Sheet

Challenging conversations are an inevitable part of an individual's personal and professional life. They are essential to cultivating productive relationships. While there are many types of challenging or important professional conversations, there are some common guidelines that will help you navigate the preparation and initiation of challenging conversations.

POTENTIAL CONFLICT DYNAMICS:

Types of Individuals Involved Types of Conflict

- | | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| • Influential person | • Family, friends, or partner | • Asymmetrical "power" dynamic | • Conflicting goals or needs |
| • Supervisor | • Professor | • Misunderstanding Change | • Different values |
| • Coworker | • Team member | • Vulnerability | • Making a mistake |

PREPARE

The key to navigating challenging conversations is preparing for the conversation. A good place to start is gauging your self-awareness regarding the particular conversation. Next, is empathizing with the individual you want to engage in conversation.

Self-Awareness Reflection

1. Identify the topic/issue you want to address.
2. What are your emotions and why? Be responsible for how you feel and understand why you feel that way. Common emotions could be discomfort, intimidation or anxiousness.
3. What are your concerns about the cause or potential outcome?
4. What assumptions about the situation or individual do you have?
5. What is your relationship with this individual, and how can you be of service to the other person?
6. Why is this important to you?
7. What is your ideal outcome?

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Empathize with the Individual

Prepare for the conversation by doing your research on the work and perspective of the individual you are connecting with.

1. Why are you connecting with this individual?
 - a. What about their experiences, skillset, or education background do you find interesting?
 - b. What would you like their perspective on?
 - c. Why do you find their perspective valuable?
2. How will you utilize their time wisely?
3. How do you engage with their current work?
4. What is the right place, time or format to have this conversation
5. What questions will you ask the individual?

Conflict or Bad News Sandwich Template

Opening: positive statement “something they would want to hear”

Middle: “However, something they don’t want to hear”

- potential solutions and corrections (What do you think statement)

End: “Something they want to hear” (Thank you, I look forward to what we can accomplish)

Individual of Influence Template

Opening: Thank you, why this individual’s perspective is valuable. Your objective.

Middle:

- Compelling questions
- Listen
- Finding common ground, demonstrating vulnerability
- Compelling questions

End: Gratitude, follow-up with results in the future.

Practice