

CONVERSATION SKILLS

Conversation Starters

- ✓ Always begin with your name
- ✓ Offer a genuine compliment
- ✓ Ask something of the person (e.g. relationship to the host of the event or the organization)
- ✓ Find out about the person's hometown or workplace
- ✓ Refer to nametag for clues (e.g. company, department, position, hometown)
- ✓ Ask something you would like the other person to know about you

Remembering Names

- ✓ Repeat (e.g. *It's nice to meet you, Sierra*)
- ✓ Word Association (e.g. Karen McComb = Carrying a Comb)
- ✓ The Teddy Roosevelt Technique (i.e. imagine the person's name written on her/his forehead)

Tips

- ✓ Maintain appropriate eye contact
- ✓ Use active listening skills to get clues about what to ask
- ✓ Stick with open-ended questions
- ✓ Use the "yes, and" technique when asked a yes or no question (e.g. Q: Do you like your major? A: Yes and I'm particularly interested in doing research with a faculty member this year. What do you think about...)

Entering Conversations

- ✓ Arrive early so that you can greet new guests as they enter the room
- ✓ Say hello to people while you are getting your nametag, joining a table, etc.
- ✓ Start up a conversation at the food/beverage station
- ✓ Do NOT hover next to groups of people who are already talking. However, if you are engaged in a conversation and someone new makes their way over...make room!

Exiting Conversations

- ✓ Do not monopolize people's time. Move on after 10 minutes or so.
- ✓ If the person you are speaking with starts looking around the room, it's time to move on.
- ✓ Different phrases you can use to close a conversation include
 - It was nice meeting you. I hope to continue this conversation with you at a later time. Do you happen to have a business card?
 - It's my first time here and I'd like to meet some of the other members. I will touch base with you before I leave.
 - Excuse me. I see the speaker and would like to ask her/him a question.
 - I'm going to go check out the refreshments. I'll catch up with you later.
- ✓ At the end of the event, attempt to say goodbye to everyone you spoke with.

Follow Up

- ✓ Remember to follow up with individuals with whom you would like to build a professional relationship.
- ✓ If you promised to send information to someone, remember to do so within 24 hours.
- ✓ Send a thank you note to the host within 24 hours of the event if appropriate.

The key to great conversations is to get the other person to do all the talking!