

# A Primer on Networking

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**PurposeMD**

Understand the “Why” of your career in medicine



# PurposeMD

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# Introduction

The concept of Networking has always been relatively uncomfortable to medical students. In a field that requires consistently high performance in the classroom, in scientific research and on standardized tests, students often feel that professional opportunities are earned through hard work alone and not through relationships built along the way.

What they don't realize is that in order to get into medical school, they utilized a network of teachers, researchers and employers to help vouch for them. Applying for residency positions is no different. By creating professional relationships with peers, medical faculty and researchers throughout your medical training, students can be propelled into positions they are applying for in a unique way. The truth is that medical school is a pre-professional program. Medical students often overlook the "professional" aspect of their training, focusing solely on the technical aspects of their education without appreciating the impact of building a network on their career success. While the technical minutia is important to master in the short term, students should have a long-term approach to their professional development by investing in their network early.

As an example, by shadowing a physician in a specialty of interest early in the first year, you create a professional relationship. You can now create more shadowing opportunities, get involved in research or just simply ask for professional advice. As you progress through your medical training, if you work on maintaining that relationship, this physician can be counted on to vouch not only for your interest in that specific specialty, but also for your dedication to pursuing that specialty as a career. Even if you decide on another specialty, this physician can still comment on your enthusiasm as a first year medical student, and that you were proactive in your professional development from an early stage in your medical training. This Primer will walk you through the essential skills of networking, from talking to classmates all the way to working with program directors as you apply for residency. It will begin by introducing you to the concept of networking, and will build the foundation for your future professional development to maximize your career potential.

This resource will also guide you through your three networks, one of which you already have in place. It will end with the "do's and don'ts" of networking etiquette, so you know exactly how to navigate this seemingly difficult world. Included with this Primer are templates and outlines for you to use in your networking endeavors, from writing the initial approach email to crafting your 2-minute self-pitch. It's time to start networking!

Throughout this Primer you will be introduced to a student named Sarah and follow her as she uses the skills in this Primer to network her way through medical school. Her experience will provide examples of how to apply the skills you are learning as you read and practice the tips provided in this primer.



# About Networking

## What is professional networking?

Many people have a negative association with the term “networking,” because they (mistakenly) believe that it’s a way of “using” other people. The difference between proper networking and “using people” is that with professional networking, the primary focus is to establish a relationship. Professional networking is the process of **establishing relationships** through which people can mutually benefit. Once a relationship is established, people within the relationship can ask, give, and receive with the understanding that a reciprocal relationship exists. The relationship is **mutually beneficial** for both parties.

## But what do I have to offer?

If you are the junior member of the networking relationship. You may worry that you don’t bring anything to the table. Don’t worry, you do. You may not have all the contacts and the knowledge, but you do bring your presence. You can bring energy, enthusiasm, curiosity, follow-through, preparation, and attentiveness. Believe it or not, that counts for a lot in networking and relationships. Often, meeting a junior person with enthusiasm and follow-through is the highlight of a senior person’s day.

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*Your job as the junior person of the networking relationship is to offer your **PRESENCE** and attentiveness. Without that, you are not living up to your end of the relationship.*

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## A key distinction about relationships.

Before we go any further, a key distinction must be made. You must ask yourself, “What is my attitude towards this other person?” Is my attitude transactional? That is, am I looking at what I want from this person? Or, is my attitude relational? That is, am I treating this person as a human being, looking first to empathize? Of course, nobody will be relational all of the time. There will be times when you are rushed, stressed, fearful where you will be transactional. Monitor yourself when you’re with others, be that colleagues, patients, friends, or family. The quality of your networking and relationships in your life will hinge on this distinction.

## Why is professional networking important?

Professional networking is important because relationships are important. If you’re going to spend eight to twelve hours a day working, you want to develop nourishing relationships in that domain of your life. Without it, you will struggle to find meaning and success in your career. There have been many studies done which point towards the insight that **about 50% of your career success (compensation, advancement, recognition, impact, satisfaction, etc.) is due to the single factor of the size and quality of your professional network.**

You may utilize the help of your professional network in order to land your residency position or your first job out of residency. Your network contacts will help you get your foot in the door at these crucial times when you may have little to no experience under your belt. Your professional network will also come into play throughout your career when you need assistance with projects or you’re looking for career advancement or possibly a new position. In addition, it is important to maintain contact with your peers and keep relationships alive. You can’t do everything by yourself! You need a community that you can turn to.



## **It's part of your professional "job"**

Many people consider developing a professional network as an "add-on." They don't consider it a part of his or her job. This is a mistake. If your job is to become the best doctor that you can be in service of patients, don't you need to learn from others? If you want to make the most impact possible, how will you do this without a network? If you are going to influence the field of professional practice that you are in, who will listen to you?

**Professional networking IS part of your professional job**, and consider it as important as your regular work tasks/studies and obligations. You are going to have to put in effort to build and maintain your professional network.

## **It requires an investment of time**

If you wanted to accumulate monetary wealth, what would you have to do? You would have to develop budgets, control spending, increase income, and manage your investments. All this effort, over time, creates wealth. Think about the time that you have spent in managing your studies. Your efforts, planning, and dedication have resulted in a "wealth" of sorts. A wealth of knowledge that you now have.

Having a large and vibrant professional network also requires an "investment" of time. Relationships take time and effort, and you don't want them to go dormant without contact for too long. It's important to literally remind yourself to contact the people in your network on a regular basis so that you can maintain your professional relationships. Drop them a friendly email or note, or pick up the phone and give them a call to check in and see how things are going. Plan a lunch together or an outing. The more you "invest" in your relationships, the more "wealth" of relationships you will enjoy!



# Three Types of Professional Networking

Let's say you wanted to get involved in a research project on diabetes prevention. However, you don't know anyone in that area of research. What do you do? Most people would like to go to a place where all those opportunities are "posted" and then "apply" for them. If those resources are available, great, but there are still two reasons this approach is not sufficient. First, you might still need your network to point you to the posting itself. Second, if you apply, how will you differentiate yourself from all the other applicants? This may come as a shock, but you need to network.

There are different types of networking for different needs. The first group is your **CONNECTIVE** network. The second group is your **INFORMATIONAL** network. Each stage gets you a little closer to your goal. The third group is your **FACILITATIVE** network.

Once you activate your network, it's not just one person (you) trying to get something done, it may potentially be hundreds of people, all helping you.

## CONNECTIVE Networking (Group A)

Connective networking is the process of connecting with others who can further assist you in your search. They might have access to what you are looking for, or they might know someone who does. The group that connective networking is made of consists of your family, friends, classmates, former work colleagues, and social acquaintances that you may have. These people are "safe". They know you and have loyalty to you. You can be a little ignorant around them. You have the space to make mistakes and ask "dumb" questions.

We refer to the people in the connective networking group as Group A contacts. These people can connect you to others who are in professional domains that you would like to be in. This group is "your people", when networking start with Group A. Simply mentioning to this group that you are looking for a new position or are in need of assistance could open up doors because they may know things that could be helpful. If they don't know anything helpful, they are still likely to be able to point you in a direction where someone else could be helpful. These connections will help you further branch out your search. Some examples of questions you might ask your Group A connective networking contacts are as follows:

- **If I want to explore neurology, who should I talk to?**
- **If I'm curious about global health projects, who would know about those?**
- **If I would like to start a research project in pediatrics, who should I talk to?**



# INFORMATIONAL Networking (Group B)

After you have activated your Group A contacts, your Group A contacts will likely begin to send you information about people who are even closer to what you are looking for. This new group that may consist of professional insiders, classmates that have experience in industry, residents/fellows, faculty members, and alumni; they have some connection to what you are looking for be it a job, a project, or an opportunity.

You will be conducting a type of networking called informational networking with this group. These people can provide information to solidify your understanding of the professional domains you are interested in and they can also refer you to additional relevant contacts. We refer to the people in the informational networking group as Group B contacts. Unlike with Group A contacts where it's safe to be a bit ignorant, you will need to be more prepared and professional with dealing with Group B contacts. Some examples of questions you might ask your Group B informational networking contacts are as follows:

- **What do you like most/least about neurology?**
- **What opportunities are there in global health for a student?**
- **Are you aware of any research mentors in pediatrics who are looking for a student to help?**

# FACILITATIVE Networking (Group C)

As your Group B contacts develop more confidence and trust in you, they may refer you and advocate for you to key people and opportunities. This next group is made up of organizational decision-makers, project leaders, residents, senior faculty/staff, and alumni.

You will be conducting a type of networking called facilitative networking with this group. We refer to the people in the facilitative networking group as Group C contacts. Facilitative networking is networking with those people who have the decision-making influence over whether you: get the job, be involved in the project, or become a formal mentee. So, you must be professional and prepared when interacting with this group. Some examples of questions you might ask your Group C facilitative networking contacts are as follows:

- **If I want to apply to neurology in your program, what kind of advice would you have for me?**
- **I would like to take on a project in global health, can I ask for you to serve as my project mentor?**
- **I would like to be involved in a research project this summer, can you be my research mentor?**



# Your Three Networks

The first group is your CONNECTIVE network. The second group is your INFORMATIONAL network. The third group is your FACILITATIVE network.

Group	Role of this Group
<p><b>Group A: Connective Network</b></p> <p>Faculty with whom you have regular contact Students who are ahead of you in other years Classmates in the same year Physicians you already know</p>	<p>Connect you to others who are in areas of interest</p>
<p><b>Group B: Informational Network</b></p> <p>Physicians in a specialty of interest Research mentors Physicians at student-run clinics Students with similar lifestyle (single, parent, gender, etc.) MS4 students going into your specialty of interest Residents</p>	<p>Provide information regarding areas of interest (specialty, lifestyle, research, and other professional activities)</p> <p>Mentor you to solidify your career choice, research, etc.</p>
<p><b>Group C: Facilitative Network</b></p> <p>Specialty core mentor Research PI Project lead Clerkship or Program Director Department Chair</p>	<p>Provide longer term mentorship on specific areas of your future career and collaborate on projects and initiatives (Letters of Rec, etc.)</p>

**Tip:** *It's best to begin networking with Group A (or Group B) and make your way to Group C through referrals.*





# Connective Networking (Group A)

## Primary Role:

The primary role of your Group A connective networking contacts is to CONNECT you to others in the field where you want to be engaged. Whenever possible, you'll want to begin the process of networking with this group. Many of those who are networking overlook this group, and they instead start to cold-contact Group B or Group C contacts. However, you should not do this! Group A members may have a considerable network themselves, and they may be able to help link and pave the way for your Group B and C contact connections. Group A contacts are people whom you know, and it will be considerably easier to network with this group in the beginning to build your confidence and familiarity with networking before proceeding to Group B and C.

## Before you approach contacts from this group

Before your contacts can help you, you'll need to know your networking goal. Is it to land a residency spot in a certain city? It is to find a mentor in an area of research? You'll need to have an idea of what your goals and aspirations are, and be able to communicate that. For example, "I'm looking for a surgical residency position on the west coast." They can't help you obtain what you want if YOU don't even know what you want!

## Approaching contacts from this group

If you are in regular contact with a Group A contact, you can talk to him or her directly without any introduction or formality. If he or she is someone that you have not contacted in a while, then call or send a friendly email asking to re-connect. It's much easier to ask Group A contacts for favors or recommendations if you have maintained a relatively close relationship with the person. So as an important practice, maintain your relationship with Group A contacts BEFORE you need something.

Sarah now knows it is her place to reach out to learn more about specialties.

Sarah was talking with her classmate, John, about her interest in general surgery when he mentioned that he did research with a general surgeon before medical school. Later that day in her learning community, Sarah was also mentioning her career interests to her physician learning community mentor, Dr. Fix and she mentioned a general surgeon friend who might be a good contact for Sarah.



## Interacting with contacts from this group

There's no set format for networking with your Group A contacts. In fact, effective networking often takes the form of a casual conversation between friends. For people with whom you have not kept in close contact, you may want to spend some time to catch up. This will be sort of a "breaking the ice" moment before you get down to the details of what you actually need. At some point in the conversation, you'll want to give him or her a general idea of what you're looking to do. With some contacts, you can be very specific ("I'm looking to do internal medicine at X hospital") and with others more general ("I'm looking for a medical residency position on the West Coast"). How specific you get depends on how well-connected you think your contact is to your goal.

## Following up with contacts from Group A

After networking, it is good to send a follow-up note shortly after the meeting. Not only does it cement the positive relationship, it also may jog his or her memory to follow up with you regarding contacts. They will receive your note or follow-up email and remember to speak to their contacts about you. Thereafter, maintain contact as is natural for a family member/friend/acquaintance.

## Maintaining your connective contacts

A well-maintained Group A network will help the speed and efficiency of your networking efforts tremendously. Take care to maintain your Group A contacts even if you are not looking for a job or opportunity. Things can change quickly, and you never know when you'll need to call on your Group A contacts for a tip. It's important to maintain your relationships so you have a network of people in place when you need them later down the line. You never know what the future might bring!

## Peers are valuable resources.

Your peers are right there "in the trenches" with you and can be a valuable source of comradery and networking for you. It is important to maintain good relationships with your peers as you might need their help in the future and you may even be working with them in the future. Your peers could easily know of opportunities that would be beneficial for you. Never forget that everyone knows someone.

After her conversations with John and Dr. Fix, Sarah followed up with an email to each of them.

Dear John,  
It was great to talk to you after class the other day. You mentioned that you did research with a general surgeon before medical school. Would you be willing to introduce me to your mentor? I am very interested in learning more about general surgery. Thank you.

Thanks,  
Sarah

Dear Dr. Fix,  
Thank you for taking the time to talk with me after class last week. You mentioned that you have a friend in general surgery and I am very interested in learning more about this field. Would you be willing to introduce me to this potential mentor? Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Sarah

# Inventory Your Group A Contacts (Don't Forget Friends and Family!)

Before beginning to network with Group A contacts, take a full inventory of people you know starting with family, then moving on to friends, and finally select acquaintances. Develop a list of 25+ Group A contacts and then systematically work your way down that list, letting each person know what you are looking for. You never know what connections they might have.

**First- Determine what you are looking for. What will you tell your Group A contacts about what you want?**

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**Second- Take an inventory of your Group A contacts**

1.	16.
2.	17.
3.	18.
4.	19.
5.	20.
6.	21.
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8.	23.
9.	24.
10.	25.
11.	26.
12.	27.
13.	28.
14.	29.
15.	30.

**Third- Begin networking!**

# Informational Networking (Group B)

## Primary Role:

The primary role of your Group B contacts with informational networking is to provide you with critical relevant knowledge relating to your goal and to refer you to key contacts and decision-makers. Group B contacts are people who work in the area you are targeting and are knowledgeable about the field but are not directly associated with the actual hiring/decision process. That distance from the hiring process allows you to show a bit of ignorance (but not too much!) as you ramp up your learning. Don't forget that people in the field know each other. You're still making impressions, and people talk...

## Before you approach contacts from Group B

Make sure your two to three-minute personal story is well polished; you'll need it to introduce yourself to your Group B contact and it will also help them become more familiar with you to better help you. Then, do some background research on the person and the field so that you are able to keep up with what is being said and able to ask some thoughtful questions. You don't want to give a negative impression by being ill-prepared. When you are engaging with specialty insiders, they are still evaluating you and your potential fit even though the meeting may be considered "informational." The person you're talking to will likely know your future director and already has many contacts in the field. Finally, you'll want to give thought on how to guide the meeting, and this includes bringing some questions that you'll ask during the meeting.

## Approaching contacts from this group

Typically, you will approach this group through referrals from your Group A contacts. Occasionally, you can use other sources to contact Group B contacts directly. If you do not know the Group B contact well, make sure you strictly observe courtesy and formality. Formality can be dropped later if the other party wants to be more casual, but it's safest to use formality in the beginning. When you are ready to reach out to the Group B contact you would make an approach call or send an approach email.

**John and Dr. Fix both send Sarah contact information for people to contact in general surgery. Sarah then decides to send an email to both of them to set up a shadowing opportunity.**

Dear Dr. Smith,  
My name is Sarah and I am a first-year medical student at UUSOM. I am interested in learning more about General Surgery and my learning community faculty Dr. Fix recommended I contact you. May I shadow you or one of your residents in the next couple of weeks? I am free after 1pm every day except for Wednesdays, and I am also free all evenings and weekends. Thank you so much for your time.

Sincerely,  
Sarah

## The approach email.

Whether you call or write is based on your preference. There is some anecdotal evidence that writing an approach email is a more preferred method among Group B contacts. (An example of an approach email can be found later in this guide.) In this email, you'll want to write something brief (a few sentences) to introduce who you are, why you are contacting him or her, and make a small request to meet (or shadow).

What if you send the email to your Group B contact but he or she doesn't respond? What is the appropriate way to follow up? First, give your contact about a week or two to respond. If the contact hasn't responded by then, you can follow up with another email. It is typically acceptable to follow up once after the initial outreach. After that, move on. People tend to be extremely busy and sometimes they may have simply forgotten to respond. Don't take it personally.

## Interacting with contacts from Group B

OK, your Group B contact has agreed to meet. How do you conduct this meeting? Because you have requested the meeting, **the onus of planning and guiding the meeting is on you.** (An example of an informational meeting and an informational shadowing experience can be found later in this guide.)

When meeting with your contact, the first thing to do is to introduce yourself. This often takes the form of a two to three-minute story summarizing your background, what you're doing now, and what you're looking to do in the future. You should take the time to polish your story prior to the meeting so that your delivery is coherent and smooth. Then you should proceed to lay out the agenda for the meeting.

As stressed earlier, the initial point of networking is to develop a relationship. However, it is hard to establish a reciprocal relationship with someone more senior and experienced. Therefore, instead of a reciprocal relationship, the junior networker could aim to establish a mentor-mentee relationship at first. This can be done by asking opinion-seeking questions of the mentor.

## Following up with contacts from this group

After you've met with your contact, it would be polite to send a thank you note within a day after the meeting. An email expressing your thanks for the meeting or a hand-written note are both fine. Thereafter, you may want to "check in" with the contact on an occasional basis (monthly, quarterly, annually based on the context). That way, you'll stay in the mind of the contact so if any opportunities arise, they will remember to connect you. Make sure to keep the contact updated on any significant and relevant events that have occurred for you. It's a wonderful way to "keep in touch" and keep the other person updated by sending the occasional "news about you" email or note.

**Sarah enjoys her time shadowing Dr. Smith. She shadows some other physicians but is now very interested in general surgery as a career and would like to set up an informational meeting with Dr. Smith.**

Dear Dr. Smith,  
Thank you for letting me shadow. I really enjoyed seeing what general surgeons do on a day-to-day basis. After shadowing you I read more about that procedure you did and found it incredibly interesting.

I would like to learn more about general surgery as a career. Could I meet with you sometime in the next couple of weeks to learn more about this field as a career? I am available after 1pm every day for the next two weeks. Thank you so much for your time.

Sincerely,  
Sarah

**Her informational meeting goes really well, and Sarah sends a thank you email to Dr. Smith. They agree to set up a follow-up meeting in 2 months. Sarah documents this in her networking tracker.**



# Writing the Approach Email

## General Template

Dear Dr. \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a \_\_\_ year medical student. I am interested in \_\_\_\_\_ (topic/specialty/etc.) \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (name) \_\_\_\_\_ recommended I contact you. May I shadow/meet with you or one of your colleagues/residents to learn more about \_\_\_\_\_ (above subject) \_\_\_\_\_? I am available \_\_\_\_\_ .  
Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Example Email

Dear Dr. Smith,  
My name is Sarah N. and I am a second-year medical student at UUSOM. I am interested in learning more about General Surgery and my learning community faculty Dr. Fix recommended I contact you. May I shadow you or one of your residents in the next couple of weeks? I am free after 1pm every day except for Wednesdays, and I am also free all evenings and weekends. Thank you so much for your time.

Sincerely,  
Sarah N.  
M.D. Candidate, Class of 2021  
University of Utah School of Medicine

# Keep Track of Your Group B Contacts

As you reach out to Group B contacts, keep track of those whom you have made contact.

Name	Notes	Follow Up
1. Dr. M. Fix	Learning Community faculty, introduced me to Dr. Smith	Email after final exams to update on progress
2. Dr. B. Smith	General Surgery contact, shadowed and had informational meeting	Follow-up meeting in 2 months
3.		
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# Anatomy of an Informational Shadowing Experience

## 1. Preparation

- Prior to shadowing, confirm correct location, time, attire (scrubs, professional attire), paperwork if needed, and bring stethoscope or other medical equipment

## 2. Greeting and Introduction

- Be prepared to introduce yourself in a few sentences (they may not remember you from your email) with your name, year in school, and quick statement about interest

## 3. Shadowing

- Be engaged! Be interested in the whole process of healthcare
- Ask questions at appropriate times
- Meet others in the clinical environment (residents, nurses, etc.), observe the entire team
- Put your phone away and do not text while you are shadowing
- Give space when they appear busy (charting, etc.)
- Feel free to ask brief questions about patient's exam, history, pathology, etc. to expand your knowledge about the patient
- Offer to get blankets, food, water for patient if it seems appropriate
- Be respectful of the physicians' time and be prepared to leave at the agreed upon time

## 4. Questions

- What is a typical day like for you?
- Why did you choose X as a specialty?
- What do you love about this specialty?

## 5. Conclusion

- Thank them for their time
- Establish possible future contacts (colleagues, residents, etc.) make sure to identify a way to contact them (e.g. email) to shadow or meet at another time

## 6. Follow Up

- Send a thank you note following your experience (feel free to mention how it inspired you, how you were struck by X patient or procedure, what you learned, etc.)
- If good fit, ask to return or to set up a meeting





# Anatomy of an Informational Meeting

## 1. Greeting and Introduction (7 min)

- Be prepared to introduce yourself (they may not remember you from your email) with your name, year in school, and quick statement about interest and background
- **Laying out the agenda for the session:** What you hope to get out of the meeting (e.g. I am meeting with you to learn more about what a career in X is like) Example aims:
  1. Understand the specialty's job responsibilities
  2. Obtain a sense of the mentor's background and how they became in their current position
  3. Information about future career/research opportunities in this field
  4. One or two other contacts who can share experiences
  5. Names of professional organizations/leadership/groups to explore
  6. Schedule a time to shadow in this field

## 2. Asking opinion-seeking questions to develop mentor-mentee relationship (15 min)

### Example questions

- How did you decide on your specialty?
- What is a typical week/shift look like for you?
- What other professional activities do you do outside of clinical time?
- What kind of people succeed in this specialty?
- What is most rewarding about your specialty?
- How family friendly is this specialty (minority-friendly, female-friendly, etc.)?
- How did you decide between X and Y specialties?
- What is the training like for this specialty?

## 3. Asking "pay off" questions (5 min)

### Example questions

- What advice could you give me in my position as an MS1/MS2?
- What do you think I could do right now to learn more about this specialty?
- What do you think I could do right now to better prepare for this specialty?
- Considering my interests, are there any other specialties you think I should explore?
- Do you or any of your colleagues have any current research projects that I could be involved in?
- Are there other attendings/residents that you think I should also meet with?

## 4. Concluding and thanking (3 min)

- Thank them for their time
- Thank the person who connected you to your mentor to close the loop ("Thank you again for connecting me with Dr. X. We had a great meeting today")



# Thank You Email Template

## General Template

Dear Dr. \_\_\_\_\_ ,

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak with you about \_\_\_\_\_ (what you spoke about at your meeting/shadowing)\_\_\_\_\_. After our conversation I have a much better understanding of \_\_\_\_\_ (what did you learn) \_\_\_\_\_. As you suggested, I will \_\_\_\_\_ (action items based on their advice)\_\_\_\_\_. I would like to meet with you again \_\_\_\_\_ (follow up)\_\_\_\_\_. Thank you again for your time.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_

## Example Email

Dear Dr. Smith,

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak with you about your experience as a faculty in general surgery and your focus on education. After our conversation I have a much better sense of the rewards and challenges of a career in general surgery. As you suggested, I will look into the society you mentioned during our meeting and see how I can become involved. I would greatly appreciate the chance to meet with you again early next year. Thank you again for your time.

Sincerely,

Sarah N.

M.D. Candidate, Class of 2021

University of Utah School of Medicine

# Facilitative Networking (Group C)

## Primary Role:

The primary role of the Group C contacts with facilitative networking is to decide on or advocate for your candidacy within a specific organization or for a specific opportunity. Once you are formally ready to apply for a residency or seek an opportunity, it is time to reach out to the Group C contact. The difference between a Group B and a Group C contact is that the Group C contact has the ability to influence the decision of the job or opportunity you are targeting.

If you have sufficiently impressed a Group C contact, he or she may be your champion within the program. However, it is recommended that you wait until you are prepared before reaching out to them; you don't want to make a mistake due to ignorance or lack of preparation.

## Before you approach contacts from Group C

Once you are networking with Group C contacts, an opportunity may appear very suddenly. Be sure that you are ready if the Group C contact is ready to talk. Why are you the right person for the position? What do you bring to the table that your peers don't? What work are you willing to commit to? When are you able to start doing the work? Being prepared to advocate for your candidacy entails a hefty amount of preparation. Put thought into what you would like to say to some possible questions. It's always best to do your homework and prepare!

## Approaching contacts from this group

Approaching Group C contacts is, in many ways, similar to approaching Group B contacts. The seeker (you) would send an approach email or make an approach call. The approach email/call would begin by introducing you. Then you would express your interest in "exploring opportunities" relative to your goal. Also included would be some key points relating to your main qualifications. Finally, it would request some kind of follow-up action such as a meeting. If the seeker is, in fact, applying for a position, then instead of an approach email, the candidate would send a cover letter.

Group C contacts trust referrals from people they know more than they trust cold contacts. That is why it's often worthwhile to patiently network your way to Group C contacts rather than to contact them directly. Typically, Group B contacts will refer you to Group C contacts. That's why it also pays to develop good relationships with your Group B contacts.

During her informational meeting with Dr. Smith, Sarah mentioned that she was interested in doing research in general surgery during the summer research time, but she was not sure who to contact or where she should even start looking for a mentor. Dr. Smith mentioned that she knows of a researcher in general surgery who might want to work with a medical student. Sarah follows up by email with this new potential research mentor.

Dear Dr. Johnson,

My name is Sarah and I am a first-year medical student who is interested in doing research in general surgery this summer. I have been meeting with Dr. Smith and she recommended I contact you about potential research opportunities. I saw that you study surgical education assessment and I am very interested in learning more. Is there a time in the next couple of weeks I could meet with you? I am available after 1pm every day except for Wednesdays. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Sarah

## Interacting with contacts from this group

Although you won't always be in a formal environment (e.g. interviewing) when interacting with Group C contacts, act as if Group C contacts are always evaluating you. This is why you must treat interactions with them as you would an interview. Your main goal is to impress the Group C contact with your interest, knowledge, and overall presentation. Remember that impressions are made from the letter/email you send, to the way you look. Everything counts!

## Following up with contacts from this group

After you've met with your contact, it would be polite to send a thank you note the day after the meeting. It is fine if you send this via email. As a reminder, make sure your email communications are neat: grammatically correct, no spelling errors, appropriate subject line, etc.

Sarah meets with Dr. Johnson and finds that they are a good fit to work together on a research project. After researching her idea, Sarah works with Dr. Johnson to develop a productive and interesting research project for the summer. Sarah follows-up regularly with Dr. Johnson to complete the project and maintains her mentorship relationships with Dr. Fix and Dr. Smith as well.



# Writing the Research Mentor Email

## General Template

Dear Dr. \_\_\_\_\_ ,

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a \_\_\_\_ year medical student. I am interested in \_\_\_\_\_ (topic/specialty/etc.) \_\_\_\_\_ and Dr. \_\_\_\_\_ recommended I contact you. I have read and seen that you study \_\_\_\_\_ (topic/specialty/etc.) \_\_\_\_\_ and I am interested in learning more about the ways I could become involved. May I meet with you in \_\_\_\_\_ (time frame)\_\_\_\_\_ to learn more about research opportunities in \_\_\_\_\_? I am available \_\_\_\_\_ .  
Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_

## Example Specialty Mentor Email

Dear Dr. Johnson,

My name is Sarah and I am a first-year medical student. I am interested in doing research in general surgery this summer. I have been meeting with Dr. Smith and she recommended I contact you about potential research opportunities. I saw that you study surgical education assessment and I am very interested in learning more about how I could become involved. Is there a time in the next couple of weeks I could meet with you? I am available after 1pm every day except for Wednesdays. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Sarah N.

M.D. Candidate, Class of 2021

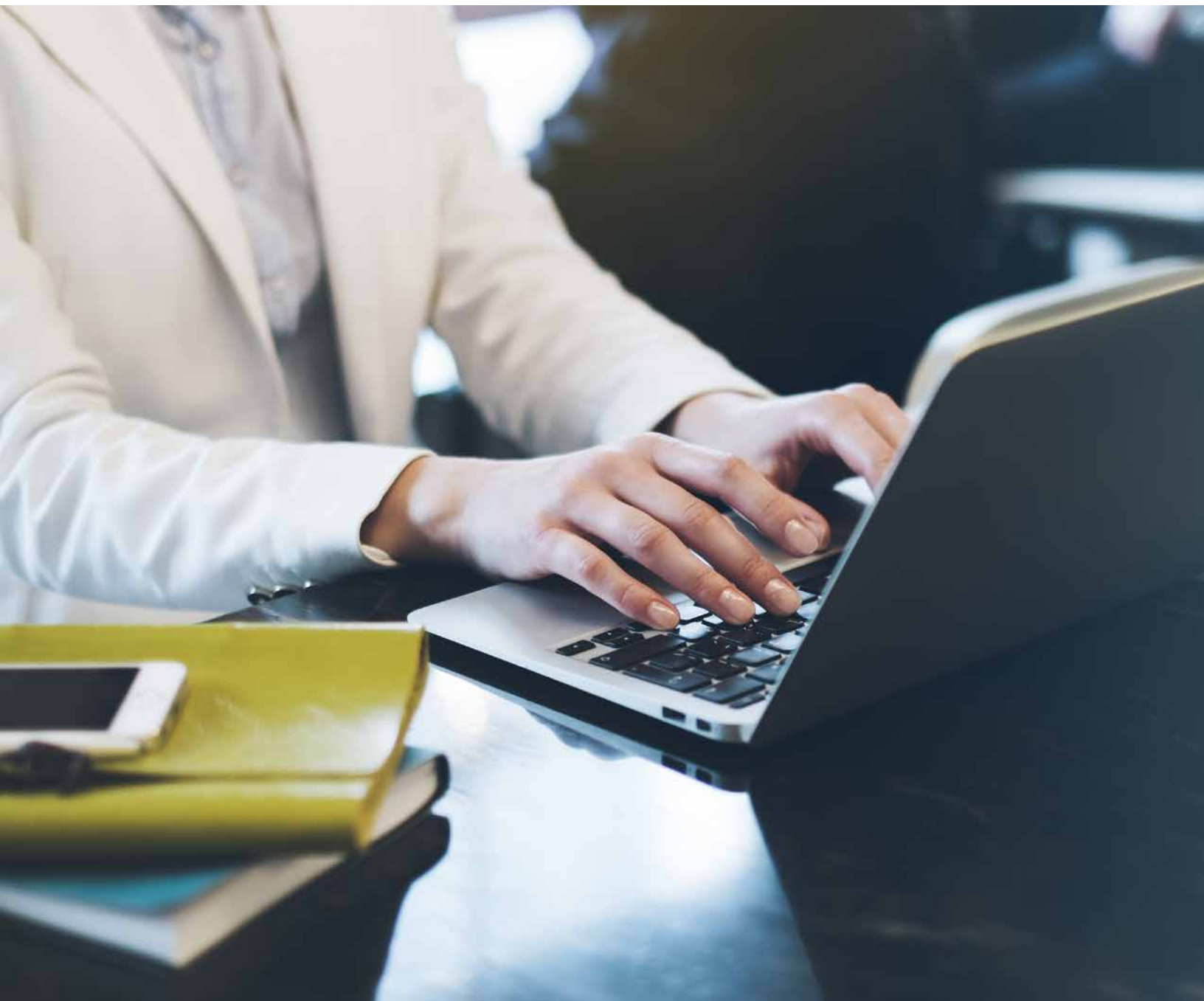
University of Utah School of Medicine

## Other Group C Contacts

In medical school, Group C contacts can include many different people who will likely change groups over time. It is likely that Group B contacts may move into Group C as they help you prepare for residency application or Group C contacts may move into Group B as you develop the relationship and they connect you to others in their network. This is why it is important to follow up and maintain your network connections throughout your medical school experience and career.

Sarah is now a third-year medical student looking for her specialty-specific mentor to guide her as she begins preparing for residency applications and intern year. She has maintained her relationship with Dr. Smith over the years and Dr. Smith connects Sarah with the Residency Program Director for General Surgery to learn more about that specific program. Sarah follows up to set up a meeting (see template and example on the next page).

Sarah has a successful meeting and sends a thank you email after the meeting.



# Writing the Specialty Mentor Email

## General Template

Dear Dr. \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a \_\_\_\_\_ year medical student. I have decided that I would like to pursue a career in \_\_\_\_\_ (topic/specialty/etc.) \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (name) \_\_\_\_\_ recommended I contact you. I have learned that your program provides excellent training and is specifically known for (subject/fellowship/strength of the program). I would love to meet with you to discuss applying for residency in (specialty). May I meet with you to learn more about \_\_\_\_\_ (above subject) \_\_\_\_\_? I am available \_\_\_\_\_.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_

## Example Specialty Mentor Email

Dear Dr. (Program Director),

My name is Sarah N and I am a third-year medical student. I have decided that I would like to pursue a career in General Surgery and Dr. Smith recommended that I contact you. I have had the opportunity to shadow her over the past 2 years and I have been drawn to General Surgery and specifically to your program. I understand that your residency program at The University of Utah has a robust program in Medical Education and I am very interested in learning more about your residency program. I would love to meet with you to discuss applying for a residency in General Surgery. May I meet with you to discuss this further? Thank you so much for your time.

Sincerely,

Sarah N.

M.D. Candidate, Class of 2021

University of Utah School of Medicine

# Networking Etiquette

## 1. Before you network

- **Do your homework.** When you network, it is your responsibility to steer the conversation. You'll need to ask thoughtful questions and respond intelligently. In order to do this, you'll need to spend some time researching information on their background and organization. You need to plan to spend a minimum of 30 minutes doing this type of preparation.
- **Be courteous in asking for the time of others.** Many would-be networkers make the mistake of being demanding in asking for time from others. The urgency of their own situation often prevents them from seeing beyond their perspective to appreciate the courtesy required to make an effective request. The second mistake many make is being overly casual. Although being casual is acceptable among acquaintances, one must respect a certain sense of formality when reaching out to a new contact. Never call a physician by their first name unless you are requested to do so.

## 2. While you network

- **Build a relationship and be interested in others.** The point of networking is to build a relationship from which both parties can mutually benefit. Building a relationship requires that you take a genuine interest in the other party. What often gets in the way of building a relationship is the urge of the networker to "skip the formalities and get to the point." Remember that networking is first about building the relationship and only then the two parties are able to make requests of one another. Listen to the other party and try to glean as much advice and knowledge from them as possible. Use each moment as a learning opportunity.
- **Guide the flow of the conversation.** Whoever initiates the conversation (you) has the responsibility of steering the conversation. Time is precious and nothing will irritate the other party more than the perception that time is being wasted from lack of direction. So when you initiate a dialogue, clearly state your intent and how the other party could contribute. Then make sure you guide the questions and conversation so that you do not (unintentionally) stray off course. This is why it is so important to do the background research so that you will already have questions and topics in mind that you would like to discuss.

## 3. After you network

- **Keep a record of your interactions.** Your network is of benefit to you only if you remember who you've contacted and engaged in conversation. If you are committed to networking, you'll probably have talked to many people. Then it becomes important to keep track of all the contacts you've had. If possible, jot down something about what was discussed during your networking session so that you can pick up quickly from where you left off. The larger your network becomes, the more important it will be for you to keep records of your contacts and interactions. There is only so much your mind can remember!
- **Find creative ways to keep in touch.** Relationships require maintenance. You must re-establish contact on a regular basis with people in your network. Fortunately, it takes a lot less effort to maintain a relationship than it does to create a new relationship. Thoughtful and creative communications to members of your network will often suffice to keep the relationship going. If you hear of a special accomplishment or something going on with a member of your network, be sure to drop them a note and congratulate them or say some kind words. It is the little things that add up to be the big things. Small steps of reaching out will go a long way.