

Frequently Asked Questions - Networking

As you think through the four pillars of the 1L Career Foundations program, you might have some questions about certain aspects of the legal profession or your law school experience. Please consult these FAQ documents to help put the things you are learning in context. Each FAQ document will focus on one aspect of the 1L Career Foundations program. Please feel free to reach out to OCS or OPICS for more information.

What is networking?

Networking is fundamentally about getting to know people, learning about their work and career paths, and maintaining those contacts over time. At its core, it's a form of research. Contacts come in many forms: classmates, friends, relatives, friends of friends, alumni/ae from your law school and your undergraduate school, professors and former employers – to name only a few. We also call this process “relationship building” or “making connections.”

If networking sounds intimidating, we have a number of resources available to aid you in the mechanics. Be sure to review the [Networking and Relationship Building](#) page on the Job Search Toolkit.

Why do it?

There are many reasons to make connections with attorneys. They generally fall into three categories:

(1) Networking as a career exploration strategy

Networking is a critical component of finding the right career path. The first and most meaningful step in learning about different legal careers is talking to attorneys who are practicing in the field. These conversations can help you understand the realities of the practice area or geographic region, the types of qualifications necessary to be successful, and the day-to-day demands of the job. Each of these considerations are key to evaluating whether a given career path is right for you. This might be especially important to those without a background or experience in the legal field, as the nature of doctrinal courses and the timing of experiential opportunities may mean conversations with practitioners are among the best ways to understand what practice will be like.

(2) Networking as an interview preparation strategy

When interviewing, employers will ask you questions that require you to articulate why you want to work in a given practice and why you want to work for that specific employer. The degree to which you can accurately describe your preferences and fit them into the context of your narrative will partly determine how much success you will have in the interview process. Networking is a crucial

component to nailing questions such as “why this employer?” or “why this practice area?”

(3) Networking as a job search strategy

Employers are always interested in reducing recruiting time, costs, and hiring risks. For this reason, many use their own networks to find new employees, rather than advertising their openings. Similarly, a personal referral can be the difference between an interview and an overlooked application. Relationships you develop during law school can help you learn about and get jobs in the future. While it’s never a guarantee, speaking with practicing attorneys might lead you to making connections with people willing to become your advocate throughout your job search.

What are the ways that I can network with attorneys?

You can make connections with attorneys in a variety of ways, including any of the following methods: (1) attending networking receptions and employer-held events (check out our guide on [Navigating Networking Receptions](#) for more information); (2) speaking to Georgetown professors and adjunct practitioners; (3) reaching out to personal or professional contacts, including friends, family members, previous professors, and previous employers, (4) speaking to attorneys at your summer internships or school-year externships, and (5) emailing attorneys you have identified on employer websites, LinkedIn, or the [Hoya Gateway](#).

How do I network?

First, try to identify attorneys who work at employers that interest you. You can often find private sector attorneys on law firm websites. For attorneys who do not have their contact information publicly listed, consult our [Accelerating Your Networking](#) video on how to make use of LinkedIn and the [Hoya Gateway](#). As the video demonstrates, it’s helpful to filter for attorneys who graduated from your undergrad institution or Georgetown Law; you can also filter for other connections.

From there, reach out! Consult our [Informational Meetings](#) resource to learn about ways you can connect with attorneys to set up conversations. The resource will discuss how to draft professional emails in ways that will increase your chances of getting a response.

Once you have scheduled a networking conversation, make sure to learn as much as you can about the employer and attorney so you don't ask redundant

questions. If you speak with an attorney, send a thank-you note within 24 hours to express your gratitude. Then, follow up regularly (aim for at least once every few months) to provide an update on what you have learned, to ask additional clarifying questions, or to send along news articles relevant to an attorney's practice area. You can also ask the contact to provide additional networking contacts.

What questions should I ask during my conversations?

Start with what genuinely interests you! Do you want to learn more about how your contact ended up in their current role, or do you want to learn more about the day-to-day work of the position? You should feel free to ask questions about the legal market or the things you can do to show an interest and build relevant skills. We have a list of possible questions you can ask in the [Informational Meetings](#) resource. As you progress in your networking you will find that you are asking more refined and pointed questions that inform your precise interests.

When should I network and how often should I be having conversations?

This is not a race and there is no finish line. Rather, you should consider building relationships and making connections to be an essential component of your professional development as a law student and future attorney. Networking is a skill that you should continue developing even after you graduate from Georgetown.

If you are in career exploration mode, having a few initial conversations with attorneys might help you to find a position suited to your specific career goals. If you have an upcoming interview, discussing the practice and role with attorneys might help you to better articulate why you are a good fit for a job. The more you network the more you will learn about specific legal markets and the more advocates you will develop along the way.

When it comes to the private sector job search, 2Ls often make a concerted effort to reach out to attorneys at the law firms that interest them – even if these employers tend to visit campus as part of a proceduralized recruiting program. Prior to 2L On-Campus Interviews, we generally recommend that students connect with as many law firms and attorneys as they can, to better prepare for interviews and to understand the universe of potential opportunities. For non-biglaw employers, networking may be the chief strategy for perfecting an application, as these employers do not often participate in recruiting programs.

When it comes to the public sector job search, networking can be just as important to demonstrate a commitment to a certain field or employer and to learn about the timing of opportunities.

Do you have any special advice for how to network in a virtual environment?

Attorneys and non-attorneys alike are juggling a number of new challenges during this time, including increased childcare and family responsibilities, and simply dealing with the uncertainties in the legal industry and world at large. Some attorneys may take longer to respond, or will need a gentle nudge. Try to have patience and empathy for those with whom you speak. Also be aware of your own video fatigue. OCS has drafted a resource on [How to Network Remotely](#) with private-sector employers and [Recruiting Outside of OCI](#) with medium and small law firms.

I am hesitant to reach out to experienced attorneys. Should I still network? Are there ways to alleviate my anxieties?

We understand that networking can be intimidating. We want to assure you that reaching out to experienced attorneys is completely appropriate and professional. There are also many ways to make connections; so do what works for you. Many attorneys are happy to speak about their work and to provide advice to law students; and the more you do it the more comfortable you will become with the process. If you're still nervous, watch our video on [Networking with No Fear](#). And don't forget that peer networking might be a great place to start – other members of student groups, Law Fellows, or other friends can provide helpful information and provide introductions to attorneys with whom they have worked.

What should I wear if I am networking over video?

If you are networking via video conference, be mindful of the image you are projecting. While you don't have to wear a full suit, we encourage you to wear business casual clothing. Look at what appears in the background of your video to ensure you would feel comfortable having a future colleague seeing everything in view.