



## 4 Types of Conversation Starters That Make Networking Easy

We all know the type of person who has no problem walking up to a new group of people to spark up a conversation. Some of us, however, feel intimidated or frightened by the thought of approaching strangers. Oftentimes, the hardest part of meeting new people is getting a conversation started. Try out some of these icebreakers to help open up the lines of communication, hopefully leading to more meaningful interactions.

### **Ask what brought someone to the event.**

One thing you have in common with all event participants is that you each decided to attend this particular event, so learn about what influenced others to come.

- “What brought you here today?”
- “What are you hoping to learn about or take away from today’s event?”
- “How did you learn about this event?”
- “What’s your favorite part of the event so far?”

### **Make observations about your surroundings.**

If there was a presentation given, discuss what you thought. You can also talk about other elements of the event, such as the food, the location, or mutual acquaintances you may have.

- “What did you think of the presentation? I thought the part about \_\_\_ was interesting.”

- “These chicken skewers are great, I’m going to grab another one. Care to join me?”
- “I’m not too familiar with this part of town. Do you know it well? Are there any restaurants/shops/parks I should visit while I’m here?”
- Offer a compliment. “Your shoes are stunning. Where did you find them?”

**Use familiar interests and references.**

Use potential mutual interests to your advantage. If you’re a sports fan, bring up the latest game and see what the response is. If that doesn’t work, weather, traffic, and local attractions are always good fallbacks.

- “Did you catch the Sounders game last night? The last 10 minutes were intense.”
- “Man, getting here was tough. How did you manage?”
- “Can you believe how nice this summer has been? Were you able to get out in the sun much?”
- “I finally got a chance to visit Kerry Park this weekend. Have you been there?”

**Ask about them.**

In general, people enjoy talking about themselves. Keep conversation flowing by asking questions that need some explanation, rather than just yes or no responses.

- “How did you find your way into this industry?”
- “What do you enjoy most about what you do?”
- “What do you enjoy doing outside of work?”

It’s OK to pull yourself aside after you finish a discussion to discreetly jot down a couple details from your conversation. It can be tough to remember individual conversations if you meet a multitude of people at one event. After you get to know a new person, follow up with a custom request to connect via LinkedIn, and use the message to highlight one of the things you discussed.

If you meet someone you want to continue to build a relationship with, be proactive. Ask to meet for coffee or a meal, and continue to get to know them.

Practice your networking skills by visiting us in the Career Action Center. We’re always happy to chat and look forward to meeting you.

Career Action Center

Resource Room: Mountlake Terrace Hall 138 | Summer Hours: Open M-Th, 9-4

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