How to: Network

An important component of academic events that often gets overlooked is networking. Events such as poster exhibits and research conferences are an opportunity to meet new people, foster connections, and expand research horizons.

Wear your nametag
» After an initial introduction, it’s easy to forget someone’s name, especially at an event where you are meeting many new people.
» Conversations will go more smoothly if the person you’re speaking with doesn’t feel awkward for not being able to remember your name.
» Others may be encouraged to wear their nametags too, which will make learning new names easier for you.

Don’t undervalue student connections
» It’s important to interact with faculty to create a professional network, learn about their research, and develop contacts. However, it is also important to communicate with other students!
» Research events such as conferences and poster competitions are a great place to meet like-minded peers. Whether or not you study in the same field, you can gain valuable knowledge by asking about their research experiences and findings.
» Forming connections and friendships with fellow students can lead to collaborations in the future: within your own university as well as across different campuses.

Embrace social media
» Create a professional profile to connect with a wider network of peers, researchers, and faculty.
» Keep your eye out for upcoming research events; most are advertised through social media. If your university, college, or department has their own account, follow it to stay in the know.
» If an event you’re attending has its own account or event page, follow it.
» If there is a hashtag associated with an event, use it! This is an easy way to engage more with the event, and for others in attendance to connect with you online.
» It makes follow-ups easy: you’re able to reintroduce your name and face without actually saying anything to them. But if you do want to include a message, it’s best to keep it short and simple.

Follow-up
» People have short memories, so don’t forget to establish a follow-up correspondence with those you’ve met.
» Try to do this within the first few days following the event.
» With students: LinkedIn, email, Twitter, and on rare occasions Facebook
» With faculty: LinkedIn, email, ResearchGate, Academica.edu, Twitter