



Building an Academic Network

At UCI:

- Connect with faculty. Attend their labs, office hours, and social events. Express your interest in their research and offer to assist with projects.
- Join student organizations. Look for departmental societies, research groups, or interdisciplinary clubs related to your field. Actively participate in discussions and initiatives.
- Seek mentors. Identify professors whose work aligns with your interests and schedule meetings to discuss your research goals and aspirations.
- Collaborate with peers. Team up on research projects, co-author publications, or present together at conferences.
- Become a teaching assistant or tutor. This helps you hone your communication skills, build relationships with students and faculty, and gain valuable teaching and service experience.

Beyond UCI:

- Attend conferences and workshops. Choose events relevant to your field and actively participate in presentations, poster sessions, and networking events.
- Join online communities and forums. Utilize platforms such as LinkedIn and find where researchers in your field discuss their work, ask questions, and share resources.
- Reach out to individuals you admire. Don't be afraid to email professors or researchers whose work you respect. Express your interest in their work and ask for mentorship or career advice.
- Participate in research collaborations. Look for opportunities to collaborate with researchers at other institutions on joint projects or exchange programs.

General Conversation Starters

"What brings you to this conference?"

This is a classic opener that allows people to share their interests and research focus.

"What have been your favorite sessions so far?"

A great way to learn about interesting presentations and spark discussions about specific topics.

"I really enjoyed [speaker's name]'s talk. What did you think?"

A way to share your own interests and encourage conversation about specific presentations.

"Have you attended this conference before? Any tips for a first-timer?"

Useful for both experienced attendees and newcomers.

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Research-Focused Questions

"Your research on [topic] is fascinating! Could you tell me more about your findings?"

Shows genuine interest and opens the door for a deeper discussion.

"What are the biggest challenges you face in your research on [topic]?"

Opens a discussion about shared obstacles and potential collaborations.

"Do you have any upcoming publications or presentations I should look out for?"

Shows interest in their work and helps keep in touch.

"I'm also working on [related topic]. Have you come across any resources or methods that might be relevant to my research?"

A way to exchange knowledge and potentially find common ground.

Career-Oriented Questions

"What's your career path after finishing your degree/postdoctoral research?"

A non-intrusive way to learn about their goals and aspirations.

"Do you have any advice for someone like me who's interested in [career field]?"

Valuable insights from someone further along in their career.

"Do you know of any upcoming job openings or fellowship opportunities that might be a good fit for my skills?"

Broaden your knowledge of unique opportunities in your field.

"Would you be open to connecting on LinkedIn after the conference?"

A way to maintain the connection and stay updated on their work.

Sample Introduction and 30-second Speech

"Hello, my name is Peter Anteater. It's nice to meet you. What brings you to this event? I'm in the Aerospace Engineering Ph.D. program at the University of California, Irvine. I'm working with Boeing on my current project to develop advanced control techniques to control rotocraft vibrations so we can reduce the vibration helicopters typically experience. I hope to do a flight test soon!"

Sample Follow-Up With Contact

Dear Dr. Anteater, It was a pleasure connecting with you at the conference last week. Your presentation on the environmental impact of invasive species in the Amazon was both insightful and thought-provoking. I would be delighted to correspond with you further regarding our shared interests and scholarly work. I look forward to our paths crossing again at future events.

