



TRANSITION AFTER YOUR SERVICE YEAR

Even from day one of your service year, you are probably already thinking about what you will do when your service year is completed. Will you be looking for a job? Going back to school? Maybe doing another service year with your same organization or a new one? No matter where your next steps take you, your service year is a great time to build your professional skills and be thoughtful about what you want for your future. This guide is especially helpful when you are in job search mode, but you can also work on these skills all year long.

POST SERVICE YEAR PREP

Preparing for your next steps after your service year should start the moment your service year begins. [Use this handout](#) to evaluate steps you can take each month to make sure you're ready to hit the ground running. (Note: This resource was created for programs, but we think it could be helpful for any service year corps member to see and use as a guide.)

GOAL SETTING

Whether you have clear career plans or no idea what you want to do after your service year, identifying goals you set and achieved throughout your service year is valuable information that can assist you in your job application and interview process. [Use our guide](#) to help you think big picture and make achieving your goals a breeze. Also, setting goals is a great way to keep your job searching on track!

OPTIONS FOR FREE & CHEAP CLASSES, EBOOKS, AND MORE

During your service year and throughout your professional career, it's always helpful to brush up on your skills or learn something new. [This guide provides recommendations](#) for free and affordable online classes and other learning resources to help you keep you sharp. There are also specific courses such as job-searching basics like resume writing, LinkedIn, and more!

TELL YOUR STORY

Telling your story effectively is an important part of the post-service year process. You'll likely tell your story during interviews and while networking so you want to make sure you know your story with ease. Who knows, your story may even encourage others to do a service year, too! [This resource](#) walks you through how you can tell a compelling story based on the public narrative model.

TRANSLATING SERVICE YEAR SKILLS

We know that you are building important skills during your service year. We also know that sometimes it can be tricky to translate what you are doing and learning into terms that resonate with employers or translate into a potential job description. [Use our guide](#) to understand the framework employers use to evaluate your skills and how to translate your service year skills so that you can stand apart when applying for jobs.

AMERICORPS ALUMS RESUME GUIDE

Curious on how you should list your AmeriCorps service year on your resume? [Check out this guide](#) that provides detailed instructions on formatting your resume and highlights tips and tricks to ensure your service year and previous job experiences make you look like the best candidate so you can land your dream job!

NETWORKING & INTERVIEWS

Does the thought of networking or interviewing make you cringe? Don't fret! Whether you love it or hate it, talking to other professionals is an key aspect of any career or job search. Make sure you are covering the basics so you impress anyone you meet! [This guide](#) provides information to prepare you and give you confidence in any networking or interview situation.

STARTING A NEW JOB

You've landed a new job – congratulations! Now it's time to make great first impressions, fight those new job jitters, and learn how to make the most of your time right before and right after your new job starts. [This guide](#) will provide you with all the information you need to begin your new job on the right foot!



STARTING A NEW JOB



Just accepted a new position? Congratulations! No matter if you are starting a service year, internship, or job, your preparation and first day will feel pretty similar. Get ready to make a great first impression, fight your new job jitters, and learn how to make the most of your time before and after the job starts.

YOU JUST GOT A JOB OFFER! NOW WHAT?

- **Step one:** Celebrate! You worked hard and clearly impressed your new employer!
- **Step two:** Decide if you will accept, deny, or negotiate the job offer.
- **Step three:** Once you have decided, you will need to inform the employer of your decision:
 - An acceptance (or denial) letter often can be done via email and should include a start date, salary, benefits, job title, etc., and a written acceptance of the job offer.
 - Or, if an employer sends you an offer letter and it lays out the terms and conditions you negotiated and mutually agreed to, simply sign-off via their terms and conditions.
- **Step four:** If you are currently employed, remember it's customary to give at least two weeks notice before your last day. You will want to tell your boss and hand in a formal letter of resignation before you start letting other coworkers know that you are leaving your current role.
- **Step five:** Let people in your network know that you will be starting a new role. Make sure professional contacts know who they should follow up with if they still have business with your previous employer and update your social networks – like LinkedIn – so everyone can share in your celebration!

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR TIME OFF BETWEEN JOBS

If you are able to, it's great to take a little time off before starting your new job. [Get organized, schedule appointments, and run errands.](#) Once you start your new job, you'll likely have to use vacation time to accomplish these tasks. Also, don't forget to relax! Starting a new job can be stressful, so take some time to do things that make you happy and spend time with the ones you love!

CONQUER NEW JOB JITTERS

It's normal to be both nervous and excited about your new position. Success on your first day starts with preparation the night before you start.

- Make sure your outfit is ready to go. Leading up to your first day of work, make sure to ask what the office dress code is. If you don't know, err on the side of being overdressed.
- Set your alarm for earlier than you normally would and plan on being early. Give yourself plenty of extra time for your commute because there's nothing worse than being stuck in rush hour traffic, or missing the last train that will get you there on time. If you get there too early, maybe treat yourself to your favorite breakfast sandwich or latte!
- Review your job description and do final research on your organization. You'll feel great walking in with a strong understanding of the organization, and fully confident about what your role is. Also, remember to bring any papers or identification you may need in order to fill out any remaining paperwork on your first day.
- Get a good night sleep and remember that you'll be great! They hired you because they see potential in you, and you accepted it because you want to work there too.

BE CONFIDENT ON YOUR FIRST DAY

Your lunch is packed, coffee is drank, and you remembered to lint roll your fluffy friend's hair off your new blazer.

You're already killing your first day! Set the tone of your new job by [staying engaged and confident on your first day](#).

You will adjust quickly, and you won't feel like the new kid for too long.

- Treat your first day like an extension of your interview. You want to put your best foot forward so that everyone is just as excited as you are about your new role at the office. Be your best professional, upbeat self.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions and take notes the old school way – paper and pen. You'll have a ton of new information thrown at you: names, random acronyms, systems and passwords, etc. You won't learn or remember everything on your first day, and that's okay, but make sure to ask about things you don't understand instead of just nodding yes to everything. Bonus points: When you write it down you can look back later instead of having to ask the same question over and over again.
- Keep a list of questions throughout the day and refer back to them. Writing down thoughtful questions will show that you are engaged and are soaking up as much information as possible. Schedule a few minutes to check in with your manager at the end of your first day, or even at the end of your first week, and work to get those questions answered.
- [Make a great impression](#) with your new coworkers. Say hello and introduce yourself to everyone – even though you are new, they may not take the lead. Lunchtime is a great opportunity to get to know people. If there is a group in the break room, don't be nervous about asking to join! If you need to go get lunch, ask your new colleagues to go with you or to give you recommendations. You'll be able to try out the office's favorite lunch spot and you will feel more comfortable once you get to know a few people a bit better.
- Pay attention to your organization's culture and your coworkers' personalities. Start to learn people's titles and roles so that you know who to go to when you have questions. Listening is key – if you're nervous, just ask questions and listen, people love talking about themselves and they'll like that you're asking for your information!

BRING A DESK SURVIVAL KIT

Having a few things on hand will make sure you can handle any little emergency! You don't need to bring this on your first day, but once you know what your desk or locker situation is, it's a great idea to keep a little kit with essentials.

Things you might want to include in your survival kit:

- Deodorant
- Clothing Tape
- Stain Remover Pen
- Bandages
- Hair ties & pins
- Underwear and socks
- Non-perishable snacks/lunch
- Mints or gum

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [6 Mistakes People Make in the First Week at a New Job](#)
- [27 things you should do on your first day of work](#)
- [Your Guide to Your First Week on the Job](#)
- [Starting a New Job Tomorrow? Here's How to Rule your First Day](#)
- [Do these 5 Things on your First Day to Win Instant Respect](#)
- [So, you Landed a New Job? How to Get the First 3 Months Right](#)



NETWORKING AND INTERVIEWS



Networking and interviews are both important parts of the working world. You'll have many opportunities to meet new people and you want to make sure you are always putting your best professional foot forward. This guide will help you with some basics of networking and interviewing to ensure that you shine now matter what situation you find yourself in.

HAVE YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH READY

Whether you are getting ready for a networking event or an interview, it's a great idea to have your elevator pitch – or a few of them – ready to go. An elevator pitch should include a couple of sentences about you, what you are doing now, and where you want to go next. It should be pretty short – think about what you would say to someone you are traveling with for only a few floors in an elevator (get it?!). Especially if you are starting to look for a job, make sure to mention that when appropriate. People won't know what you are hoping for new – job or otherwise – unless you tell them about it.

There are many articles about why and how to get your elevator pitch ready, but here are some we like to get you started:

- [Service Year Alliance's Storytelling Guide](#) - *This might be too long for an elevator pitch, but could help you in figuring out the key points of your story!*
- [The 15-Minute Method to Writing an Unforgettable Elevator Speech](#)
- [I Walked into an Interview with No Elevator Pitch—Here's What Happened](#)

Once you have ideas about what to say, remember to practice! You may feel silly saying this out loud, but the more you actually practice, the easier it will be, and the more confident you will sound!

NETWORKING BASICS

For some people, networking is no big deal, and for others, hearing the word makes them want to curl up under a blanket and never come out. If you fall more towards the "this-is-the-worst" end of the spectrum, use our simple tricks to help you get started! Whether you love it or hate it, networking is an important part of building and keeping a professional group of contacts that will help you with current work and future opportunities. As with all things, practice makes it easier!

How To Find Events And People

For many people, their current job and contacts are the basis of their network. Each time you move to a new job, you carry some connections with you and your network continues to grow. If you are just starting out or are looking to expand your network beyond your work, here are some suggestions to get started:

- **College alumni groups.** If you are a college grad, there could be an alumni group in your city that you can join. If there isn't a group, your college still may have a list of alums in your area or a list of alums in the industry you are hoping to connect with. Many people are willing to be contacted for questions, so reach out to your alumni office to learn more.
- **Young professional groups.** If there is a particular industry you are interested in, do some research to see if there is a group in your location specifically to help young people build networks. For example, [Young Nonprofit Professionals Network](#) has chapters in different locations throughout the US.

- **Service Year / AmeriCorps Alums chapters.** Of course, connecting with other service year alumni is a great way to build your network! Alums go on to do many types of work so they are a great source of advice and connections in a variety of industries.
- **Volunteering.** Finding a cause that is important to you and volunteering is a great way to connect with others that care about the same thing. Volunteering is great practice talking to new people – you’ll build your networking skills while you do some good for your community!
- **Classes.** Taking in-person classes is a great way to brush up on some skills or learn something new while also networking. You can look for classes specifically in your industry, or something totally for fun – no matter what, you’ll be meeting people and making new connections.
- **Newsletters and Listservs.** There are many lists you can join that will keep you updated about happenings in your area or about the industry you are in. It’s a great idea to stay informed about your industry – news makes a great conversation starter when networking! Do some research and join some listservs to keep up to date on news and events.
- **Social Media.** Connecting online is a great way to find events that you can join. Follow people or organizations that you admire in a professional capacity to stay in the know. It’s fine if you have different accounts for professional and personal use – just remember that what you post online lives on forever!

NETWORKING DO’S AND DON’TS

So you’ve gotten yourself to a networking event – great job! Now what? Don’t stress – networking is just having conversations. Think of it as making friends, professionally! Below are some conversation tips and tricks to help you get over the initial jitters of talking to new people and give you a foundation to make connections.

Make sure to...

- **Dress for success.** Make sure to look your best at an event. See if there is a dress code listed for the event. If not, business casual is likely fine for an after work event. Wear something that makes you feel confident!
- **Ask people about themselves.** The easiest thing to do is ask open ended questions about someone to get them talking. Check out some ideas for conversation starters in the “Informational Interview” section. It’s likely they will reciprocate with questions for you to keep the conversation moving – that’s why your elevator pitch is important!
- **Be honest.** It is always smart to put your best foot forward when you are meeting new people. Make sure though, that you are being honest about yourself and your skills and experiences. Just like with a resume, you want to highlight what you are good at but not lie or embellish – it will hurt you in the long run!
- **Find connection points.** It’s possible that you will talk with someone that has experience or skills that aren’t in line with the industry you are hoping to get to, and that’s okay! You never know when someone will have some wisdom to share or a connection for your future. Also, if you know someone else that is interested in that work, offer to make that connection. Even as you are starting to build your network, you can be a connection point for others!
- **Follow Up.** If you meet someone helpful at an event or otherwise, it’s appropriate to ask for their contact information to follow up. Say something along the lines of, “It’s been really great talking to you about _____, and I’d love to follow up with you to learn more. Do you have a business card?” If someone is at a networking event, they are also there to network, so they will likely be more than happy to share contact information. If you ask to follow up, make sure that you do. A quick email to say, “It was great to meet you at _____ and I look forward to staying in touch” is perfect.



Make sure you don't...

- **Focus only on your job search.** If you are looking for a job, it's fine to mention that. People won't know unless you say something! However, don't monopolize the conversation by only talking about your job search. Networking is about making professional relationships for the long haul, not just your next job.
- **Over-use your connection.** Whether you meet someone at a networking event or know them from a previous job, make sure they aren't the only person you are relying on to build your network or help you in your job search. Of course, trusted advisors are great to help you get started, but it's up to you to do the hard work for yourself. Also, if you reach out to a contact and they aren't getting back to you, you can follow up once, but probably not more than that in a short amount of time. People get busy and sometimes aren't available to follow up with you, and that's okay.
- **Only make asks.** Similarly to not over-contacting someone, make sure every time you contact someone, you are not only asking them for something. You can keep in touch with important contacts by sharing an article you think they will like, congratulating them on a work-iversary (LinkedIn has reminders for those!), or giving them an update about some current projects you are working on.

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

A great way to kickstart a job search or follow up after meeting someone at a networking event is to ask for an informational interview. This is a chance for you to ask someone about their career path and get some advice on next steps for yourself. Here are some steps for conducting an informational interview:

- **Make the ask.** Send a brief email to start, and make sure to mention how you know them. Remind them of the networking event you met at, or if you got their information from a mutual contact, mention who it is. Ask for 20 minutes of their time to start – either talking over the phone or meeting for a coffee in person if that would be easier for them.
- **Prepare.** Get ready for this interview like you would a real interview. Research your contact (on LinkedIn or their work's website) and the organization they work for. Make sure you know some basics so that you don't waste your time asking them things you could find out by googling! Also, have your generic resume ready in case they ask for it. This isn't a job interview so there is no need to stress about being perfect, but practicing like it's a real interview will help you when you get to that stage.
- **Conduct.** Just like when networking, make sure that you ask open ended questions. Don't spend time talking about you or your journey – you are there to learn about them! Below are some conversation starters if you aren't sure where to begin. Also, make sure to be respectful of time – stick to the time you said you would, or ask if they have a few more minutes to spare.
- **Follow Up.** Make sure to send a thank you note or email after your meeting. They took time to help you, so thank them for it! Mention something they said that was particularly helpful. Also, if it seems appropriate, you can ask for others contacts that you might be able to speak with as well.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

If you aren't sure what to ask when networking or doing informational interviews, here are some ideas to get you started:

- *How did you get into your field of work?*
- *What has your career path been like to date? Is it representative of most people in this kind of position?*
- *What are the future prospects in this field?*



- What trends do you see developing over the next few years?
- What do you enjoy the most about your job?
- What advice would you have liked to have heard when you were starting out?

JOB INTERVIEWS

Congratulations! Making it to the interview round for a new position is a big deal. Preparing for a job interview is similar to preparing for networking or an informational interview (so read the info above!), just a step further in seriousness.

- **Prepare well.** Think through questions that might be asked in the interview and prepare your answers. Jotting down bullet points can be helpful. Also, make sure you aren't using the same example for each question – think through all of your different work, volunteer, and educational experiences and pull out accomplishments and lessons learned from each. Again, have your elevator pitch ready for that "Tell me about yourself" kick-off! Here's [Glassdoor's list of 50 common interview questions](#) to help you prepare. Finally, prepare questions to ask them!
- **Show up.** Make sure to dress appropriately – err on the side of being more professional and more conservative if you really aren't sure what the dress code is. Make sure your hair, nails, and shoes are neat and tidy - little details could matter! Give yourself more than enough time to get to your interview, and find a coffee shop or place to hang out if you are too early. Head into the interview about 10-15 minutes early, but be ready to wait if they don't start until the scheduled time. Bring a pen and notebook, a few copies of your resume, and a list of printed references. Remember to silence your phone!
- **Interview and Follow up.** Take a deep breath – you are going to be great! If you are given a complicated or multiple part question, don't be afraid to ask to have it repeated or to say it back to them and ask if you understood it correctly. Remember to share a variety of your experiences and not use the same example over and over. At the end, ask the questions that you prepared. Remember to make sure your questions aren't things you could have googled. If there is anything unclear about the job or a question that came up in the interview, don't be afraid to ask that as well. After the interview, send a thank you within 24 hours to each of your interviewers. An email is fine, but a handwritten note is also a great way to stand out!

PRO TIP: If you're a fan of the handwritten note, it can be helpful to bring a few thank you notes with you to the interview and find a nearby coffee shop to write your thank you notes immediately after the interview. You can buy stamps at a CVS and drop the letters in the mail on your way home.

There are many articles you can read about preparing for interviews – check out [this one from The Muse](#) and this one from [The Balance Careers](#) to start. It is smart to prepare as best as you can, but be sure you [do some self care](#) and get some sleep as well to keep you cool, calm, and collected, and ready to ace your interview!

FINAL THOUGHTS ON NETWORKING AND INTERVIEWING

When it comes to job hunting, networking, and interviewing, you'll get a lot of advice and some of it may be conflicting, so go with what speaks most true to you and to the industry you are trying to get into. Here are the main points to remember, from our perspective, when it comes to networking and the job application process:

- Know your elevator pitch.
- Have a general resume ready for any situation (like networking), but tailor your resume for each job you apply to.
- Do your research on your job, industry, interviewers, etc.
- Put your best self forward while still being honest about your experience and your abilities
- And be confident! You'll be great :)

