

Networking: “Here’s My Card”

Common business card FAQs every job seeker should know.

Do I need business cards?

In short, yes. Business cards are indispensable networking tools that, in a small space, tell people who you are and how to contact you about job leads and open positions. Like elevator speeches, business cards provide valuable information in a compact, convenient, professional format. Look professional: with many websites and office supply stores producing business cards inexpensively, they are worth the small investment.

When do I use business cards?

Use your business cards anytime there is an opportunity to make a potential networking contact. Distribute them at a career fair or function, after an interview, in a chance encounter, or when time to chat is limited. If the other person doesn’t have one, use yours to jot down important information. Have cards ready in case friends, faculty, and colleagues hear of work opportunities and want to pass along your contact information. If you have business cards, hand them out. They are your opportunity to easily market yourself. But don’t throw them around; you’ll come across as self-serving. And don’t forget to ask for cards, as well. It’s a small exchange that can generate big returns.

What do I put on my business card?

Your business card needs to accomplish two main objectives: 1) provide your accurate contact details so that someone knows how to reach you; and 2) communicate who you are as a candidate. At a minimum, include your name, phone number(s), and email address. If you have a professional portfolio or website, include your site’s URL to showcase your work. Create your business card to reflect the type of industry and position in which you want to work. For example, candidates seeking traditional consulting or accounting roles should have a more traditional business card: horizontal, conservative typeface, and clean layout. Creatives might opt for more non-traditional formats and experiment with layout, colors, and graphics. Whatever the design, make sure the text is easy to read with plenty of space. Don’t clutter your card with too much information or elements.

Do I need to include a title on my business card if I am not employed?

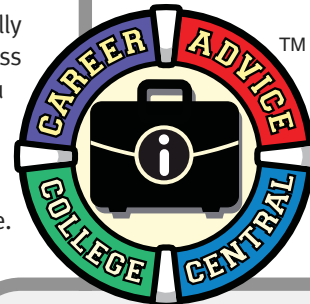
If you’re a student or are unemployed, generally you do not need to put a title on your business card. Titles can be limiting and are risky if you do not have much experience in the given field. However, when used correctly, a title such as “Accounting Student” or “Designer” can help establish you as a credible candidate.

What shouldn’t I include?

Avoid too many fonts, extraneous text, and a personal photo, unless you’re in the performance arts and can tastefully include a professional headshot. You do not need to include your home address on a business card unless you are comfortable doing so. Simple is often best. In general, a one-sided business card is a safe bet. Artists and creative professionals who want to include images on their business cards should consider something called a “leave-behind,” a larger two-sided business card with an example of their work on the back. Your card should help the recipient remember who you are. Don’t underestimate the power of these mini billboards.

What about electronic business cards?

Today, much networking occurs digitally. You can distribute your business contact information online by adding a proper signature to your professional email account. Display the same information from your business card, including your name, phone, email, and link to your professional website, if available. Mobile business cards apps also allow you to seamlessly share business contact info by bumping phones. Use this technology in conjunction with traditional cards. And follow up with your new contacts to remind them of who you are.



i n a nutshell:

Business cards are valuable real estate when it comes to networking and establishing credibility:

- **Have them professionally printed; proof for errors**
- **Put important info on the front**
- **Be aware: odd-size and shape cards don’t fit standard cases**
- **Keep your cards neat and clean; no dog-eared corners**
- **Politely review someone’s card first, rather than just shoving it in your pocket**
- **Follow up with new contacts within 24 hours to help solidify the connection**

Exchanging business cards is a quick means to relationship building. Put your name directly in someone’s hands and let them know that you are “at their service.”