

Effective communication continues to be ranked the #1 ability sought by employers. It is also one of the four strengths identified by UAB as essential for all graduates. The following guidelines provide ways to demonstrate strong communication and professionalism ensuring your reputation stays on a positive trajectory to build a strong career:

- Always **be early** for appointments and interviews. It is better to arrive fifteen minutes early than a minute late which can damage your reputation and ruin your chances for success. Build in plenty of time for travel. If you arrive early, use the time to relax, prepare, and present a professional image to everyone you meet.
- Always **dress for success**. Keep professional attire on-hand for short-notice interviews. Keep business casual attire to wear in class, clinicals, lab, or other times where you can project a professional image, which affects your reputation.
- Remember to **say thank you** during an interview or other meeting. Having the opportunity to interview, mentor, job shadow, or meet new professionals in your field are all privileges for which you should express appreciation. Time is an incredibly valuable commodity; it is imperative you acknowledge this.
- Send **thank-you letters, notes**, and/or e-mails following interviews or other meetings (p 35). Taking the time to follow up with typed or hand-written thank you letters printed on quality paper demonstrates your attention to detail and sincere appreciation. Less formal meetings may be followed with a well-constructed email.
- Record a **professional voicemail message** for your cell phone and/or home answering machine. Record it in a place where background noise is eliminated, greet callers in a manner that will impress them. Get rid of immature greetings such as “This is John, you know the drill.” These types of messages create a poor first impression.
- When you meet with a contact make sure you **turn off or silence** your electronic devices. If you want to take notes during a meeting, ask first, so you will not be misconstrued as inattentive or as texting while they are talking.
- Obtain a **mature, non-offensive e-mail address** for contacts who choose to communicate via e-mail. Choose an e-mail address that is related to your name and has no reference to immature nicknames or offensive statements. Your e-mail address will also appear on your resume, so make it professional.
- Keep your **social networking accounts** (LinkedIn, Facebook, etc.) clean of any material that you would not want a potential employer to see. A growing percentage of employers are looking at these accounts as part of their due diligence in assessing potential employees. This is an essential part of your 21<sup>st</sup> century resume, reflecting the reputation you want to portray. and maintain.
- Always keep your **desired reputation** at the forefront of your mind (professional, committed, leader, team player, ...) Ensure your actions continue to enhance it, building strong references and positive impressions. People’s assessment of your actions can open or close doors throughout your career. Make sure you know what your reputation is and take steps to keep it growing in the right direction.

