

STUDENT GUIDE

ADVICE FOR THE SUCCESS OF YOUR FORUM!





OYSTER PERPETUAL MILGAUSS

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WEEK SCHEDULE

Monday, 5th October	
09:00 - 18:30	Company presentations
10:00 - 18:00	Forum Get Ready
18:00 - 20:00	Opening conference
Tuesday, 6th October	
09:00 - 18:30	Start-Up Day
09:00 - 18:30	Company presentations
18:00 - 20:30	Speech contest
Wednesday, 7th October	
09:00 - 18:30	Company presentations
Thursday, 8th October	
Stands Day	
09:00	Opening of stands, beginning of the workshops and interviews
12:00 - 13:30	Contact-luncheons
17:00	End of workshops and interviews, closing of stands
Friday, 9th October	
Stands Day	
09:00	Opening of stands, beginning of the workshops and interviews
12:00 - 13:30	Contact-luncheons
17:00	End of workshops and interviews, closing of stands
Saturday, 10th October	
22:00 - 04:00	Forum EPFL Closing Gala, Lausanne Palace

INTRODUCTION

The Forum EPFL is a student association of the EPFL. Every year, it organizes the largest recruitment fair in Europe, and its 38th edition will take place from the 5th to the 9th of October 2020 in the SwissTech Convention Center.

This year again, the Forum EPFL's committee has dedicated itself to helping other students, and to prepare them as good as possible to fully take advantage of the opportunities of the fair and to hopefully leave it with a job or an internship!

This guide provides all the information needed to succeed in your visit to the Forum EPFL 2020. You will find several different articles written by experts that will help you be prepared for the world of employment. Additionally, all the elements related to the services given during the Forum week are explained, including the details about the Skills Week which will take place just one week before. Lastly, you will find some tips on how to maximize your chances during the research for employment or an internship.

SIGN UP ON THE FORUM EPFL SITE

These are the steps to follow to register to the services of the Skills Week and to those of the Forum EPFL week marked by an asterisk (*):

1. Go to www.forum-epfl.ch
You must create a new profile even if you already had one last year. Attention, you must be minimum in BA6.
2. Create a profile by clicking on «Login» at the top right of the home page. In the «Student Connection» tab you can use your Gaspar account to log in.
3. Upload your CV to your profile (maximum two pages).
4. Wait until your profile is verified by our committee. You will then receive a confirmation email.
5. Go to the «**Forum EPFL services**» section. You will find the various services offered during the week of the EPFL Forum and during the Fall Skills Week and you can simply register.

GET READY FOR THE FORUM EPFL

1. CONFERENCES

On April 7th and 9th 2020, the EPFL Forum will offer, in partnership with the EPFL Career Center, a conference “Write an effective CV” online with Zoom. Registration on the Forum website is required. You will find below the schedule of this event:

Conference “Réussir son CV FR”	Conference “Write an effective CV EN”
Tuesday 07/04 17h15 - 19h00	Thursday 09/04 17h15 - 19h00
Conference (FR) on Zoom: Link sent by email	Conference (EN) on Zoom: Link sent by email

2. FORUM SKILLS WEEK

We have arranged the Forum Skills Week, one week before the Forum, to offer you an ideal preparation for your research for an employment or an internship. From the 28th of September until the 2nd of October 2020, you will have the opportunity to benefit from plenty of our services, which will take place in the Rolex Learning Center.

Please note these services are reserved for EPFL students and with compulsory registration within the limit of places available on: <https://www.forum-epfl.ch/en/>

a. Career counselling

A diploma from a university does not only open one door into the vast world of employment. There are lots of accessible careers after graduating from EPFL. You will get the opportunity to discuss your multiple options with professional career counsellors, who will then help you find the most fitting professional career according to your wills and skills.

b. CV & covering letter correction

These two documents are at the basis of any job search. They will allow the recruiters to estimate your skills and your hypothetical future within the company you are postulating for. During the Forum Skills Week, you will have the chance to bring your CV and your covering letter that you drafted beforehand and experts will correct them for you during 30 minutes of individual interviews.

c. Professional photoshoot

A picture is incredibly important when it comes to presenting yourself to important people. Exactly because of that, the Forum EPFL provides you with a professional photographer. The participation is for free and no registration is required.

d. Job interview simulation

Before obtaining a job or an internship, there is one last step left: the job interview. In order to prepare you for this almost most important last step, you will have the opportunity to simulate a job interview of 30 minutes. During that time, professionals will ask you typical job interview questions and will then give you feedback on how you did.



3. FORUM GET READY !

On Monday, October 5th, the first day of the official Forum week, you will have the last opportunity to get ready for the Forum EPFL. All of the following services will be provided during that day at the SwissTech Convention Center.

a. CV correction

You will for the last time have the opportunity to let your CV be corrected by professionals. Please note though, that this correction will not be as detailed and personalized as the one during the Skills Week.

b. Workshops

You will have the opportunity to participate in interview

simulations, sophrology courses and even more. All these workshops will be run by professionals and are an excellent opportunity to make the most of the opportunities offered by the Forum.

c. Professional photoshoot

The last session of professional photos will be organized to provide you with a picture you can use for your CV and other official documents. The participation is for free and no further registration is required.

4. ORGANIZE YOUR DAY AT THE FORUM EPFL

What really counts when first coming to the Forum is having a precise idea of what you are looking for.

In order to make the most of your day, identify the companies you are interested in beforehand. To do that, you can rely on our publications such as *the Forum Magazine*, *the Companies Book* and *the Start-Up Book*. You can also visit our website: www.forum-epfl.ch.

This year, you will also find all the important information about the Forum EPFL week on your *Pocket Campus* application!

THE FORUM EPFL WEEK

1. PRACTICAL DETAILS

The Forum EPFL, which has welcomed more than 17'800 visitors in 2019, will once again open its doors from 5th to 9th October 2020 at the SwissTech Convention Center.

More than 190 companies from various fields such as watchmaking, computer science, finance or energy will be present. During this week there will be plenty of conferences given by the companies in order to present themselves to the students. Even more direct contact will be possible at their stands which they will host on the 8th and 9th October. Furthermore, Interviews and contact-luncheons will be suggested to all students in order to find a job or an internship.

Additionally, you will have the opportunity to meet the dynamic world of innovation and start-ups during the Start-Up Day on Tuesday 6th October, directly at their booths or during their conferences.

The week will end on a high note at the Closing Gala, a unique event open to every EPFL students which will take place at Lausanne Palace on Saturday, October 10th.

2. SERVICES

a. Presentations

Within the framework of small conferences, representatives will have the possibility to introduce you to their company on the 5th, 6th, and 7th October. They will expose their activities, work methods and their objectives but also their expectations towards their future collaborators. Access is free for everyone; no further registration is required.

b. Workshops*

We have organized workshops that will allow the students and the companies to get acquainted in a more interactive environment. Depending on the company, round tables, workshops or even case studies will be offered. Registration on our website is required to participate.

c. Stands

The stand days on the 10th and 11th October are an ideal moment to establish direct contact with company representatives and to inquire about their activities as well as internship and job opportunities. Access is free for everyone; no further registration is required.

d. Interview Rooms*

On the 8th and 9th October, those of you that have been chosen by companies will have the chance to get an individual interview with the companies' representatives directly at the Forum EPFL. Furthermore, you can directly apply for an interview via your account on our website. The company can then decide whether they would like to meet you. Therefore, perfect your CV if you want to take advantage of this opportunity!

e. Contact-Luncheons*

If you have convinced a company with your CV, you will get the chance to meet its representatives in a less formal environment (instead of traditional interviews) during the stand days on 8th and 9th October. These contact luncheons will take place at the SwissTech Convention Center. Registration is required to participate.

** Please note these services are reserved for EPFL students and with compulsory registration on <https://www.forum-epfl.ch/en/>*

3. SPEECH CONTEST

Show your eloquence skills with a personal speech on the SwissTech Convention Center stage? This is the challenge that MUN & Forum EPFL associations offer to EPFL students!

On Tuesday, October 6th, a speech contest will take place with plenty of awards for the winners. The competition is open to all spectators and overseen by a distinguished jury; this initiative marks a step towards raising awareness of the importance of communication skills and public speaking for engineers and scientists on campus.

4. FORUM EPFL CLOSING GALA

Just like all good events, the Forum EPFL week would be incomplete without a worthy closing party. That is why the Forum EPFL Closing Gala will be back this year on Saturday, the 10th of October.

This festive and elegant evening will take place at the prestigious Lausanne Palace.

Do not miss this unique event!



A FEW TIPS

1. HOW TO ACE YOUR FORUM

By, Stephen Fischer, Career Counselor, EPFL Career Center

The Forum EPFL is the oldest and largest job fair in the country.

With over 190 companies and 70 start-ups from aerospace to banking, your Forum continues the tradition of facilitating important meetings. The good news is, you won't have to compete for a job.

The SwissTech, with just a sixth of the capacity of its LA counterpart (at roughly four times the cost), is nevertheless already an award winner for its environmentally friendly features, including renewable energies: water from Lake Geneva and geothermal pillars supporting the structure are used for heating and cooling; photovoltaic panels on the western facade simultaneously produce electricity while keeping the interior at an even temperature. This fits well with the Forum's commitment to create a "carbon neutral" event as signified by its ISO 14001 certification, and along with the quality assurance standards in place, makes it a meeting place of values as well as talents and aspirations.

Tourist, fact-finder or job-seeker?

Why are you attending? Because it is convenient, offers free admission and your friends will be there, too? Are you trying to confirm certain ideas about your career options while eliminating others? Or are you already in active job search mode, and plan to network with potential employers?

How you prepare will inform your experience and give a sense of where you are to everyone you meet.

Prepare, prepare, prepare

Create a three-tier selection, with the "A List" being your preferred employers, the second group acceptably attractive ones, and the third those that are of some professional interest, but not employment targets.

Adapt your research to each tier:

For the C list: know their location(s) and specializations;

For the B list: know at least one competitor, and have one question ready;

For the A list: all of the above, plus formulate three specific questions and identify at least two jobs/roles where you could contribute positively.

Go beyond the homepage to learn about product lines, R&D, locations and values. Try to get an in-depth understanding of the economic environment, the sector, current trends and challenges in any given field.

Media: *The Economist, Financial Times, Science, Bilan, Forbes, Hydro Review, Oil & Gas Journal, etc.*

Background: use Glassdoor (www.glassdoor.com) Kompass (<http://ca.kompass.com/>) or similar sites to compare and contrast your target company with their peers. Know why this company is the most attractive to you and cite at least two advantages it has over its rivals.

Job-seeker's bonus: if you don't find a job with the first company, you may find it with one of their competitors.

Plan your visit(s)

Some companies are only present for one of the two days of the Forum, so plan accordingly. Which ones will host a lunch, a business presentation, be present at the Start-Up Day or just have a stand at the Forum? The size of the stand can be a good predictor of the number of staffs likely to be assigned.

First impressions

Another difference from Roman times: togas are out, and business dress in. You can always remove a tie, but it's tough to conjure one up just before approaching UBS or Schindler.

Each company has its own culture, dress code, and sense of importance, and it is better to err towards the formal to reinforce your status as a young professional. This will also help you make the mental shift from student to potential future colleague. Avoid wearing a backpack and carry your papers in a small satchel or briefcase instead.

Take notes when you speak with company reps and do ask for their cards—they are here to meet you, so don't be shy!

Follow-up & follow through

Luckily, you won't have to depend upon the *Cursus publicus* to send a brief but meaningful thank-you message within 48 hours after the Forum; email will do just fine. Mention at least one topic you discussed to emphasize your interest. During the application process, you will also be able to refer to specific people you met at the Forum in your motivation letters.

Make the most of your Forum, and you will certainly have a much brighter future than the soldiers and road-builders under Caesar and will be well on your path to creating a new empire of good ideas and well-conceived systems using both your creativity and your technical capacities.

2. EFFECTIVE CV'S FOR YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

By, *Stephen Fischer, Career Counselor, EPFL Career Center*

If you are like many of your peers, you already know that if you Google «a perfect CV for engineers», you can get “About 172,000,000 results in just 0,41 seconds.”¹ Then if you spend just 15 seconds opening and glancing at each webpage, you’ll be looking for 29,514 days for the answer.² Or, if you prefer to take advantage of our team’s 12 years of market knowledge, read the best practice tips below.

Let’s start with defining the role of an industry-oriented CV: think of it as a key to the interview room. Its purpose is not to tell your life story, so its moniker is a bit of a misnomer. Instead, it is like the chapter headings you see when you use the “See inside” option for a book on Amazon.

You need to give concise, incremental and relevant details about your technical skills and your pedigree as a student, intern, volunteer and employee. This latter section for young graduates is usually as thin as the paper you are writing on, so the other sections need to be robust and comprehensive.

No holding back: false modesty or, worse, ignorance about who your different readers will be, puts your application at a complete disadvantage. We estimate that even at MSc level, an EPFL graduate should have nearly half a page of technical skills—don’t limit these to a list of software or programming languages, though. Include key marketable skills like process engineering, AutoCAD, spectroscopy, clean room and wet lab techniques. Be as specific as you can: “Protein analysis,” instead of “Biology,” and “Stochastic analysis,” not just “Statistics.”

If, like many of your peers, you have also led groups, even informally, and taken responsibility for all or part of at least one project, here is a place to add additional skills like logistics, intercultural communication and project management. This section should closely emulate the “Skills & Endorsements” section of your LinkedIn profile.

Let’s debunk two myths right away: for virtually the entire world, with certain

¹<https://www.google.com/search?q=best+engineering+cv&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&client=firefox-b-ab>

²<https://www.google.com/search?q=170+million+times+15+seconds+in+days&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&client=firefox-b-ab>

exceptions in North America for mega-corporations, you do not need to limit yourself to one page. Bachelor’s students may not need the extra space, but anyone can use two, and PhD’s may even add a third page, perhaps as an optional addendum with conferences and publications. If a CV doesn’t grab someone’s attention in less than a minute, it won’t matter how long it is, and vice versa, once you have the “fish on the line,” so to speak, they’ll be more than willing to roll past a page break.

The second received idea is that your CV must be identical to your LinkedIn profile—the opposite is in fact the case.

You need to consider your online version as a kind of home base, broad and accurate enough so that it won’t contradict your many CV’s, each version of which must be adapted to the company, the role and the types of skills needed in same. Recruiters now fully expect you to have selected the most relevant skills and experience to highlight on your CV, and as long as there is no factual contradiction (dates of degrees, different majors, etc.), the two-step process will consist of them going to your online profile after being motivated by what they saw on your CV.

You need to write for both a generalist, often someone even younger than yourself, who will work off a “wish list” or “ticky-box” chart provided by the future boss of the person to be hired. The chances of her being an engineer or a researcher, even for a pharmaceutical or manufacturing company, are almost nil. If your CV demands attention, it will then be read by a more senior person, though also someone likely to have a different specialization than you do. Spelling, grammar and layout are given inordinately high importance by most recruiters, and silly-sounding email addresses are reason for some not to look further at your CV—fair or not, they go by their first impressions, so if you claim to be “very good at making very small things” as a Swiss optical engineer once said to me on a plane, but have several typos or misspellings on your documents, this will give the opposite impression.

“Show, don’t tell” is the golden rule, which is why we suggest that you list the main technical skills which relate to the role you are applying for at the top of your CV, but generally refrain from putting soft skills or character traits (“good team worker” and “energetic, motivated researcher” are not only generic, anyone can claim these). Describing your Master’s Thesis work in terms of project management, from concept to outcomes, and mentioning that you had to work with two more senior engineers and another department based in Zurich will give the reader much more about your interpersonal skills than simply listing

them, no matter how accurate they are.

Finally, be concise, clear and comprehensive throughout your CV: this will give you the best chance to unlock the interview room door and give you a chance to share your compelling motivation and aptitude for the job!

A YOUNG PROFESSIONAL'S CV: THE NUTS AND BOLTS

Add your Skype and LinkedIn info under your email & address!

(Header)

Strengths:

-
-

Education

2014-present	PhD in Robotics, EPFL
2014	Master in Informatics, EPFL
2012	Maturité scientifique (secondary diploma)

Professional experience:

2014	Enterprise A: project X (internship)
2012	Enterprise B: project Y (summer job)
2010 - present	Enterprise C: replacements

Technical Skills

-
-
-

Languages:

-
-

Extra-curricular activities

-

Personal details:

-

In Switzerland, include your nationality, age & civil status under "Personal Details"

Header
First and last names, contact details (including Skype & LinkedIn, with photo usually on right)

Strengths (Key Skills)
A summary of what you want the recruiter to focus on; this section should be adapted to each role/company. *ATS programs will pick up key terms set in their search parameters!*

Education
Don't go further than secondary school (careful of "false friends!")

Professional experience
List most relevant experiences, including thesis/post-doc work; can be split into two sections, "Core" and "Additional" Experience.

Technical Skills
Describe techniques/tools/industry processes, not only software

Languages
Level of proficiency, certificates, language travel

Extra-curricular activities
Limit yourself to the most interesting ones

Personal details
Citizenship (plus Swiss permit), age, civil status, driving license, military status (if male; no obligations = a small advantage)

Applying in the US or Canada? Just take off your photo, your age and civil status—but leave your nationality.

3. JOB INTERVIEWS: BE BETTER THAN CBI

«Students should be able to think on their feet and relate the answers they provide in job interviews to their skills and experience which can be beneficial to a prospective employer.» --Selene Siregar, recruiter at Michael Page in Jakarta ³

Let's not kid ourselves: for most of you, the interview will be the most stressful part of the entire job search process, even when you feel you've prepared for it properly. You're not alone: according to a 2013 survey of 1000 employed adults in Canada by Harris Interactive and Everest College, as many as 92 percent stress over one or more aspects of a job interview. Top aspects cited were the nervousness at feeling overqualified, getting asked questions they were not ready for, and arriving (or thinking they would arrive) late for the interview. ⁴

So, let's address taking care of the human part of your resource, first. You need to choose your clothing carefully: comfortable but not sloppy, appropriate without restricting your movement (e.g. women, wear slacks instead of a skirt; men, don't wear a jacket or tie that is too tight). The worst thing you can do is not to eat, drink and sleep properly beforehand in order to spend even more time reading about the new inventions that H55 or MindMaze just obtained patents for. That deep-digging for key factual and company culture insights is essential but needs to be mastered well before the evening prior to your interview. You need to be hydrated, because thirst increases anxiety and can raise your body temperature, possibly enhancing a tendency to sweat when you are nervous. At the same time, you cannot excuse yourself every 15 minutes to run to the toilet, so you need to find a balance, similar to that when you are preparing for an exam.

When it comes to the mental state necessary for a successful candidate, a few simple pointers can help enormously. Remember that you are already part of the top 15% of all candidates who applied, which means that the first of the famous four questions employers need to answer, "can you do the job," has already been answered. This may be in part due to perceptions of the value of your diploma, your school in general and your individual profile (gender, nationality, age) but more likely for graduate recruitment, it's all about the skills

³https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/careerchats-managing-expectations-moving-towards-nannette-ripmeester/?lipi=urn%3Ali%3Apage%3Ad_flagship3_pulse_read%3BiSEu5%2BtKQrugxaf5spdp2g%3D%3D

⁴<https://www.nexxt.com/articles/why-anxiety-during-a-job-interview-is-so-common-and-what-you-can-do-to-prevent-it-18522-article.html>

you have acquired and your proven capacity to continue to learn complex things from statistical analysis to process engineering, and your potential to continue learning new things. This is why they are recruiting a young professional over a more experienced one, and your profile stood out.

Whether you are a bit rustier in Python than C++ or feel better using AutoCAD than Ansys, you will be able to adapt, grow and contribute rapidly in any new role. This means money to your employer, and that makes you a valuable potential asset: you need to focus on this, not the things you aren't yet able to do. Don't underestimate the added value of your project and team skills, your (human) languages and your maturity—think where you were just three years ago, compared to now. Aren't you impressed? Be confident, then, and emphasize your capacity to learn new and complex processes, acquire new tools and ways of working, throughout the interview. While many recruiters seem to take it as a point of pride to offer you less than you are worth, they also know that you will bring value to the company or they wouldn't be talking to you in the first place.

Preparation: three levels, one purpose

Preparation for the interview needs to be on three levels, but strangely, often the most personal of these is neglected by candidates, even those who have prepared the other two thoroughly.

Start with the job itself, and make sure you understand all aspects of the responsibilities and prepare your concrete examples (see below) which best illustrate technical and soft skills related to these. Research the importance of the role in the overall scheme of the department and the company, too. Then look more closely at the organization you are about to join: are they based only in one place, do they claim to be international, but this is actually in four countries, with five sites, or are they in 30 places around the globe? How many employees are there in total, and how many working in the location where you will be if hired, say in Rapperswil or Geneva? How big is the team you would join? (For this question, don't hesitate to ask the HR, before or during the interview.)

For the other questions, you should get beyond their home page, reading about them on media sites and/or by contacting acquaintances who work(ed) there, to get at least approximative answers which you can then complete during the interview. You need to identify at least two competitors and be able to compare and contrast them with your target employer. This will lead you to understanding the current “hot topics,” burning issues and breakthroughs in the sector. For

manufacturers of electric cars, more environmentally friendly, faster-charging and higher output batteries are front and center; for wearable medical devices, portability and simplified user interfaces may be the priorities.

Finally, you have to be ready to speak about the one thing you are an absolute expert on: you! Many recruiters, however, remark on the inability of students to identify their own strengths and weaknesses. If you take the time to prepare, you won't feel stymied when asked at the beginning to “tell me about yourself,” or later during the interview what your main successes and challenges have been to date.

On a practical basis, prepare (and bring your notes for) the following:

1. 90-120 second “**Elevator Speech**” this is an elegant pitch about you as a professional and should highlight aspects of your experience and skills which relate to the role you are applying for. (See separate article on “Networking” on page 29 in this guide.)
2. Two “**strengths**” and two “**weaknesses**” this is a favorite area for recruiters, since it makes most candidates uncomfortable as many scientists and engineers have particular trouble talking about their strengths. We suggest choosing one that is technical and one that is a character trait or a soft skill. The most important thing to remember is that “weaknesses” are human, and what they want to hear is how you are dealing with these—did you sign up for Toastmasters to help you get over being afraid to speak in public, for example.
3. Two project stories, with one being a “**success**” where you met your goals, and the other a “**failure**” where you did not reach them. As our director, Philippe Ory, says, this second one can be exaggerated, almost to the point of being a B-movie disaster script. Again, the main point isn't what the results were per se, but what you did exactly, and what you learned. So in the latter case, they also want to hear how you did (or would do) things differently next time.
4. All of these come from the Competency-Based Interview⁵ approach to recruitment, the most commonly used especially for entry-level positions. See the text box for an explanation of the STAR method of answering which they expect and adapt numbers 1-3 accordingly.

⁵<https://www.wikijob.co.uk/content/interview-advice/interview-types/competency-based-interview>

Bring a copy of all your documents and your notes, as well as an extra pen and plenty of paper to take notes during the interview. Arrive about 10 minutes early and leave any extra bags and coats in the reception area. Turn off your phone entirely. Messages from your sweetheart on WhatsApp or a call from Mom at the exact moment when the interview was supposed to end are all bad juju.

Now, **one last point about confidence and preparation:** as a technical professional, you continue to learn new techniques, acquire soft and hard skills regularly, and learn to challenge any method which is touted to be uniquely valid and sufficient for all purposes. Unfortunately for you and for the recruiters, this is generally not the case for HR trainees or even experienced recruiters. Many are trained only to the CBI approach, and use the same basic structure, even identical questions and exercises, regardless of the area of activity, so a mechanical engineer, a technical sales advisor and a quality assurance engineer may all get the same STAR questions like those mentioned above.

Now that you know this and can prepare accordingly, you can help your interviewer be less stressed, too. By adapting to her discourse community, you show a generosity of spirit but also should be more relaxed, having taken to heart their ways and means, and both of you will benefit. This doesn't mean you can't add your own style and the length and level of detail for each of your prepared responses can be varied depending upon the interest s/he shows in the topic. Most recruiters will help you by asking follow-up questions when they want further explanation. Oddly enough, the stories you prepare can usually be adapted on the spot to illustrate virtually any of the main skills and competencies they are looking for, too.

The session will generally end with a trick question that doesn't seem so: "do you have questions for me," your interviewer will ask. The worst answer is, "no," as it shows lack of interest rather than complete understanding of the role, the company, sector and your future career development—virtually impossible to cover in less than an hour! The second worst response is a "life-style" question about flexi-time, tele-commuting, or starting date being put off because you have a holiday planned soon. Make sure you do ask when and how the follow-up to your present discussion will occur. Within 24 hours after your interview, write a short thank-you message to everyone you met, and try to mention one specific topic that you discussed with each, underlining your keen motivation for the job.

While the old saying has it that practice makes perfect, and it's certainly the case that you can learn to be a more confident interviewee by dint of in-depth preparation and hands-on experience, in fact you only need to be better than the other candidates, who will also be dealing with the same issues—and sometimes with fewer tools and less confidence. So, like the Alaskan joke says, when chased by a grizzly, you don't have to be faster than the bear, just faster than the other hikers.

4. NEGOTIATING YOUR FIRST SALARY: YOU'RE WORTH IT!

“In business, you don't get what you deserve, you get what you negotiate.”

Dr. Chester L. Karrass

Congratulations: your first personal branding effort has paid off, and you have received an actual job offer. You took our advice to diplomatically avoid discussing salary expectations during the first interview, emphasizing instead the technical competencies you would bring to the job, and how motivated you were to join their enterprise (see separate article on interviews elsewhere in this guide), but now it's time to “talk turkey” as the wheeler-dealers of the Wild West put it.

Now it's the moment of truth, however: when the adrenaline subsides, you realize there are still one or two important topics that have not been clarified, and number one amongst those, is how much remuneration they plan to offer you.

You are in a strong place vis-à-vis your future employer, but in many young professionals' minds, not strong enough to negotiate a first salary. Studies across many different economic sectors show that salary negotiation for young graduates is worth it, however: while about half of all recruiters said they would have been open to negotiating salary, only 38% of candidates even try.⁶

Nearly 75% of the same recruiters would have been willing to negotiate non-salary aspects of the contract, such as flexible working hours, support for professional development or further education and a range of other aspects, including vacation time. An impressive 80% of those candidates who did negotiate with their employers at this critical stage were at least partially successful.⁷

Interestingly, other surveys indicate that even when recruiters were unable (or unwilling) to come towards the candidate in terms of money, those who negotiated were considered more confident and therefore gained respect in the

⁶<https://www.nerdwallet.com/blog/loans/student-loans/negotiating-salary-study/#skip%20to%20graphics>

⁷<https://www.nerdwallet.com/blog/loans/student-loans/negotiating-salary-study/#skip%20to%20graphics>

eyes of their future colleagues. The only certainty is: if you don't negotiate, you will end up with whatever the employer wants to give you.

Don't undersell your degree

Successful negotiation happens during the hiring process; don't count on future pay increases to make up for being paid an initial salary that is too low. In fact, “start low, stay low” is real, and can haunt you for years. If you've attended our conference on this subject, you'll remember that for some strange reason, in spite of the fact that our graduates are more numerate, have the only required fact that our graduates are more numerate, have the only required internship at engineer level (not secondary) in Switzerland, generally are bilingual at least and have increasingly incorporated digital fluency and computational thinking, they are still paid less than graduates from the HES-SO system. Shocking as this is, the situation will not change unless you and future generations of EPFL graduates work hard to obtain proper salary levels, both as candidates and later, when hiring future collaborators. This is even more important for women, since on average they are paid between 10-15% less than men for the same positions, virtually everywhere in the world, alas.⁸

The most important aspect of any negotiation is understanding what the parameters are; in this case, you need to know what other recent graduates are receiving. The best place to get the average salary figures based on statistical analysis is from the annual Graduate Employment Survey (in French only), administered by the Career Center and available on our website (see footnote for link).⁹

In order to create a salary range for your discussion with the employer, you can then consult Salarium.ch where you can quickly calculate an estimated salary level for the type of job you are applying for. Note that they use a mathematical model, not statistics, and do not take into account differences between Master's and PhD levels of qualification. Still, their system often projects a higher salary than ours, so can be useful for your negotiations.¹⁰

⁸<https://www.glassdoor.com/blog/engineering-pay-gap-glassdoor-reveals-many-women-engineers-earn-less-than-men/>

⁹<https://carriere.epfl.ch/files/content/sites/carriere/files/shared/Insertion%20professionnelle%20des%20dipl%C3%B4m%C3%A9s%202016.pdf>

¹⁰<https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/statistics/work-income/wages-income-employment-labour-costs/wage-levels-switzerland/salarium.html>

Unfortunately, international platforms like Glassdoor and PayScale are not sufficiently populated with data for the Swiss market to be of much use, with the possible exception of entry-level jobs for big pharma. If you are starting your career in the UK or North America, however, clearly the Swiss sites will not be of use, whereas these two will provide you with the necessary info to prepare to negotiate.

Giving the numbers based on research will strengthen your arguments. You will still need to take into account which region you will be living in (i.e. Zurich is 15-20% more expensive than Morges, Valais is about 20% cheaper than Vaud, etc.) as well as the size of the company and the relative importance of the job. If you will be doing other tasks besides the technical ones you are qualified for, like managing projects directly, dealing with clients or supervising more junior staff, you should add an additional ten to fifteen percent to your expected salary range, and be able to justify this accordingly.

Slow things down: turn-taking towards agreement

In Switzerland, Salary levels are negotiated on an annual gross level. The fixed part and the variable part, if any, are usually discussed separately. If there are bonuses based on performance, or so-called “in-step” salary raises discussed orally, make sure they are also included in the final contract that you sign. Non-salary advantages such as free meals or parking, fitness center or travel are generally available to all employees, so cannot properly be considered “personal benefits” and of course, they can be cancelled at any moment. When it comes down to numbers, keep in mind the psychological thresholds: a salary of 79,500 has a better chance of being accepted than a salary of 80,000.

If the employer offers a salary that is too low, stay quiet for a few seconds at first. Your interlocutor will perceive your disappointment and may already improve the offer (a good chance, normally). Underline the fact that you are very motivated to do the job well—in fact, you are a “110-percent worker,” and want to concentrate only on that, not having to worry about making ends meet, or traveling an hour to work, because apartment costs are too high next door. Say you had hoped for something “a little better” (even when there’s a big difference from what you expected).

Then, only if the other person doesn’t break the silence, ask, “What would it take for me to be able to get what I expected?” and/or, “How long do you think it would take to reach my expected salary level? If your interlocutor makes

an effort, make one on your side, too. But think carefully, there may not be another «round». Making a concession allows you to protect the quality of the relationship with what may be your future employer!

Both internal and external recruiters will often justify their salary offer because of your lack of experience, which is ironic when hiring recent graduates for entry-level positions in the first place. Remember that «inexperienced» does not mean «without skills»; your proven competencies are not easy for employers to find, much less to acquire. Highlight your company internship experience, which only EPFL (not ETHZ or HES) requires for all MSc students. Emphasize that the post entails numerous responsibilities, so logically this should be reflected in the remuneration. (It’s pretty tough for them to tell you at this point that the position is not very important, since they have been stressing its attractiveness, and often, the high number of other candidates which it has attracted).

They may also take refuge behind company practices (inflexible salary scale, equity between collaborators). In fact, these are usually guidelines, not rules, even if they try to persuade you of the opposite, so they can be negotiated. Or they may put undue emphasis on their brand (“you will be working for the most famous company...”) or on other advantages such as the retirement fund, mobile phone and travel allowances, or training programs. None of these have much relative economic value and are generally available to all employees, whatever their salary. Most importantly, they can disappear at any time, as mentioned above.

When your interlocutor has reached the limits of what s/he can (or is willing to) negotiate, but still has not met your expectations: you may decide to reject the offer, or to accept it on condition that they add a clause outlining a raise (or at least a review) schedule emphasizing that this would give you time to prove your value.¹¹

You can still choose to negotiate another aspect of the agreement: offer to work 90% for the salary proposed, for example (though beware of generational bias), or obtain right to work one day a week from home (“telecommuting”). Further, you could ask that they delete the non-competitive clause from the contract (these are often inappropriate, sometimes even illegal, and should merit financial compensation in any case).

Normally, one doesn’t negotiate the length of holidays, nor number of hours

¹¹ NB: *employers do not run any real risks, given Swiss labor laws, so this is a gamble.*

per week for a full-time contract, since both are covered by Swiss labor law, and possibly a collective labor agreement (“CCT”).¹²

If you want to learn how to be an effective negotiator, you might want to take a free online course, Coursera or other¹³; otherwise for a small sum, you can buy a book by a recognized expert in the field.¹⁴ While not the summum for everyone, salary is a measure of the value your contributions have been assigned, and also a facilitator of your new life as a young professional, not a student. How much is that worth to you?

Walk-away Salary
Know the lowest salary level that you're willing to accept, and anything under that will make you "walk away."



This should reflect personal criteria (basic needs, other offers, etc.) and also the socio-economic context.
What do others earn?

- Identical profiles (EPFL Eng.)
- Similar profiles (other engineers)
- Less-qualified profiles with little or no responsibility or who create less value for the company

How much is your EPFL degree worth? If you undervalue it, so will the employer...and not just you, but future grads will also suffer!

NB: by negotiating up from 75 to 80k (just 7% more per annum) for your starting salary, in 10 years, you will have earned 65K CHF more than your colleagues who did not negotiate. By the end of 20 years, the difference could be as much as 143k CHF!

—Excerpt from presentation by Philippe Ory, Director, EPFL Career Center

5. FOSTERING A NETWORKING ATTITUDE: ONE ENCOUNTER AT A TIME

“There are as many ways of networking as there are individuals. It comes down to knowing yourself well, using your strengths and capacity in ways which make sense to you.”¹⁵

A common misunderstanding about the importance of networking is that it involves complicated actions and therefore is only useful for people with large, active networks. While you may have only three or four truly intimate friends, it's likely that you are in contact on a regular basis with 30-40 people, and that if you put your mind to it, you could come up with a list of as many as 100-plus people you could contact to facilitate finding someone of influence for your job search, and that you know the names of at least 2,000 people.

As a young professional today, you are likely to be “connected” with dozens or even hundreds of other people via various platforms yet remain stymied when asked to approach an employer at the Forum. Research has shown that there are roughly four degrees of separation between any two people (slightly less than it was 20 years ago, thanks to social media).¹⁶

Networking does impact your job search: according to both studies by the Swiss Department of the Economy (SECO) and our own graduate surveys, 22-23% of the jobs found by both generalists and EPFL graduates came through networking. If you add in the amorphous category, “Other,” which we suspect might include contacting previous employers or lab mates, but not seen by the respondent as “networking” per se, this figure could be as high as 30%.¹⁷

Studies show that women tend to prioritize sympathetic connections (feelings), proximity and accessibility to a limited circle of people whom they trust. Men, however, often have a relatively large circle of people with whom they exchange help and favors. A man will use his network more to express ideas and/or to promote projects he feels are of value, which women are less inclined to do.

¹² <https://www.cagi.ch/en/practical-info/getting-a-job-in-switzerland.php?subcat=54>

¹³ Free online course: <https://alison.com/course/Introducing-the-Art-of-Negotiation>

¹⁴ Book reviews: <https://www.livecareer.com/quintessential/salary-negotiation-books>

¹⁵ “Je réussis grâce à mon réseau;” A. Bosetti & M. Lahore; DUNOD; 2016

¹⁶ An optimal algorithm used by Danish researchers found an average degree of separation of 3.43 between two random Twitter users, requiring 67 requests for info to Twitter. A near-optimal solution of 3.88 can be found by making just 13.3 requests.” --Bakhshandeh et al (from Wikipedia)

¹⁷ Graduate employment survey EPFL 2014: carriere.epfl.ch/telechargements

Women tend to have a smaller pool of contacts (50 on average vs. 72 for men), and to be less satisfied with their networks. In fact, 85% of personal networks for both sexes are maintained by regular face-to-face contact.¹⁸

For many people the hardest thing to talk about is themselves, especially in the context of needing something (a job) from someone who is perceived to have the decision-making power (more senior person in the field, or the actual recruiter), so we suggest that you begin by creating opportunities to speak with strangers about neutral topics—what their company or lab is doing, always a classical topic, and generally flattering to your interlocutor.

Manage Every Encounter Thoughtfully

As with most social interactions, networking is an exchange: even a very senior person may need new ideas, perspectives or insights from interacting with you. On the other hand, instead of focusing on your immediate needs, such as finding an internship, you will tend to be more relaxed and confident when speaking about a topic related to the other person's career path or company. Showing sincere and informed interest is a gift in and of itself and can open up psychological space for the other person to fill by returning focus on you. Generally speaking, most will return the favor of showing interest in you and your objectives, but all in good time: start with the other, each time.

Even a spontaneous meeting with someone active in your field should present an opportunity to express your career interests and to gain insider views of the sector or field.

Most scientists and engineers seem to have trouble giving a concise presentation of themselves, hence our focus during networking seminars on the so-called “Elevator Pitch.” This is a storytelling exercise, and should be prepared in writing ahead of time, but not memorized (you don't want to sound like a robot), weaving in your most recent degree/current studies but with a focus on what you would contribute to the field and where your interests are. It can be between 60-120 seconds long and is also the kind of response you'll be expected to give at the beginning of a job interview when asked to tell the recruiter about yourself. See the inset for a kind of general overview of the pitch and check out the websites listed in the footnote below for tips on creating an effective one.¹⁹

¹⁹ <https://ecs.engineering.illinois.edu/career-resources/the-elevator-pitch/> and <http://sfp.ucdavis.edu/files/163926.pdf>

Small events can be great, because they seem more manageable, and it's probably true that you have a better chance of meeting five new people out of 50 than you might out of 5,000. On the other hand, you may feel more “pressure to perform,” and attract attention before you feel ready for it. A word of caution to extroverts, who have the impression they are “naturals” at networking. In my experience, everyone needs to spend time thinking about their specific goals, and to understand as best they can those of their potential interlocutors. You should practice your pitch while looking in the mirror, not at a set of notes, at least a few times before an event which could offer opportunities to meet people who could have influence on your career. Don't just trust the fact that your friends all say you're the life of the party, or you may have a very enjoyable but entirely superficial experience, while your shy classmate makes a quiet but serious impression and walks away with a fistful of business cards.

Earlier is always better

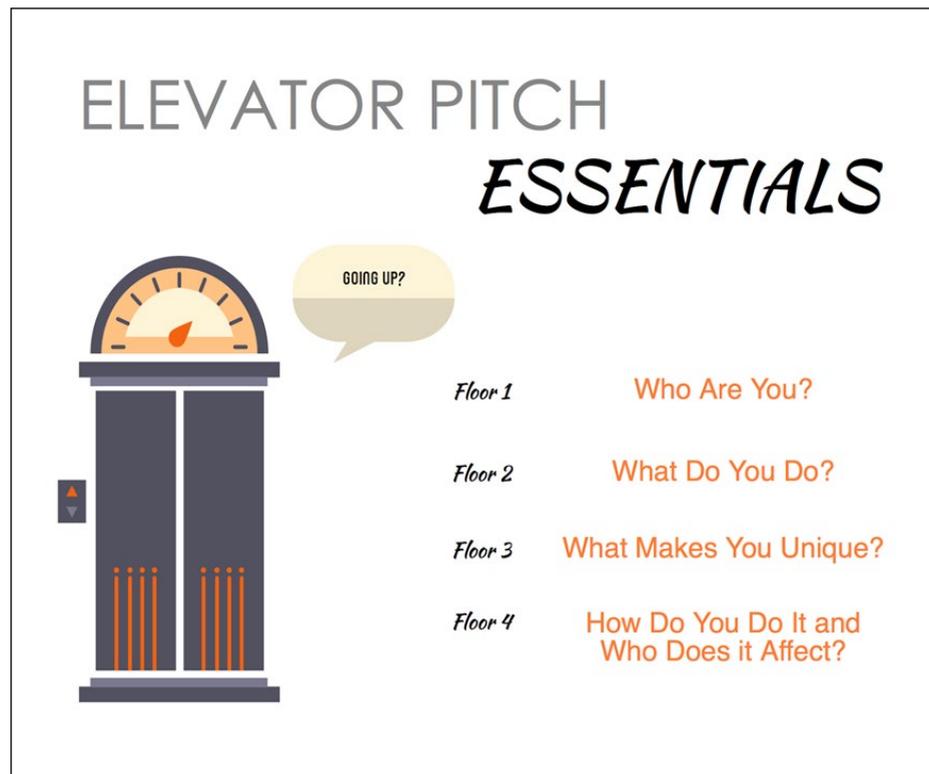
The earlier you start, the better. In other words, starting to meet people and practice your interactive communication skills well before you are under pressure to sign a contract. Of course, you can join the on-campus chapter of Toastmasters International for great support and training in public speaking²⁰ but joining any club, sports group or volunteering in the community are all investments of time and energy which will foster both confidence and interpersonal skills. To a certain extent, you play a role throughout the job search, and as with your CV and online profile(s), you show the most relevant traits and capacities in the best light possible.

So think about creating a kind of stage persona for yourself as a job-seeker and networker; far from false, it is a kind of public display version of yourself—well dressed, poised, and extremely well prepared to meet key people in their field, whether in the elevator, at the drinks reception, or in the assessment center. Consider keeping a notebook on your networking interactions (and interviews, too), capturing what worked best, what you learned, and what you will improve next time.

Fostering a networking attitude, when consciously solicited by practice and reflection is available to everyone, and will be adapted to your gender, your

²⁰ <https://toastmasters.epfl.ch/>

character, communication style and culture as well as the circumstances you find yourself in. It is essential for meeting employers and startup entrepreneurs at the Forum, of course, but also excellent preparation for your future job interviews (see separate articles in this guide).



6. HOW TO USE LINKEDIN TO BOOST YOUR APPLICATIONS

LinkedIn is the world's first professional social network and had, in April 2018, about 260 million active accounts (We are social SG study). Interacting on this network is a major advantage in your job search and could lead you to your next professional adventure. Tips & Tricks to optimise your profile and help you stand out from other applications.

Photo & intro: your business card

On LinkedIn, having a profile picture **multiplies by 7** your chances of having your profile consulted by users of the network. So let's get started: depending on the industry for which you wish to work, **dress appropriately**, put on your best smile and upload your picture.

Under your picture sits the caption, or if you prefer the **title of your profile**. By default, LinkedIn will choose the name of your latest occupied position. However, we suggest that you change it and insert keywords related to the industry or the position you are looking for. **This way, a search engine will find you faster and with ease.**

Next, as an introduction to your profile, comes a presentation paragraph, which you must not neglect: this is where you briefly describe what you are and what you look for. This paragraph must be precise, concise, and we suggest that you add to it the easiest way to contact you, such as a phone number or an email address.

Experiences before formation

If you have already completed internships, immersion tasks in corporations, or your first contracts, do not hesitate to position them ahead of your formation, as this is what interests companies.

As you detail the tasks and missions you have accomplished, strive to give as much tangible data as possible, this to allow a recruitment agent to get an idea of your achievements. With this in mind, we suggest you keep a journal during your internships or missions, and to record in it all the data you may need when you will be looking for a new professional adventure.

Furthermore, do not hesitate to contact your previous employers or teachers for recommendations directly from LinkedIn: thus, they will appear on your profile in a form more visible than a scanned letter. Finally, your associative experiences count for a lot, and this even more in certain countries (such as the United States for example) as it shows your interests and your willpower.

When it comes for to your formation, it is relevant to add any distinctions you could have received as well as the subjects of memoires or thesis papers on which you may have worked. These could prove interesting subjects of conversation to start an interview.

Be social

LinkedIn is a social network, and it should be used as such! Just as facebook or Instagram, the algorithm will make you appear much higher in the search results if you interact more than your namesake:

- add contacts.
- ask to join groups.
- share content related to your formations and your interests.

On the long term, this active vigil (we do it every day!) will allow you to truly stand out and will support your application in a positive manner.



MAKE A BETTER IMPRESSION

1. DRESS CODE FOR A JOB INTERVIEW

Ideally, when you meet a representative you should be dressed in the same spirit as him/her. Thus, for an interview with a start-up or a university, the look is rather relaxed. With a company, the suit is generally rigorous.

Keep in mind that every job possesses a dress-code of its own. Therefore, you need to adapt your clothes to the aimed position. Consequently, maybe think of looking up some pictures of the company online, perhaps you will find some indications.

a. Formal interview

Bet on the classic suit and tie: this look gives a maximum of versatility. If you choose to wear a belt, its color needs to match your shoes. Additionally, you can match the color of your socks either to the shoes or to the suit. In general:

- Buy a classy suit: choose a navy blue or a dark grey color. If you have to opt for motives, choose them discreet. Avoid pure black fabric.
- Find a suiting shirt: a white one is a safe bet for interviews. Otherwise, we can also suggest a pale blue, but keep it classic!
- Choose a sober and elegant tie, ideally made of silk or wool. Avoid plastic, it will make you look unprofessional!
- Wear real leather shoes, preferably of dark brown color. Do not forget to polish them!

b. Interview in an informal structure

Aim for the smart casual style: this look has been specifically implemented for interviews with rather informal structures. As for example within most of the start-ups, where the spirit voluntarily aims to be more relaxed:

- Wear a blazer. If you use a suit jacket, watch out that it does not fall too low.
- You can adduce shirts with more original collars or motives (to a certain extent).
- Your pants can have several forms: you can choose from a raw pair of jeans or a good quality chino to a pair of woollen pants. Yet, impeccable ironing is required.

- Concerning your choice of shoes, you have more freedom: you can adopt carefree Brogue shoes, Derby, desert boots or even Chelsea.

c. To avoid

- Creased clothes: it is a sign of carelessness.
- Imposing accessories or too much makeup: simplicity has more chances to be appreciated.
- Conspicuous elements: big jewels, strong perfume, flashy nail polish or for example a red polka-dot tie.
- Sexy clothes: to remain professional you need to avoid cleavage and short clothes. Also, if you are a man, you should under no circumstances unbutton your shirt so that your chest is visible!
- Do not come without a nice bag. Bring your documents and something to take notes.

2. SHIRT COLLARS

Shirt collars are numerous and are not necessarily suitable for each type of face or neck. Here we offer a guide to help you choose the right shirt collar depending on the situation and your body type.

a. The French collar

Also called a classic collar, this type of collar is the most common. With or without a tie, it makes it possible to lengthen round faces with small necks even if it is suitable for most facial morphologies.



b. The Italian collar

This collar shape has a much wider opening than the French collar. It is worn with a fairly wide tie or even without for a more casual style. As with the French collar, it can be worn by a majority of people, especially individuals with an elongated face. On the other hand, it should be banned in the event of a strong neck circumference.



c. The English collar

This collar is easily recognizable thanks to its small opening and the tab that connects the two sides of the collar. The system makes it possible to highlight the tie knot, so it is unthinkable to wear it without this accessory. This geometry will lengthen your face but is not recommended on a wide neck because it will tend to stub you.



d. The American collar

The peculiarity of this collar concerns the buttons that hold the tips. Worn without a tie and under a jacket, it is both chic and casual. To be avoided for elongated faces.



e. The Club collar

The club collar has rounded ends. It is suitable for long rather than round faces and gives softness to angular faces. It can be worn without a tie or with a thin tie



f. The broken collar

This style of collar is reserved for official ceremonies or for cocktails. It is worn with a bow tie or a lavallière, essentially with a tuxedo. Like the Italian collar, opt for the broken one if you have a rather thin neck and an elongated face.



3. THE TIE KNOT

Each tie knot has its own characteristics and must adapt in particular to the shirt collar you wear and the type of tie chosen (silk, wool, knit, etc.). Here you will find how to make the most commonly used tie knots, as well as the most suitable outfits for each of them.

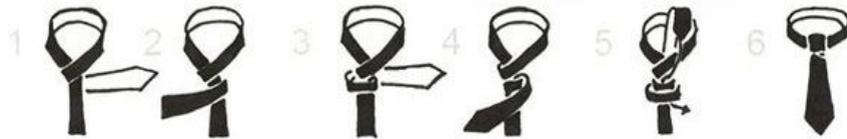
a. The simple knot

The simple knot is the great classic of tie knots. Very simple to make, it fits with most ties and almost all shirt collars. It is perfect for men of medium or large size.



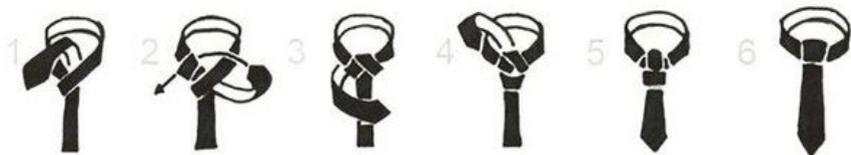
b. The double knot

The double knot is very close to the single knot except that it requires a second rotation. Thicker in its appearance than the single knot, the double knot is ideal with most shirt collars. It is also perfect with all ties except those that are too thick.



c. The Windsor knot

The Windsor knot is the knot for special occasions. As it is bulky, it should preferably be carried out on spread necks, such as the Italian neck. Sometimes complex to achieve, it requires to be successful to fall between the two parts of the collar and hide the last button of the shirt.



d. The half Windsor knot

The half Windsor looks like the Windsor knot but is thinner and easier to make. It goes perfectly with thin or thick ties. Elegant and triangular, it is best worn on a French collar shirt.



e. The little knot

The little knot goes particularly well with thick ties or shirts with an English collar. It should be avoided on shirts with long or wide necks.



4. PROPER TABLE MANNERS FOR A CONTACT-LUNCH

Contact-lunches will be an opportunity for you to meet with business representatives in a less formal setting than traditional interviews. Here are some tips to teach you how to sit well at the table and eat elegantly by following the rules of good manners:

- **Dear gentleman, do not sit before the ladies**
Priority goes from the oldest woman to the youngest man.
- **Lift the chair slightly to get closer to the table**
Do not creak the chair while pulling it.
- **Do not lean your back against the back of the chair**
Keep your back straight.
- **During the meal, put only your forearms on the table**
And especially not the elbows!
- **Never put your hands under the table**
It would be doing things “English”. According to the French way, the hands always remain above the level of the table.
- **Place the towel on your thighs**
Do not hang your towel on your collar and remove your towel when everyone gets up from the table.
- **Do not eat with your hands, use the cutlery**
Absolutely nothing, not even the fries!
- **Never bring the knife to your mouth**
Use a fork.
- **If you serve yourself a drink, offer it to those around you**
And that before you serve yourself. If there are only a few left, it is elegant to sacrifice oneself.
- **Never look at your cell phone**
It’s a sign of respect for other guests. Also remember to set your mobile phone to silent mode.
- **Don’t start eating until everyone has their dish**
If the wait is too long and your meal is hot, ask the other guests for permission to start eating.
- **Take small bites**
You can quickly intervene in the conversation without the others waiting too long for you to swallow your mouthful.
- **Do not clean any openings**
So not the ears, the nose, or the mouth. Never use a toothpick.

- **Run the towel over your mouth regularly**
To avoid leaving traces of lips on the glass. Ladies, opt for a lipstick that does not rub off.
- **Don’t cut off**
Wait for your interlocutor to finish speaking before reacting. Don’t raise your voice.

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