Introduction

The following information is designed to help you navigate networking receptions, recruiting meals, interviews and other settings you may encounter in your job hunt or during your summer employment. These skills should also prepare you for the real world work of a lawyer where client development skills are key, as well as help you handle yourself confidently with judges, colleagues and people from all walks of life.

Basic Meal Etiquette

Before the Meal

- If you have dietary restrictions, let the employer know in advance – preferably at the time you schedule a callback interview.
- If you have not done so already, turn off your cell phone and put it away. Whether face up or face down, a phone on the table is distracting.
- Place your napkin in your lap after you sit down. Ask for a new one if you drop it.
- Be polite to the maître d’, wait staff, bussers, etc. The employer is evaluating all of your social interactions.

What Not to Order

- Messy foods like certain pastas or lobster.
- Foods you eat with your hands such as ribs.
- The most expensive thing on the menu, unless you are encouraged to “try” a particular dish.
- Things you’ve never had before – an interview is not the place to learn you have an allergy.
- Alcohol – not at all at lunch; only with moderation at dinner if you wish to join others who are ordering alcohol. Do not feel that you must order alcohol if you do not wish to have any.
- Foods that may result in smelly breath.

Table Setting

- Silverware starts from the outside in (see chart in Appendix A).
- The bread plate is on your left and drinks are on your right. It is helpful to remember that your left hand makes a “b” and your right hand makes a “d.”
- Your salad plate is to the left of the forks or placed directly on the dinner plate.
- The water glass is above the knives; wine glasses (if present) are to the right of the water glass.

During the Meal

- Do not text while eating, and don’t take pictures of your food. Keep your phone put away.
- Do not begin eating until everyone at the table has been served.
- Don’t put your elbows on the table while eating.
• Break bread into bite sized pieces before eating it.
• Butter, spreads, or dips should be transferred from the serving dish to your appropriate plate (bread, appetizer or dinner plate) before spreading or eating.
• Don’t chew with your mouth open or talk with your mouth full.
• Don’t put soiled silverware on the table; balance it on the plate.
• Never “intercept a pass,” i.e., snagging a roll out of the bread basket or taking a shake of salt when it is en route to someone else.
• Ask to have items passed; do not reach into another diner’s personal space to get something.
• Do not take the last piece of bread or the last appetizer.
• Do not complain about the food or send it back unless absolutely necessary; if there is a serious problem with the food, discretely address the issue with the waiter.
• Do not engage in personal grooming at the table. This includes blowing your nose, using a toothpick, or applying lipstick or face powder.
• If you need to leave the table for any reason, simply say “excuse me” – no further explanation is necessary.
• If you are temporarily leaving the table, place your napkin on your chair; placing it on the table signals that you are finished with your meal.

After the Meal
• Indicate you are done eating by placing silverware at the four o’clock and ten o’clock position and the napkin on the right hand side of the tablessetting.
• Do not request a take-home container, and try not to leave a huge amount of food on the plate.
• You have been invited out; you do not pay and should not offer to pay.
• Thank the attorneys for taking you to lunch, and for their time.

Receptions and Networking Events

Preparation
• Be sure to do your research on the employer ahead of time, but don’t neglect to keep up with what’s going on in the world around you. Read the newspaper in print or online, listen to the news, follow informative news blogs, etc. Brush up on what is happening with the Law School or the University; alums may enjoy hearing about the football team, new Law School initiatives or a favorite professor.
• Before arriving, think of two open-ended questions to ask that people can’t answer with a yes or no. Think of questions that begin with “who,” “what,” “where,” “when,” “why,” or “how.”

Tips for Arrival
• If you RSVP’d for the event, go! If you RSVP’d indicating that you would not be at the event don’t show up, unless you call ahead of time and are granted permission to attend.
• Silence your cell phone. Short of receiving a kidney for a transplant or waiting for a significant other to go into labor, there is no reason for your ringer to be on.
• Register/sign in at the reception table if necessary.
Name Tags
- Use large and legible print so people can read it.
- Wear the name tag on your right side so people can easily read it when shaking hands.

Beverages and Alcohol Consumption
- Be very cautious about alcohol consumption. Unless you are quite comfortable with your limits and behavior when drinking alcohol, avoid it altogether.
- Do not feel pressured into drinking; feel free to sip soda or water instead.

Introductions
- Always stand when meeting or greeting someone. If there is a table or desk between you, walk around to face the person.
- When being introduced, always offer your name right away if it isn’t given.
- Provide context when introducing yourself. For example, “I am Sam Smith; I am a 2L at the University of Michigan Law School.”
- A firm handshake is vital! Connect hands at the joint of the thumb and establish eye contact.
- If others join you in a small group, include them in the conversation by sharing what was said just before they arrived.
- When you don’t remember names and you need to introduce someone, say, “I’m sorry, I’ve forgotten your name” or “Have you met each other?”

General
- Be aware of your body language when listening. Do not fold your arms across your chest and don’t look around the room to see who else is there. Nod your head and keep eye contact with the person who is speaking.
- Don’t interrupt. Let people finish their sentence before you begin talking.
- Help keep the conversation flowing.
- Avoid rehearsed jokes in these situations. Humor is a subtle art, and it is hard to predict what might be taken the wrong way.
- Don’t go down a rabbit hole of complaining, which reflects badly on you. Maintain a positive demeanor.
- Don’t get caught up in gossip. It can circle back and harm you.

Working the Room/Networking
- When attending receptions, set a goal of meeting at least two new people.
- Upon entering the room, look for opportunities to engage with other lawyers; find a small group or an individual with whom you can begin chatting. Avoid groups of two, who may be having a more personal or intense discussion. Look for individuals or small groups who, by their body language and eye contact, seem to be signaling an openness to talking with someone new.
- When joining a group ask, “May I join you?” then introduce yourself.
- When ending a conversation, shake hands, mention that you have enjoyed visiting with the person, and move on. Ask for a business card if appropriate. Don’t feel obligated to “babysit” and linger in an unproductive or unpleasant conversation.
Communicating with Your Career in Mind: Voicemail, Social Media and Networking Sites

Your Online Presence: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Blogs and Google
- Employers do often look for your online presence; be proactive and take steps to ensure you are presenting a professional image. For tips, see:
  - Facebook E-Guide (NALP)
  - Other Selected Articles on Social Networking (NALP)
- **Make sure your personal social media accounts are set to private.** If you choose to keep any public, make sure that any content that is accessible reflects an image you would like employers to see.
- Google yourself for both website results and images. Know the results and have explanations ready for anything that looks suspect.

Email
- Use your University of Michigan email address, to help build your brand as a Michigan Law student.
- If you are sending the first email begin with a formal tone, then match the level of formality of the response for subsequent emails.
- Treat email like a letter or a memo. Use spell check, grammar check, and proofread before hitting send. Use a proper salutation and closing.
- Make the subject line as informative as possible.
- Use exclamation points sparingly – they are not as commonly used in professional emails as they are in personal emails.
- Organize your thoughts and be succinct.
- Don’t send snippy or derogatory emails and don’t send emails when you are upset. Don’t type in all caps.
- Don’t put anything in writing that you wouldn’t want to see published or sent to the hiring partner. Emails get forwarded around the globe.
- Watch the auto-fill in your email recipient line and be careful with “reply all.”
- Be timely in your responses to emails. Acknowledge job offers and other important communications within 24 hours, even if you do not yet have an answer to the email (i.e., you are not yet ready to accept or decline the job).

Voicemail and Cell Phones
- Have a professional-sounding voicemail message. Ensure that your voicemail box does not fill up, preventing people from leaving you a message.
- Check your voicemail messages frequently and return all messages as soon as possible, and definitely within 24 hours. You need not have an answer to a question in order to acknowledge the message. As with emails, if you receive a job offer by phone you should acknowledge receipt of the message within 24 hours even if you are not yet ready to decide whether you will take the offer.
• Turn off your phone during interviews. At work meetings, meals, and receptions, leave your work-related mobile device on silent and excuse yourself from conversation before checking it.
• Unplug! It should go without saying that at receptions, interviews or networking events you should not be wearing a Bluetooth accessory or headphones of any kind.

A Note about Texting
• Don’t text in the middle of meetings, lunches, interviews etc. If communicating with someone is that important, excuse yourself from the conversation and text in private. What constitutes “important?” Your partner is about to have a baby; you are awaiting an organ transplant; maybe if you could be receiving a message from Chief Justice Roberts with your clerkship offer.
Appendix A. Table Setting Diagram