

Lesson

Thursday

Intermediate JavaScript (/intermediate-javascript)

/ Test-Driven Development and Environments with JavaScript (/intermediate-javascript/test-driven-development-and-environments-with-javascript)

/ Meetups and Networking

Text

Meetups and Networking

Networking encompasses many different avenues of connection including meetups/events, informational interviews, cold emailing, conventions, slack channels/LinkedIn, among others. This lesson focuses on meetups and events, but we encourage you to explore lots of different ways to network as a junior developer.

Meetups will likely be a big part of your job search, and an important part of your long-term career in tech. They are a fantastic place to meet new people, hear about new projects, and learn about job opportunities.

Here at Epicodus, your teachers have likely encouraged you to attend meetups as a student. This lesson will expand on that, and outline tips for making the most of your meetup experience; both as a student, and later on as a job-seeker.

Why Network?

There are a lot of benefits to networking. The number one benefit is that you'll meet new people in your local tech community, and you might make some new friends who share your interests. You can also learn more about opportunities and resources within your community (jobs, community resources, trainings, etc). Networking events frequently have a learning component to them with a guest speaker presenting on a topic, so it's also an opportunity to learn about new technologies and tools you haven't worked with.

Here are a few more benefits to networking to consider:

- Get involved in the local tech community.
- Find and learn from new people in the field.
- Discover new parts of the industry; get a deeper look at parts of the industry you already know.
- Build social connections that may help your job search later.

DON'T approach networking with the expectation of a job offer.

This can come across negatively. No one is obligated to offer you a job, and you don't want to seem like you're just using people to get ahead. Which leads us to our next point:

DO approach networking to build real connections with people who share a mutual interest in tech — and you'll probably find that those people think of you when their company is hiring!

It's great to network with the intention of supporting your career, but you want the relationships you create to be genuine! You don't have to be best friends with everyone you meet through networking, but try to build real connections. Remember that the folks you interact with are also real people, not just potential job opportunities. How would you want someone to approach you? People generally want to help each other, especially the people they like and connect with on a real level, so the benefits of networking come naturally when you focus on relationships first.

Considerations for Networking During Covid

- Look for virtual Meetups (<https://www.meetup.com/>) held over Zoom, Google Meet, etc.
- Attend virtual conferences and talks.
- Set up virtual informational interviews over Google Meet or Zoom (LinkedIn is a great place to message people).
- Connect on LinkedIn.
- If a company you are interested in has an Epicodus alumni, messaging them can be a great place to start.

Making the Most of Meetups

For the more social among us, meetups are probably not that intimidating: you go, eat snacks, listen to some talks, and meet some new people. But for those of us who feel more introverted and don't necessarily enjoy making smalltalk, meetups may feel daunting. Here are some tips to make the most of your experience:

- **Meetups are work.** Consider them work in the same manner as your lessons and classwork. They are a necessary part of becoming a developer. Much like the technical skills you practice at Epicodus will help you find employment, so too will the network you grow at events like these. Time spent nurturing social connections can later help get your resume in the right hands.
- **Prepare for crowds.** Meetups can be busy and crowded. If this intimidates you, remind yourself again that this is work. Know where the restrooms and exits are. Get there early and familiarize yourself with the space before it becomes crowded. (Getting there early may also allow you to introduce yourself to the meetup hosts before they're tied up, too!) Make a goal to stay for one hour, chat with at least 3-5 people, then re-assess based on your comfort levels after the hour has passed.
- **Find a meetup about a topic you're interested in.** You'll find it easier to talk to people if you have an interest and some knowledge of the topic at hand.
- **Set your goals.** What are you looking to achieve by attending? Do you want to hear cool talks? Are you looking for a job? Are you interested in telling people about the project you are working on? Let this shape how you interact with people. Prepare some key talking points to support what you are trying to achieve. You can prepare an "elevator pitch" as well, which is a short pitch that sums up your idea or your project in a nutshell. Read more about elevator pitches here (<https://www.fastcompany.com/3004484/problem-your-elevator-pitch-and-how-fix-it>).
- **Research people to approach.** If it's publicly available, check out the RSVP list research some of the attendees on LinkedIn. Find several key individuals (not just one, you need some backup) and prepare questions ahead of time. Then, approach the person in question if the opportunity presents itself.
- **Read the signals.** If someone you're speaking with begins chatting with someone else, turns away, seems distracted, or leaves, simply move on! If you have a good conversation that seems interesting enough, and lasts for a few minutes, it's appropriate to ask that person for their card. Don't forget to follow up with them within 24 hrs after the meetup.
- **Watch your intake.** Many meetups serve alcohol. Don't make the mistake of consuming more than you should and worrying whether you acted inappropriately. Again, consider this work.

- **Don't wall yourself off.** It's natural to want to hang out only with the people you know at an event; but this is counterproductive. Spend a little time chatting with people you know, then return to point 1.) You are here to make new connections! If nothing else, try to make new connections with those individuals you know.
- **Ask questions.** If conversation seems stifled and you're not sure what to say, just ask questions. Practice active listening. If you sense your conversation partner is looking to exit the conversation at any point, politely say something like, "I don't want to keep you long, but I'd love to follow up with you. Can I take your card?" and leave it at that. Follow up within 24 hours if you feel this is a beneficial connection for you to foster. **Consider questions like:**
 - "What does your day to day look like?"
 - "Have you been in Portland/Seattle long?"
 - "Where did you work before X company?"
 - "What exactly does [individual's job title] do?"
 - "What do you enjoy most about your work?"
 - "What did your path to programming look like?"
- **Be flexible and open-minded.** Your conversation partner may tell you they hate your field of study, even if you love it. Or they may say they think there are "no" jobs in your intended career field. Even if things like this are the last thing you want to hear, don't argue! Instead, graciously let them know you disagree, or simply change the subject. Don't take this first conversation too seriously. Seek common ground. If it can't be found, find a polite reason to leave the conversation and disengage.
- **Follow up.** After meeting someone, get their business card, email address, or at least their name. Connect with them on LinkedIn, and send them an email or LinkedIn message saying something as simple as "Nice meeting you last night!" If you're still nervous about going to a meetup or want more tips, check out The Painfully Shy Developer's Guide to Networking for a Better Job (<https://www.samjulien.com/shy-dev-networking>).

Finding Meetups

But how does everyone find out about all these events, anyway? We have a few tips for that, too. There's many online sites that post meetups, and we've compiled a list of popular resources below. Check them out!

We also suggest that you share any events you're going to attend on the Meetup RSVP board or in Discord during your time at Epicodus.

At your job or internship, ask your colleagues if there are any meetups they attend. Ask if there is anyone in your company that hosts or is involved with any meetups, and if you can help. Joining in and helping to facilitate is an awesome way to get involved.

Remember, the earlier you begin your networking, the more connections you will make — connections that could lead to a job.

Remote Networking Resources

- Meetup.com (<https://www.meetup.com/>)
- Eventbrite (<https://www.eventbrite.com/>)
- Lesbians Who Tech (<https://lesbianswhotech.org/virtualpridesummit>)
- Women Who Code (<https://www.womenwhocode.com/events>)
- Out In Tech (<https://outintech.com/>)

Seattle Networking Resources

- Seattle JS Hackers — Slack (https://seattlejshackers.slack.com/join/shared_invite/enQtMzYzMDcwNzQ3Nzk0LTcxZDI5NjA1MjIwYzdkYjQ5ZDh)
- Open Seattle — Slack (<https://openseattle.org/>)

- Puget Sound Programming Python (PuPPy) — Slack (<https://www.pspython.com/app/>)
- Olympia Frontend Development Meetup Group — Slack (https://olyjs.slack.com/join/shared_invite/enQtODkxMTQ2MTg0ODAzLTc4ZTEwOWJmOGQyODcwNmQyZmZIM2L)
- Seattle / Eastside Coding Interview Practice — Slack (https://sde-skills.slack.com/join/shared_invite/enQtOTY5Mzc0MjY5NjUzLWY4ODk1ZDc5OGExMGJlZjc5MDExOGMxN2NhYWl4I) and Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/sdeskills>)
- She's Coding — Slack (<https://shescoding.typeform.com/to/fcSCQs>)
- New Tech Seattle (<https://www.newtechnorthwest.com/>)

Portland Networking Resources

- Portland Jr. Developer Meetup (<https://www.meetup.com/Portland-JR-DEVELOPER-Meetup/>)
- ChickTech (<https://www.meetup.com/ChickTech-Portland/>)
- Blacks in Tech (<https://www.meetup.com/PDX-Blacks-in-Technology-Meetup/>)
- PDX Women in Tech (WIT) (<https://www.meetup.com/Portland-Women-in-Technology/>)
- Lesbians Who Tech (PDX Branch) (<https://lesbianswhotech.org/events/city/portland/>)
- Code for PDX (<https://www.meetup.com/Code-for-PDX/>)
- Calagator (<https://calagator.org/>)
- Latinx in Tech (<https://www.meetup.com/LatinxTechPDX/>)

[Previous \(/intermediate-javascript/test-driven-development-and-environments-with-javascript/whiteboard-practice-javascript-strings\)](#)

[Next \(/intermediate-javascript/test-driven-development-and-environments-with-javascript/developer-reality-you-are-the-project\)](#)

Lesson 47 of 49

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