

# Career Fair Guide

Career fairs are a great way to learn about employers, make connections, and improve your chances of getting a job or internship. Career Services hosts many career fairs and recruiting events throughout the year for all fields and majors, offering critical opportunities to leverage your degree to reach your career goals. Use these strategies to prepare and make the most out of each event you attend.

## Why Attend Career Fairs?

All students and job seekers benefit from attending career fairs and recruiting events. Think of a career fair as a chance to have a series of brief initial interviews with as many employers as you wish. By interacting with recruiters from many organizations with current job openings, you can learn about available positions, get inside insights about different organizations, hone your professional communication skills, and introduce yourself to employers.

Candidates often discover new companies, get tips for success on specific applications, learn about special opportunities and employer benefits, and make connections that give them an edge when applying for jobs and internships. Even if you're not seeking a job at the moment, career fairs are an important way to learn and practice that will help you prepare for a smooth transition after graduation.

## Preparing for a Career Fair

It's important to do your homework before a career fair so you can arrive ready to take full advantage of the event. Candidates who are prepared make better first impressions and greatly improve their chances of landing a job or internship. It's important to take the time to know yourself, know the employers, and make the match.

- **Know yourself.** Consider what you hope to achieve at the career fair and what your strengths are as a candidate. What are your current goals? What are your most relevant skills, experiences, and qualifications that have prepared you for those goals?
- **Know the employers.** Who is attending the career fair? Which employers are most relevant for you? See the list of registered employers by looking up the event on [Handshake](#). Identify about three to five companies that most interest you and take some time to research each one. Review company websites, social media channels, and current job openings.
- **Make the match.** What interests you most about your top companies? What makes you a great candidate for each one? Take notes about what appeals to you about these organizations, why you are a strong candidate, and what questions you have for them. Update your resume to reflect the current goals and key qualifications you want to share with employers at the event.

Career Services is available to help you prepare for career fairs. Check out the [workshop schedule](#) to see if there are any special events to help students get ready, visit drop-in hours, or call to schedule an appointment.

### Professional Introductions

Next, prepare a professional introduction that highlights your goals and key qualifications. Here is a simple format you can use. Try to write a sentence or two for each of the components below.

1. **Quick intro** (name, year, program)
2. **Plans for the future** (“I’m pursuing a career in…” or “I’m passionate about…”)
3. **Steps you’ve taken so far** (“Last summer, I interned at…” or “Through my classes in… I have learned…”)
4. **Question or statement of interest** (“I’m wondering what opportunities you have for…” or “I’m interested in your organization because…”)

Be sure to run through your professional introduction a few times so you feel ready to greet recruiters. Try saying your professional introduction to yourself in the mirror, recording yourself on your phone, and practicing with a friend or family member.

### What to Wear

Treat a career fair like a job interview. Whether the event is in person or virtual, wear professional clothing appropriate to the norms of your industry. Business professional or business casual attire is recommended. Wearing informal clothing may make you appear unprofessional or unserious to recruiters. It is better to overdress than to underdress for a career fair. Here are some quick examples illustrating different types of professional attire. These are examples for reference, not exhaustive lists.

Business Casual	Business Professional
Khakis, polo shirts, skirts, blouses, dress pants, dress shirts, etc.	Suit and tie, skirt suit, pantsuit
Some colors and patterns ok	Dark neutrals, few if any patterns

### Career Fair Day – In Person

Bring a notepad and copies of your up to date resume. When you check in, you will receive a map of the fair. Take a few minutes to review the map and locate your top companies before you enter the event. It’s a good idea to start easy with a few employers that aren’t on your list and then work up to your top choices.

It’s normal to be nervous. Career fairs can be overwhelming—there may be 100+ employers present, depending on the event—so take your time and don’t try to talk to everybody. It’s ok to take a few minutes to walk through the event and get your bearings. You may find it helpful to do a little bit of eavesdropping to hear how other

candidates are interacting with recruiters. For career fairs on campus, Career Services staff is available to answer your questions and help you get started.

Take the initiative to greet recruiters. Say hello and deliver your professional introduction. Then, have a brief discussion about the company and opportunities that interest you. Feel free to ask questions and take notes. It's a great idea to ask for tips for a successful application. Recruiters will often give detailed advice about the application process and what managers at their organization are seeking.

Before you go, ask if the recruiter would be willing to share their business card or email address for any follow up questions. Don't skip this step! Follow up is your most important tool for generating opportunities from a career fair or recruiting event.

### **Career Fair Day – Virtual**

Most of the strategies for in-person events apply to virtual events, too. Prepare ahead of time and dress professionally from head to toe just like you would for an in-person event. There are a few special considerations when attending a virtual career fair.

Consider your location and internet connection. Attend from a quiet place where you will be able to participate in the career fair without interruptions. Select a location where you will be well lit and where the area visible behind and around you is clean, neat, and free of distractions. Make sure you have a stable high-speed internet connection.

Take a moment to explore the platform that will be used for the event to familiarize yourself with the layout. Log in a few minutes early to give yourself time to troubleshoot any issues. Test your microphone and camera to ensure they are enabled and functioning. Always turn your camera on when interacting with recruiters. Leaving your camera off will make you seem unprofessional and disengaged.

Be sure to sign up for specific sessions. This is required to participate in most virtual career fairs and is how you build your schedule for the event. Most employers will offer a mix of group and individual sessions. Group sessions are a great way to learn more about the organization overall, while individual sessions allow you to introduce yourself and ask specific questions. You can register for as many or as few sessions as you like.

To sign up for sessions, find the career fair on [Handshake](#) and register for the event. You will then have access to the schedule. Sign up for any sessions that interest you. Check back as the fair gets closer, as employers will continue to post sessions. On the day of the fair, go back to the main event page. You will be able to join each session a few minutes before it is scheduled to begin.

Keep an eye on the clock—sessions go by quickly and may end automatically when time is up. Take a moment to ask the recruiter for their email address so that you can follow up with them.

### **Follow Up: Your Most Important Tool**

Following up with recruiters is the essential strategy for converting interactions at the career fair into job and internship opportunities. Recruiters talk to dozens or even hundreds of job seekers at career fairs, so they often won't remember individual candidates. By following up with them, you remind them who you are and distinguish yourself as a serious candidate ready to take action.

Within a couple of business days, send a message thanking the recruiter for their time and reiterating your interest in the company. Note anything that stood out from your conversation and update them on any steps you have taken already. Then, ask any questions you have and ask for their input on what to do next.

Here is an example of a message to a recruiter.

Subject Line: Internship Opportunities at General Industries

Good afternoon Mr. Begay,

My name is Marcus and I'm a junior majoring in Economics at The University of New Mexico. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me at the career fair on campus last Thursday. I really enjoyed learning about the General Industries summer internship program, especially the Management Training track.

I wanted to let you know that I submitted my application online following the guidelines you shared. Please let me know what my next steps are and if there is any other information I can provide to support my application.

Sincerely,  
Marcus Jones