



# How to Navigate Career Fairs

Career events are an opportunity to network with company and organization representatives and potentially apply for jobs and internships. Business professional dress (sometimes business casual) is expected; bring copies of your resume.

You not only market your academic training but also your skills and personal traits to employers. Review the majors being recruited, but also prepare to introduce yourself to employers. Communicate how you have demonstrated the following traits and inquire how you could be an asset to their organization:

- Career & Self-Development
- Communication
- Critical Thinking
- Equity & Inclusion
- Leadership
- Professionalism
- Teamwork
- Technology

Resource: <http://www.naceweb.org/knowledge/career-readiness-competencies.aspx>

## DRESS THE PART

Employers expect Business Professional attire at interviews, and you may wear a suit to a career fair. However, most employers expect Business Casual at on-campus recruiting events. Regardless, arrive clean, pressed and well-groomed.

### Men

- Pressed, collared shirt with pants/nice jeans (no rips)
- Hair and facial hair should be well-tailored

### Women

- Pressed, shirt with skirt or pants/nice jeans (no rips)
- Skirt should come to knees (avoid extreme slit)

### Everyone

- Don't smell (smoke, perfume, cologne).
- Brush your teeth and bring mints (if needed) but no gum.
- Eat a snack prior to avoid distractions caused by hunger.
- Bring resumes in a portfolio; avoid carrying bulky bag(s).
- Wear clean shoes.
- Know schedule as some recruiters plan next day interviews.

### Avoid

- Hoodies and leisure wear
- Oversized or tight clothing
- Revealing items
- Distracting jewelry

## PREPARE TO TALK WITH EMPLOYERS

Avoid, "Hi, I'm Jane Doe. What does your company do?" You want to impress recruiters with your knowledge of their company, available positions and communicate your fit. Research career event attendees on Handshake.

## REGISTER WITH HANDSHAKE

- Access via **my UTMartin** portal.
- Complete your profile.
- Upload resume, cover letter and unofficial transcript (you may or may not share with employers based on GPA).
- Research employers prior to career events.
- Search for available jobs.
- Review upcoming events.

## PREPARE YOUR RESUME

A resume should summarize your past experiences that demonstrate relevant skills, personal traits and successes that communicate your fit to companies and available position(s). It should fit on one page, have no grammatical or spelling errors and be printed on resume paper. See Resume Tip Sheet.

## PREPARE WHAT YOU WILL SAY

Prepare an "Elevator Speech," a 30-60 second introduction of yourself that you share with each recruiter. The plan is to...

- Introduce yourself, making eye contact with a smile.
- Offer a firm hand shake and a resume.
- Tell what sort of employment you seek.
- Summarize your relevant education, experience and skills.
- Close by reiterating your interest and asking questions.
- Thank the recruiter, ask for business card and leave.

Do not manipulate their time by talking about personal life. Stick to relevant details. Conduct personal research to develop your own questions, but here are some examples to get you started:

- What career opportunities are available for individuals with my degree and skills?
- What activities will best prepare me for your positions?
- What qualities are you looking for in new hires?
- Do you hire students for full-time jobs, co-ops, internships or summer employment? How do I apply for these positions?
- What is the best way to apply for a position with your company?
- What type of opportunities do you currently have available?
- What are your future hiring plans?
- What type of training do you offer new hires?



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- For what geographic locations do you hire?
- What makes your organization different from competitors?
- Describe the work environment at your organization.
- What characteristics describe successful people at your company?
- I'm very interested in a position. What is the next step?

## USE YOUR TIME WISELY

- Come early as some recruiters leave the event early.
- Do not travel with friends, be an individual.
- Know with whom you want to talk, and visit those tables first.
- Wait your turn, not interrupting others engaged with recruiter.
- Network with other recruiters, not missing opportunities.

## FOLLOW UP

- Ask for a business card from each recruiter.
- After the event, send personalized emails to thank recruiters for their time and ask any questions you may have.
- Attach your resume to the message.
- Mail a handwritten thank you as well.
- Check to see if the company (not the individual) has a LinkedIn and/or Twitter profile and follow it.

## CAREER FAIR DOS

- Dress professionally—career fairs require the same attention to apparel as interviews.
- Greet recruiter with firm handshake and maintain eye contact.
- Prepare an elevator speech.
- Prepare informed questions to ask before the Fair.
- Stand alone and be independent—try not to constantly move in a “pack” with your friends.
- Keep an open mind. Approach lesser known companies—you might discover a lot of potential.
- Have a sense of humor and be personable.
- Bring a portfolio to hold your resumes, appointment book, business cards, etc. Keep it organized throughout the Fair.
- Ask about the best way to find out about upcoming opportunities with the company.
- “Close the deal.” Don't be afraid to take the initiative and ask what the next step is.
- Ask for a business card so that you can follow-up.

## DON'TS

- DON'T be afraid of the recruiters. They're here to meet you!
- DON'T pretend you're interested in a company if you're not.
- DON'T schedule an appointment you don't intend to keep.
- DON'T overstate your abilities. Present yourself and your abilities in a convincing, but honest manner.
- DON'T monopolize the recruiter's time. Make a good impression, gather information and move on.
- DON'T ask questions about salary.
- DON'T complain about past jobs, classes, or professors!
- DON'T insult recruiters. Cultivate them into your network.
- DON'T just toss your resume on the table. Take the time to market yourself.
- DON'T insert yourself into a conversation a recruiter is having with another student. Wait your turn.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Who may attend?

CPAD invites all students, regardless of classification (freshman to senior, graduate student and alumni) to attend every available and applicable event. Career fairs are excellent opportunities to network for internships, full-time jobs and graduate programs. Prior to entering an event, participants will register/sign-in where you will receive name tags that identify classification and major.

### Should freshmen, sophomores or juniors attend?

Career fairs are a vital component to help people achieve their professional goals. They can provide valuable opportunities to explore different careers and seek employment, whether a full-time position or internship. There are many reasons to attend a career fair:

- Access to recruiters from a wide array of companies and industries in one location.
- Find out about available job openings and submit resumes in person.
- Explore different, and even discover new, career options and possible future areas of employment.
- Identify “what it takes” to land the job at various companies – what education, background, skills, and/or coursework is needed to succeed in a field or at a particular company.
- Practice interview and networking skills.
- Gain job searching advice from the recruiters who hire college graduates.
- Develop a network of business contacts.
- Learn about different industries.

### How do I make a good impression?

- Print your resume on quality paper and don't staple to other documents.
- Bring a portfolio to hold your resume, pen, paper and support documents; preferably one with slots for business cards.
- Have your schedule available in case you have the chance to set up an interview.
- Have a list of companies that interest you most as you may want to add notes from your research.
- Keep breath mints on hand to help counteract dry mouth and bad breath.

### When greeting recruiters:

Make eye contact, smile, introduce yourself and offer a firm handshake.

- Be personable; keep the conversation light and comfortable.
- Be prepared to present your elevator speech.
- Ask thoughtful questions specific to the company or industry.
- Leave a copy of your resume and request a business card from the recruiter so you can follow up with him or her later.
- Thank the recruiter for his or her time and for considering your resume. Let recruiters know you enjoyed speaking with them and that you will be in touch.