

Job Fair Preparation



UW-Superior Career Services, in partnership with faculty, staff, and employers, provides students and alumni with opportunities and resources to identify career goals and develop life-long career management skills.

UW-Superior Career Services strives to be a recognized and valued service to the students, alumni, university, and community as the premier provider of career development expertise and programming.

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What to Wear to a Career Fair

Think about this—when you meet someone new, you size them up. In about a minute, you can decide whether or not you like the person. Hiring managers are good at sizing up people, too. They see lots of job applicants and they can tell in a flash who will fit in and who will not. In a job interview or at a career fair, the goal is to show you fit in—and the first thing a hiring manager will notice is how you look. Here's how to make a good, first impression.

- **Start with a good night's sleep**
Employers expect to meet someone enthusiastic, energetic, and excited to be there.
- **Shower**
It will help you look sharp, alert, and healthy.
- **Shampoo your hair**
One of the first things the manager will look at is your hair. It makes a huge statement about your overall hygiene and cleanliness.
- **Brush your teeth**
Get the manager to remember your ideas, your skills, your personality—not what you had for breakfast. Brush, floss, and use mouthwash.
- **Use deodorant and antiperspirant**
The manager will think you're as cool as a cucumber.
- **Use eye drops**
Get the red out and let your eyes twinkle.
- **Trim your nails**
Most hiring managers will notice when they reach to shake your hand.
- **Hair styles**
Choose a simple style that makes you look good. Get the manager to focus on your face, your expressions, your eyes—not your hair style.
- **Avoid strong perfumes or colognes**
Some people may find it unpleasant.
- **Makeup**
In business, less is more. The idea is to look professional so you'll be taken seriously.
- **Shave**
A two-day stubble looks great on the weekend, but not in a job interview or career fair.

- **Body piercings**
One or two piercings are fine. A half dozen or more becomes a distraction. Tongue jewelry can also be a distraction.
- **Avoid trendy fashions**
It's been said that fashion gets attention, but it doesn't convey power. Classic clothing conveys power. Conduct your job search from a point of strength, not novelty.
- **Dress in the clothes that fit the company culture and show you care**
Your best bet is to overdress. For any interview or career fair, make sure to dress in business casual or more formally. If you're not sure what to wear to an interview, call the company and ask someone in their human resources office. They'll be glad to tell you.
- **Check your clothes**
Make sure they fit properly and feel comfortable. Check for holes, tears, splits, stains, missing buttons, runs, frayed hems, worn cuffs, puckers, pulls, or wrinkles.
- **Wear clean, freshly pressed clothes**
Send your jacket, skirt, and pants off to be dry-cleaned and pressed. Have your shirt or blouse laundered, starched, and pressed. Looking sharp tells the manager that you take pride in your appearance and your work.
- **Avoid excessive jewelry**
A watch, a ring, a necklace, and/or a pair of earrings are ideal.
- **Avoid bright colors, loud fashions, and patterns that clash**
Again, it's a sign that you need lots of attention.
- **Empty your pockets**
No bulges to ruin your profile and no jingling change to fall out of your pocket when you sit down for your interview.
- **Smile—smile big**
You're beautiful and smiling projects confidence. It also helps you add inflection to your voice.

Source: Dahlstrom, Harry. *The Job Hunting Handbook*. Dahlstrom & Company, Inc., 2017.

What to do and What NOT to do at a Career Fair

Career fairs offer the chance to meet dozens of recruiters that are waiting to meet you face to face. Keep in mind that recruiters do not usually hire people at career fairs. They prefer not to interview at the job fair because the fairs are noisy, fast-paced, and there are too many people to interview. So they usually schedule interviews for a few days after the fair. When competing with hundreds of other job seekers for just a few minutes of a recruiter's attention, it's crucial to show up prepared, ready to face the day, and knowing what it takes to distinguish yourself from the crowd. Here are some tips for what to do and not do in order to secure an interview.

Introductions

- DON'T offer a weak or shaky handshake, or present yourself as shy.
- DO introduce yourself with a smile, eye contact, and a brief, firm handshake. The recruiter's first impression of you is crucial!

Tell me about yourself

- DON'T be too vague, share too much information, or speak too quickly when you talk to a recruiter.
- DO have your elevator pitch ready and be prepared to answer the recruiter's questions.

What interests you about the company?

- DON'T go to a career fair without doing your research on companies first!
- DON'T act or speak unprofessionally.
- DO find out which employers will be there; research each company on your priority list; and prepare informed questions

Leaving a lasting impression

- DON'T forget to bring resumes, leave your contact information, forget the recruiter's name, or expect the recruiter to follow up with you.
- DO give the recruiter your resume right away during your conversation, ask for their business card, thank them, and let them know how you will follow up with them.

Get Prepared for Your Next Career Fair!

To find out what to do at a career fair in order to avoid these mistakes and secure an interview, follow these steps!

- Stop in at Swenson 1061 or call Career Services at (715) 394-8024 to ask about our Career Fair Prep workshops.
- While you're in the office, grab our flyer on 8 Ways to Stand Out at a Career Fair.
- Schedule a resume review appointment with Career Services.
- Contact Career Services about printing copies of your resume on resume paper.

Source: "What To Do and Not Do at a Career Fair, from the UCLA Career Center." *YouTube*, uploaded by MktngUCLACareerCtr, 17 June 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zyrRuVAJLas&feature=youtu.be>.

8 Ways to Stand Out at a Career Fair

Standing out—in a positive way—is no easy task at a career fair. When you’re piled into a packed auditorium and competing with hundreds of other job seekers for just a few minutes of a recruiter’s attention, it’s crucial to show up prepared, ready to face the day, and knowing what it takes to distinguish yourself from the crowd.

Before the Event

1. Find Out Who Will Be There

- Look—or ask—for a list of all the companies who will be attending prior to the event, and prioritize the ones you want to approach. This way, if you run out of time to meet everyone, you’ll at least be sure you’ve hit your top choices.
- While a career fair is a good time to learn about companies, you should know a little about them before showing up. You’ll be able to ask deeper questions and get better information. Do some research about each company on your priority list and be prepared to tailor your conversations specifically to each recruiter.

2. Pack Your (Small) Bag

What should you bring to a career fair? Not much. Don’t carry a bulky briefcase or handbag—you want to be able to easily make your way across the room, have your hands free for handshaking, and not look disheveled. All you need is a small purse, plus a dark, plain folder to hold your resumes and any information you pick up at the event. Bring at least 20 copies of your resume (more if there are more companies that you’d like to meet with), a pen and paper for taking notes, and business cards (if available).

3. Dress for Success (and Comfort)

As with any interview, it’s important to dress professionally—but at a career fair, you want to be comfortable, too. Wear a lightweight suit that won’t get too hot, and check your coat or leave it behind. Make sure your shoes are extra comfortable!

During the Event

4. Don’t Be Shy

- As you approach each table, be friendly, be confident, and be prepared with something to say. Introduce yourself with a smile, eye contact, and a brief, firm handshake. Often, the recruiter will take the lead and ask you questions, but you should also have your elevator pitch ready—a 30-second soundbite of what you want the company to know about you. To really use your time wisely, you should be able to concisely convey why you’re interested in their company and how your skills or qualifications suit the position.
- At the same time—don’t go too fast! Job seekers have a tendency to speak quickly, which comes across as rushed or nervous. You want to speak slowly and with interest.

5. Get Your Resume in Their Hands

One of the biggest mistakes job seekers make is not giving out their resume until the end of the meeting—at this point, the recruiter may have gotten interrupted or moved on to someone else. Instead, as you speak about yourself, hand your resume to the recruiter, and point out the places that substantiate what you're saying. This will draw their attention to your resume and make you stand out from other faces at the table.

6. Give a Memorable Goodbye

- You want the person you're speaking with to know you're interested in his or her company. Ask relevant questions – and be sure to ask about next steps. You should also offer to come by the recruiter's office for a longer conversation in person.
- When the conversation is wrapping up, make sure to thank the person you're speaking with for their time. Most importantly, request a business card! There's no way you'll remember everyone's names at the end of the event. Plus, you'll want to have their email address so you can follow up.

After the Event

7. Follow Up

Within 24-48 hours of the career fair, send a thank-you note to each person you met with, whether you're interested in the company or not. Who knows—the next time you go to a job fair, the recruiter at that dull software company could be working for Google! If you think the recruiter would appreciate a handwritten note, send one, but also send emails to everyone. Don't copy and paste—it's OK for your messages to be short, but you'll want to personalize them to each company and recruiter.

8. Take Action

- For those companies you are interested in, follow the recruiter's instructions about applying for a position. If you need to submit your resume online, do so within a few days of the event so you're still fresh in the company's mind. And if there's not a position available right now that's a good fit, ask the recruiter if you can come in for an informational interview. Getting even more face time with the company is always a good thing!
- It's not always easy to stand out at a career fair, but if you arrive prepared and organized, approach the tables politely and well-practiced, and follow up the right way—you'll already be ahead of the pack.

Source: Katen, Laura. "8 Ways to Stand Out at a Career Fair." The Muse, <https://www.themuse.com/advice/8-ways-to-stand-out-at-a-career-fair>. Accessed 20 September 2017.