

## Job or Career Fair Prep Strategies

Whether you're seeking your first job or your fifth job, attending a career or job fair is a smart strategy for marketing yourself to potential employers.

Forget reviewing hundreds of online ads or spending countless hours filling out applications and emailing resumes! At a job fair, you can connect directly with recruiters and hiring managers from a wide range of companies, learning about them as they learn about you.

Yet, knowing how to effectively prepare for a career fair means you'll stand out from other attendees and ultimately find your next great career role. Follow these steps to make the most of every job fair you attend.

### How to prepare for the career or job fair

A key contributor to your success will be in your preparation. Here are some tips:

**If you can, pre-register for the event:** This can include submitting your resume and/or other information just in case attending employers review your information before the fair.

**Research the companies that are attending:** Having a background on these organizations means you can ask specific questions about the job and company. This impresses [company] representatives because it shows a genuine interest in them.

**After researching, decide who you'll talk with:** By doing this, you don't have to waste precious time wandering around and deciding who to start a conversation with. You'll know when you walk in the door, greatly increasing your chances of success. If you can get a layout of the fair beforehand, you can make a "plan of attack" to see each employer in order of interest.

**Prepare and print your resumes:** Bring more than you need, as some companies may want more than one copy. If you have multiple job objectives, make sure you bring enough versions of each resume, and of course, be sure your resume is well-written and free of errors.

**Create and practice your elevator pitch:** This 30- to 60-second speech should explain who you are, what your skills are, and what your career goal is. Prepare for potential interviews or interview questions:

### What to do on the day of the fair

Arrive as early as possible, come dressed appropriately for the job fair, and then follow these tips to make the most of your time:

**Be confident and enthusiastic:** Introduce yourself with a smile and a firm handshake. Companies are there because they want to meet you, and more importantly, make a hire. Be ready to give your elevator pitch when appropriate. If you're still a student, talk about your academic and extracurricular experiences as well as your career interests.

Take notes if necessary: Do this especially “when you inquire about next steps and the possibility of talking with additional managers,” says the UC Berkeley career center. “Write down the names, telephone numbers, etc. of other staff in the organization whom you can contact later.”

Ask the company representative for a business card: This will give you all the information you need to get in touch with this person if necessary and to send a thank-you note for the time the representative spent with you. Believe it or not, many a candidate has won the job because of a thank you.

Network, network, network! In addition to the company representatives, make time to talk with other job seekers to share information on everything from the companies to job leads and get their contact information if possible. Also, definitely approach any professional organizations at the fair and get information for future networking opportunities.

Actions to take after the event

Once you’ve prepared for the career or job fair and then actually attended, there are a few important things to do once it’s over. Here’s what to keep in mind:

Follow up with company representatives you talked to: As mentioned above, send a thank-you note as soon as possible after the fair. Review your interest in and qualifications for the job and promise to follow up with a phone call. You can also attach another copy of your resume to the note or email.

Continue to network: Reach out to fellow attendees you talked with to share your experience of the job fair and ask about their successes. Tell them you’ll keep them in mind if you see an open position they might want and ask them to do the same for you. Join any of the professional organizations that were at the fair if they are appropriate to your career goals, as well.

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