

Getting the most out of Career Fairs

Prepare for a career fair as you would for a professional job interview.

Career Fair Essentials:

- Bring plenty of copies of your resume, a pen, and an attractive-looking folder
- Consider carrying a bag or briefcase that will allow you to keep your right hand free for handshakes
- Write and practice saying a 30-second elevator speech that includes highlights about your skills, education, experience, character, and what you are looking for at the career fair
- Research the companies that are scheduled to participate in the career fair
- Decide which companies you will approach, and create a list of questions you want answered by each
- Carry pocket-sized resumes or business cards to give to employers
- Dress professionally! The more professional your attire, the more you will be noticed and appreciated by employers.

Recommended

Business Suits
Dress Pants
Professional Dresses & Skirts
Blouses and Polo Shirts
Khakis

Not Recommended

Casual Hats
Flip-Flops
T-Shirts
Athletic Wear
Jeans

Show that you take career fairs seriously

Be knowledgeable about the companies whose representatives you approach; research them ahead of time by visiting their websites. The Employer Directory on the CPCC Connections website is a great tool for learning more about companies attending the CPCC Career Fair. Mention that your resume was sent to them prior to the fair – it will show them you are a serious candidate.

Many employers will hand out promotional items like pens and mouse pads to entice you to come to their table. Don't load up on these items; remember the most important "freebie" you can get from an employer is their business card!

Suggestions for talking to employers Simply dropping your resume off at the employer's table will get you nowhere.

- Introduce yourself and find out all you can about each company's opportunities
- Career fairs can get busy. If you are waiting to speak to a recruiter, listen to what they are telling other job seekers, make a mental note about the speaking style and mannerisms they use, and pick up some of the their company's literature so you can learn more before you begin speaking to them.
- Speak to other job seekers around you. Find out what they are looking for at the fair and get the low-down on the employers they have already met.
- Hand your resume to recruiters after you shake hands; tell them a little bit about yourself (elevator speech!) and what you are seeking. Finish with any questions you have.
- If your dream employer is at the career fair and is hiring for your dream job, try talking to other employers first. This will allow you to practice your elevator speech before you talk to your dream employer.

Do not be alarmed if employers tell you to apply online

Some recruiters will not take your resume and will tell you to apply online instead. Applying online allows several recruiters to be able to view your qualifications. Make sure you get the recruiter's name and contact information or a business card so you can follow up with them after you apply online.

Follow up with employers after the fair to make the best impression

Immediately after the fair, jot down some notes about your conversations with recruiters while it is still fresh in your mind. Send an e-mail thank-you note to the recruiters with whom you would like to cultivate a relationship two to three business days after the fair.

Even if you are not looking for a job, Career fairs can still be a valuable experience

Career fairs are a great way to practice before you go to formal interviews. Even if you are not looking for a job now, chances are you will be in the future. Career fairs are a great way to find out about internship opportunities, learn information about a company, and gain networking contacts. Learn more about the [CPCC Career Fair](#).