DRESS FOR SUCCESS.

It’s important to dress professionally when making a first impression on an employer! “Dress for success” isn’t just a common idiom. It’s a part of shaping how employers view you.

While you do not always need to wear a formal suit or dress, you do want to make sure the details of your outfit are as tailored as the resume you’ve worked so hard on. Little details like clean, shined shoes and a watch can broadcast professionalism. If you wear jewelry or other accessories, make sure that they’re appropriate for the culture of the employer you’re aiming to meet.

One great way to make sure your look is ready to go is to devote some time to research before the fair. Look for a list of the employers attending and prioritize those you want to talk to most. Then check out their company culture, policies and dress codes to make sure your outfit works as broadly as possible.
Don’t be scared of a little pop of color! Not all professional clothes need to be black, gray or navy. You want to make sure you don’t stand out for the wrong reasons, but wearing clothes that make you feel true to yourself can give you that extra confidence boost. Also, you don’t need to worry about breaking the bank. **The outfit above was entirely thrifty!**
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. No need to bring more than a small bag or a dark, plain folder to hold resumes and any information you pick up.
EXPRESSION IS IMPORTANT.

Regardless of your gender presentation, religion, or culture, comfort and confidence are key when meeting employers. So, don’t force yourself to dress in a way that doesn’t align with your identities. If you’re worried about being discriminated against, check out the laws in your state (or the state you may move to) to see what legal protections would serve you best.

At the end of the day, your well-being is something an employer should value highly. It’s likely that working for a company that doesn’t respect your identities is not something that will work out in the long-run, so don’t be afraid to express yourself as you see fit.

For U.S. residents or workers, www.eeoc.gov is an excellent resource for locating information on equal opportunity employment.
In short – sometimes.

It never hurts to present yourself professionally, but we get that wearing a suit and heels to meet with a tech startup, interview for a creative industry, or visit a non-traditional office with a dress code of jeans and a t-shirt might feel a little over the top.

Business casual is completely appropriate for career fairs, provided that the employers you intend to talk to align to that style. If you do feel that a more casual approach is appropriate, make sure it’s still professional. A plain polo or sweater and wrinkle-free slacks are good options. The details are just as important with business casual outfits, so make sure your shoes, accessories, and hair are neat and clean.