

**Career Fair Prep Guide**

**1. Research the companies in advance**

* Take the time to research which employers will attend the fair. The attending employers are listed on Handshake.
* You may not have time to visit every employer, therefore the best strategy is to choose the companies of most interest to you and research them thoroughly ahead of time.
* Keep in mind that you cannot tell what a company or organization has to offer simply by looking at their name or product. Most companies/organizations have needs to be met in accounting, human resources, management, engineering, etc. It is up to you to be assertive in striving to match your skills and interests to companies and their needs. Clarify your goals before the career fair, so that you leave with meaningful contacts and information.

**2. Update and polish your resume**

Have at least 25 copies of your updated resume (on high quality white or ivory resume paper) prepared to hand to the representatives at the fair.

* Make sure that your resume is free of errors and has been critiqued by a career counselor.
* Include your computer skills, internships, and relevant coursework and work experiences.
* Carry your resume in a portfolio or folder with a nice pen and a pad of paper**.**

**3.** **Dress professionally to make a positive first impression!**

**Appropriate Women’s Attire Includes:**

* Business suit in a dark color with a modest blouse.
* Modest skirt, blouse and a jacket or blazer.
* Low heeled, polished dress shoes.
* Hair should be neat and away from your face.
* Make-up and jewelry should be kept to a minimum.

**Appropriate Men’s Attire Includes:**

* A business suit in a darker color.
* A lightly colored dress shirt and complementary tie.
* Dress socks and shoes with a matching belt.
* Dress shirt and tie with nice slacks and a sport coat.

**What not to wear to a career fair:**

* **NO BLUE JEANS.**
* **Remove facial piercings and cover tattoos**.
* **Heavy make-up:** You want to look natural.
* **Excessive jewelry:** Wear small earrings and rings on your hands.
* **Heels over 3 inches high:** It will affect the way you walk and your feet will thank you at the end of the day!
* **Perfume, Cologne or Aftershave:** Many people are allergic to fragrances and you don’t want your scent to be the only thing an employer remembers about you. **HOWEVER:** Do wear deodorant; it can get very warm at a Career Fair!
* **Do not wear hats** unless for religious/cultural reasons
* **No backpacks:** We will have a bag check available to you during the fair.

**4. Practice your introduction**

You have only **3 seconds** to make a first impression! So you want to present yourself as confident, pleasant, and relaxed.

* **Be sure to smile, maintain eye contact, and give a firm handshake.**
* Never give a limp or half-hearted handshake, it is considered rude.
* On the contrary, avoid giving a bone-crushing handshake. Be sure to practice this.
* **Practice introducing yourself OUT LOUD** so you are used to hearing it when you speak to an employer.

**5. Market yourself well**

Be prepared to respond to the question: **“Tell me a little bit about you”** by assuming an employer is asking “Why should we hire you?” It is a good idea to write your response down and practice before the fair.

**Develop a 30 Second Commercial** or “Elevator Speech” which is a quick synopsis of:

* Your name, major and education level:

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* Why you chose your major/what you like best about your major and classes:

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* Highlights/skills attained from past work, internship, volunteer, or student involvement experience:

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* Opportunities you are currently looking for/career goals:

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You especially want to practice your **30 Second Commercial** out loud**.** If you are uncomfortable talking about yourself you might want to ask friends or family help you by making suggestions of what to say. Other people often see the strengths and value in us that we don’t see in ourselves. Be sure to practice, practice, practice!

**6. Be prepared with questions**

**What to ask?**

Do your research on companies as suggested in Tip #1 and be prepared to ask related questions. Examples of questions include:

* **Current and future projects**
* **Company Culture**
* **Company Success**

**What not to ask!**

* **What does your company do**? (This can offend the employer and shows that you are not specifically interested in them).
* **How much do you pay?**
* **What are your benefits?**

**7. Be a good listener**

* Again, **eye contact** shows that you are listening.
* **Take notes.** This also shows you are listening and will help you with details later. There is no way that you will remember everything said to you by every employer.
* **Body language:** Keep your weight evenly distributed on both feet and your back straight. It will keep you alert and you will have a more professional presence.

**8.  Ask for business cards**

* It is important to acquire the contact information of the employers you meet at any career fair.
* If they don’t have their cards with them, write their information down on your pad of paper.

**9. Don’t forget to follow-up**

* Be sure to send a thank-you email to those employers you met and with whom you hope to get an interview. Often the hiring decision will come down to which candidate made the best professional impression.
* Also, a thank-you note puts your name in front of the employer one more time; this is a part of the self-marketing process discussed in Tip #5.

**10. Relax and have fun!**

A career fair is a wonderful opportunity to:

* Practice your interviewing skills
* Increase your network of employers
* Learn what companies are hiring UK graduates
* Meet lots of people who want you to succeed