

Job Fair Guidelines

Why should I attend a job fair?

- In a competitive job market, a job fair is a great opportunity to meet many employers in one location.
- A job fair is an investment in your future. You will most likely not get a job offer at the fair, but you will make some contacts that may benefit you in the future.
- Job fairs provide you with a chance to explore new career interests, employers, and opportunities.
- Job fairs prompt you to be proactive about your resume writing, interviewing, and networking skills.
- Job fairs provide you with an opportunity for face-to-face contact with a recruiter to ask questions and offer information that may not otherwise be included in your online application.

What should I expect at a job fair?

- Each employer is assigned a table to set up informational displays and promotional materials.
- Employer representatives answer questions and provide information about career opportunities.
- Some employers collect resumes or ask that resumes be submitted online. They will often provide company information or business cards; a few may conduct preliminary interviews.

How do I prepare for a job fair?

- Identify the skills and strengths you have to offer the employers.
- Develop a well-written resume. Make sure to print several copies on professional paper. Assemble a professional portfolio (if applicable).
- Familiarize yourself with participating organizations and research those of interest to you. Use the internet, news sources, and career fair materials to learn about the companies you plan to visit. You can impress a recruiter by knowing about his or her company's background, values, and goals.
- Prepare a list of questions you want to ask employers.

What do I do at a job fair?

- Dress professionally. Carry your resume in a professional-looking portfolio or folder. It will keep your resume neat and handy, and gives you a place to file business cards of recruiters that you meet.
- Take paper and pen with you to write down important details about particular organizations, including names of people who may not have had business cards. Take a few minutes after you leave each table to jot down these notes!
- Take the initiative to approach representatives, rather than waiting for them to approach you.
 - Offer a firm handshake, introduce yourself even if you are wearing a name tag, use good eye contact, and smile. Speak clearly, show enthusiasm, and genuine interest.
 - Prepare a 30-second "commercial" for yourself. Hand the recruiter a copy of your resume and be prepared to discuss it. Share basic information about yourself and your career interests. For example you might say, **"Hello, I'm Carrie Jones. I'm a senior at Chatham University majoring in English and I am very interested in a marketing career. I just completed an internship in the Marketing Division of ABC Company in Pittsburgh and I've taken several courses in business marketing. I'm very interested in talking with you about entry-level marketing opportunities at XYZ Media Corporation."**
- Use time wisely. Determine where employers are located and in what order to visit them. Focus on the companies that truly interest you.

- Broaden your focus and include many types of employers. For instance, you may not have considered working for a hospital, but hospitals recruit and hire professionals in many different fields (i.e., management, IT, or health care).
- Be honest and positive. For example, don't skirt the GPA issue. If you're asked, tell the recruiter your cumulative, semester, or major GPA and use the one that is the best. If you are not sure, find out. If your GPA is not stellar, explain what the problem was in the past, and how you effectively resolved it. Do not give long excuses.
- Be aware of time demands on employers. Do not monopolize an employer's time. Ask specific questions.
- Asking about salary is considered a mistake at this point. This subject should not be brought up until you are offered the position.
- Pick up business cards or company information for future contact with the organization.
- Thank the employer and ask about the next step in the recruitment process.

What do I do after a job fair?

- Take the initiative to follow-up; don't sit back and wait for employers to call you.
- Send thank you notes to all representatives who interviewed you at the fair (or those you would like to interview with) to remind them of your interest and qualifications.

What should I NOT do at a job fair?

- Do not go to booths with friends. Interact with the recruiters on your own. Make your own positive impression!
- Do not carry a backpack or large purse with you; choose a professional tote bag or briefcase. Most fairs provide an area to hang coats and umbrellas.
- Do not dress casually. A career fair is a professional activity—perhaps your first contact with a future employer.
- Do not "wing it." Do your homework! Research the companies just as you would for an interview. You'll be able to focus on why you want to work for the organization and what you can do for them.
- Avoid these phrases, "What are you hiring for?" and "Tell me about your company." According to a recent survey of employers, lacking focus/a clear career objective accounts for the most common mistake students make at job fairs. If you aren't focused on a specific career, approach recruiters by telling them what your major is and what types of positions you're interested in.

Need more information?

Visit the Career Development section of the Documents and Forms page on MyChatham for these additional resources to help you prepare:

- Resume Writing Tips
- Resume Development Worksheet
- Sample Resumes
- Portfolio Preparation Guide
- Professional Dress for Interviews and Career Fairs
- Questions to Ask Employers
- Sample Thank You Letter