

Career Fair Prep

A HILLSDALE COLLEGE CAREER SERVICES GUIDE

Career fairs are an opportunity to meet prospective employers face-to-face. The ability to have contact with a wide range of employers at one time enables you to learn about different types of opportunities, selection processes, and in some instances have or set up interviews. The contacts you make at a career fair are an excellent opportunity to develop your professional network that will further your job or internship search.

How to Prepare

1. Ensure your resume is perfect. It should be clear and concise. If you would like your resume reviewed, you can submit it on Handshake through the portal, visit a S.A.M. Monday through Thursday from 6–9 pm, or make an appointment with a Career Services staff member.

2. Plan your strategy. There is usually a list of employers available prior to the event that indicates who will be attending. Identify the organizations you want to network with and research information about those organizations.

3. Practice your introduction. Make a good first impression by having a “one-minute commercial.” This

will introduce you, allow you to demonstrate your knowledge, let the employer know why you have attended the fair, and express your interest in the company.

4. Know what you are going to ask. Have one or two questions in mind for each employer. The questions should reflect the research you have done on the employer and your interest.

5. Dress professionally. That means a suit or sport coat, slacks, and a tie for men and a suit, dress, or jacket for women.

IN THIS GUIDE

How to prepare	1
What to expect	2
What to do afterward	2
Remember the employer’s perspective	2
Do's and Don't's	2
Night-before checklist	2

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PURPOSE

Networking and Learning

“Keep in mind that all is not lost if you don’t land a job. Career fairs also offer great practice in perfecting networking and interviewing skills. Talk to as many people as you can, never underestimate the value of face time with recruiters from leading companies. And, just as importantly, listen to them, too. Pay attention to the questions you’re being asked and to the kind of information they’re offering. It’s impossible to leave without something of value.”

— Tory Johnson, *Women for Hire*

Do's and Dont's

Do:

- Ask for a business card or the best way to follow up.
- Bring a professional bag to carry give-aways, handouts, and other information.
- Prepare well-considered and intelligent questions.
- Show confidence and enthusiasm.
- Follow up and send thank-you notes after the event.

Do NOT:

- Ask the employer, "So, what do you do?"
- Walk around with a group of your friends.
- Chew gum.
- Have your cell phone on.
- Wear too much perfume, cologne, or other scent.
- Ask for an interview or a job.
- Bring your parents.
- Wear inappropriate or unprofessional clothing.
- Monopolize a recruiter's time.

What to Expect the Day of a Career Fair

- Depending on the fair, you can expect anywhere from 25 to 350 employers represented at different booths. Long lines can form, so patience is important.
- Upon arriving at a career fair, take a few minutes to understand the layout of the room and where the employers you most want to meet are located.
- When you are ready to meet with employers, it is recommended to begin with a company that is less of a priority for you. This will provide the opportunity to practice engaging and relieve nervousness.
- When you speak with an employer, maintain eye contact and introduce yourself with a firm handshake. Have questions and your "one-minute commercial" prepared.
- It is wise to keep track of the organization and representatives with whom you spoke. It is easiest to do this by taking notes after each interaction with an employer.

What to Do After a Career Fair

- It is important to follow up with the connections you made at the career fair.
- Send a brief thank-you note to those representatives you wish to speak with further. This will set the stage for future correspondence.
- You may also want to extend an invitation to connect on LinkedIn. If you do not have a LinkedIn account, it is wise to create one. Go to grads.linkedin.com to create an account.

Remember the Employer's Perspective

- Employers often use career fairs as a way to build a pool of candidates or to raise awareness of their organization among prospective employees. Do not be discouraged if they do not have an immediate opening.
- Employers may refer you back to their website to submit an application and resume instead of collecting them on site. Use the face time at the fair to gather pertinent information for application and to make a positive impression.

Night-Before Checklist

- Plenty of copies of your resume on resume paper. Half-dozen more than the number of employers you plan to visit is a good rule of thumb.
- A folder for carrying your resumes.
- Paper and pen for taking notes.
- A clean pressed professional suit.
- A specific list of employers you have researched whom you want to talk with.
- A list of prepared questions.