GUIDE TO
CAREER FAIRS

FIRST STEPS
✓ Look for upcoming career fairs through your college’s office or on HireMizzouTigers.com
✓ Research recruiters and companies that will be present at the career fair
✓ Prepare a résumé (or multiple versions of your résumé) to hand out at the career fair

WHY ATTEND A CAREER FAIR?

- To discover job opportunities
- To research organizations and industries
- To receive feedback on your résumé and fit for positions
- To meet with many recruiters at once
- To increase your chances of getting a job interview
- To network with professionals

THINGS TO DO BEFORE A CAREER FAIR

Prepare Your Résumé and LinkedIn Profile

Recruiters meet hundreds of students at a career fair, so it is vital that your résumé is in top form and your LinkedIn profile up to date. Good résumés should be professional, error-free, and highlight your transferable skills. Come visit the MU Career Center for a résumé and LinkedIn profile review to make sure they are ready for the big day!

Research Companies

Research the organizations of interest to you to gain general knowledge of and prepare questions for the companies with which you wish to speak. You can find this information in places such as:

- HireMizzouTigers.com
- Current Employees
- Your Professors
- Company Websites
- Company Annual Reports
- Trade Journals (i.e., Wall Street Journal, Fortune, Chronicle of Philanthropy)
- LinkedIn

Learn which positions are available and develop informed questions to ask regarding the company. By doing your research before the career fair, you will demonstrate a genuine interest in the company and make a stronger first impression.
Treat a Career Fair like an Interview

Many students make the mistake of not treating a career fair as seriously as they should. Prepare for the day as you would any other job interview. Interviewing tips can be found on our website at http://career.missouri.edu/resumes-interviews. As with any other interview, practice answering questions that might be asked of you. Common questions from recruiters will include:

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why are you interested in this company/position?
- What are your qualifications and relevant experiences?

Additionally, you should also prepare questions to ask of the recruiter. Here are some generic questions to help get you started:

- What qualities and background are you looking for in employees?
- What courses would you recommend someone take before being hired as a __________?
- What is the application/interviewing process like for your organization?
- Do you have a business card I could have for future reference and contact?

Student Checklist

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Things to bring with you:</th>
<th>Things to leave with:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio, folder, or briefcase</td>
<td>Business cards of recruiters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple copies of your résumé printed on high quality paper</td>
<td>Company literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing material (pen, paper)</td>
<td>Greater knowledge of career opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence!</td>
<td>Enthusiasm!!</td>
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What To Do During A Career Fair

- Keep your nerves in check. Companies are also trying to make a good impression on you!
- Look professional by wearing business attire. A general rule is to keep clothing, jewelry, and hairstyles simple and conservative. It is better to be overdressed than underdressed for a fair.
- Listen carefully to what the recruiter is saying and ask informed questions.

Strategies and Tips

Now that you're at the career fair, how should you navigate it? Here are some strategies and tips that students find helpful during a career fair.

The Walkabout Strategy.

- When you first arrive, walk around the entire room to get a feel for the layout of the fair and find out where the companies you want to speak with are located.
- If you approach a booth where a recruiter is already with a student, don't immediately get into line. Instead, take a few steps back and listen to the current conversation. This gives you the opportunity to observe the recruiter in action with another student and might give you an idea of what questions will likely be asked of you.
- As you move about the room and make eye contact with recruiters, go over and introduce yourself. You may not be familiar with the organization but it may be a great opportunity to start getting to know the company/recruiter. You never know what opportunities could come from a conversation with a recruiter. Plus, it's good practice speaking with employers.
Elevator Pitch. A great strategy for introducing yourself at a career fair developing a 30- to 60-second elevator pitch, which highlights the important facts about you that a recruiter should know. Before the fair, share your opening statement with a friend or colleague and get their feedback. Remember to practice your pitch until it feels comfortable! Your pitch should include the following information:

- Your name, year in school, major
- Opportunities you are seeking
- Relevant experience
- Knowledge of the company
- Something that makes you stand out

Example: “Good afternoon! My name is Lilly Anderson and I am a senior graduating in May with a degree in Spanish. I recently spent a semester abroad in Spain and am looking for a position where I can use my fluency in Spanish and build upon my leadership skills in a corporate setting.”

Employer Advice.

- The recruiter is interested to learn about you. Though friends may provide support, avoid travelling in groups and becoming distracted.
- Bring a portfolio or briefcase – not a backpack or shoulder bag.
- Don’t pick up so much free stuff that you are unable to shake hands or interact comfortably with the recruiters.
- Do the necessary preparation before a career fair. Don’t just “wing it”!
- Keep in mind that there may be other students waiting—keep conversations brief, but don’t cut the recruiter off. Let the conversation end naturally.
- Be confident—if you don’t seem sure of your qualifications neither will the recruiter.
- Go early. Some recruiters leave as early as a half hour before the event is scheduled to end.
- Make a personal connection with the recruiter. Recruiters see hundreds of students the day of the career fair. Making that personal connection will help the recruiter remember! Remember, they are people, too – ask them how they like being a recruiter, how travel is going, etc.

WHAT TO DO AFTER A CAREER FAIR

Even though the career fair has ended, your job isn’t quite done! Here are some follow-up tips to ensure you have made the most of your visit to the career fair:

- After the fair has ended, jot down a few notes about the organizations with which you spoke.
- Write Thank You notes! In the note, confirm your interest in the organization, highlight your skills, and inquire about the next step. You can send an email immediately afterwards, and a written note within a week of the fair.
- Keep track of contacts – write notes about your conversation on the back of business cards.
- Employers have their own hiring processes, so follow their instructions carefully. For example, while a recruiter may collect your résumé at the fair, many require applicants to submit their résumé online as well at the organization’s website.

Next Steps

- Come to the MU Career Center to talk with a Career Specialist about your job search and to schedule a mock interview.
- Visit our Handouts link on http://career.missouri.edu/resources to download other handouts in our Job Search series.