

# How to Introduce Yourself at a Job Fair



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Whether you're a college student going to a campus career fair or an experienced candidate attending a professional job fair or another networking event, your introduction is the first opportunity you'll have to make a good impression. If you're not always comfortable with putting yourself out there, talking to people you don't know well, or selling yourself to prospective employers, it may help to learn how to introduce yourself at a job fair.

## What's a Job Fair?

A job fair (also known as a career fair), provides opportunities for job seekers to meet with many employers at one event. Attendees can chat with recruiters from participating companies, learn about job openings and career opportunities, and may have the chance for a quick on-the-spot job interview.

Career fairs often offer networking programs, resume reviews, and job search workshops for job seekers, in addition to meetings with company representatives.

## How to Prepare for a Job Fair

Attending an event with lots of people you don't know can be challenging, especially if you're not the most outgoing person in the room. But it's essential to moving your career along the path you want. Don't worry: with a little preparation and practice, you'll be able to introduce yourself in a professional – and near stress-free – manner.

Remember, the people you meet with are interested in recruiting, and may be your future employer. They'll do their best to make you feel comfortable. Take some time to prepare, and you'll be able to present your credentials effectively to everyone you meet. If you know exactly what you're going to say and how you're going to say it, it will be even easier to connect with a recruiter. Review these tips for making a great first impression, and you'll be well on your way to getting the most from the job fair.

## How to Introduce Yourself at a Job Fair

**Take the time to prepare.** Don't wing it and walk into a career fair without having done anything to get ready. If you have time, consider getting a business card made up with your contact information. Make sure your resume is current (give it a quick makeover if it's not) and print out copies ready to hand out to recruiters.

**Research the companies.** If there's a list of participating companies online, check them out to see who you want to meet with. If you have a priority list of employers you'd like to connect with, you'll be able to take your time working the room and introducing yourself.

**What to bring.** A portfolio is a great way to hold everything you need to bring. Another option is a large purse, small briefcase, or a messenger bag. Be sure you can easily get your materials out of it to share with recruiters. Bring 20+ copies of

your resume and a stack of business cards, if you have one. Also bring a notepad and pen to jot down names and facts you want to remember.

**Have questions ready.** Have a list of questions you want to ask, so you're not fumbling for what to say. If time permits, check out company websites in advance so you're familiar with the participating employers. Check out the mission statement of each company of interest, as well as the openings listed on the career page. Review this list of the best questions to ask at a job fair and personalize your own list of questions.

**Have your elevator pitch ready.** An elevator pitch is a quick synopsis of your skills, background, and experience. Get yours ready in advance and practice saying it. Recruit your friends and family to listen to you for 20 - 30 seconds or so - which is as long as your pitch needs to be - and get their feedback. The more you practice it, the easier it will be to say. Review these tips for writing an elevator pitch, with examples.

**What to do when you're especially shy.** If networking really isn't your thing, consider bringing a friend, especially someone who is naturally sociable. It will be much easier if you have someone else tagging along. Also, read these networking tips for introverts before you brave a career fair.

**Check in when you arrive at the fair.** You may need to sign in at the reception area and get a name tag. Your name tag goes on your right side because you'll be shaking hands with your right hand. Having the name tag on the same side as the handshake draws the recruiter's eye to your name tag, making it easier for them to remember your name.

**Visit companies in priority order.** Make the rounds, visiting your priority companies first. That way you'll be most likely to get to meet a representative from the companies you're most interested in working for. If you have extra time, talk to other organizations too – you may find a surprise company that's a good match.

**Introduce yourself with a smile.** A smile really does make everyone feel better about themselves, and that includes the person you're introducing yourself to. Be proactive and take the initiative, tell the recruiter who you are, and offer to shake hands. A simple introduction is fine:

"Hi, I'm Amanda Jones, and I'm pleased to meet you."

"Good morning, I'm Anthony Tobias, and I'm glad to meet you."

"Hello, I'm Kimberly Smith. It's a pleasure to meet you."

**Keep it formal.** Unless you're told otherwise, address the person staffing the desk as Mr. or Ms. After you introduce yourself, be prepared to give your elevator pitch and be ready to answer a few questions. Offer a copy of your resume and your business card, if you have one. Ask the recruiter for his or her business card to take with you.

**Follow up after the fair.** Take the time to send a follow-up email. Send it as soon as you can after the fair is finished. It's a way to make another good impression on the people you meet. Here's an example of a follow-up letter to send after a job fair that you can tailor to match your own circumstances.