

Job Fair Questions Students Need to Be Prepared to Answer

by Kristen Hamlin



Always bring your "A" game to a job fair.

Jupiterimages/Photos.com/Getty Images

For students about to graduate, a career fair can provide a major boost to their job search efforts. Usually sponsored and hosted by university career services departments, career fairs allow students the opportunity to meet with recruiters from a wide variety of companies and organizations and learn more about possible jobs -- and in some cases, begin the application process. It's important to treat the career fair as seriously as you would a traditional job interview by dressing professionally, bringing your resume and coming prepared to answer questions in a way that impresses the recruiter, encouraging her to look at you more closely.

Basic Information

One of the most commonly asked questions at career fairs is the simple "Tell me about yourself." Be prepared with a 30-second response that covers your name, major, relevant skills and experience -- and the types of opportunities that you're seeking. You should also expect to answer questions about why you chose your major, what you liked most and least about your studies and what your short- and long-term goals are. Answer the questions honestly, striving to make an impression so you stand apart from all the other candidates talking to the recruiter that day.

Company Information

When you register for the job fair, or receive information about the event, chances are you'll receive a list of companies attending the event. Take some time to research the companies that you expect to meet at the fair, as it's not uncommon for recruiters to ask questions to test an applicant's knowledge of their organization. Prepare to answer questions like "Why are you interested in our company?" and "Why do you think you would be a good candidate for this position?" If you can provide specific, targeted answers that show you've done your homework, you'll make a good impression and increase your chances of landing a follow-up interview.

Skills and Experience

While most of the time, your interactions with recruiters at job fairs are limited to a few moments, if the fair is slow or the recruiter is especially interested in you, you might have the opportunity for a more in-depth conversation. Prepare to answer questions about your strengths and weaknesses, provide examples of problems you've overcome, or share information about specific projects you completed in your courses and internships. A recruiter might also ask what your expectations are for the job. For example, he might ask you to describe your ideal job, or to name three things you're looking for in an employer. Also be prepared for questions that might seem like they come from left field, such as "What is the last book you read?" These questions are designed to get to know you better as a person -- and gauge your engagement with the world around you.

Turning the Tables

Job fairs aren't only an opportunity for recruiters to get to know you, but also a chance for you to learn more about potential employers. Be prepared to ask some questions of your own in addition to answering questions. Avoid questions about pay, benefits, vacation time and how long it will take until you're promoted; instead, ask about the qualifications that the company requires and the typical career path of new recruits. Use the information from your research to develop questions. Ask how the company is responding to challenges in the market, for example, or about new projects or products. Focus on questions that show your interest in the company -- and what you can bring to them, not what they can do for you.