



Ready Reference D-5

What to Do At Career Fair

What To Do At A Career Fair

A Career Fair is an excellent forum for students and employers to meet and interact. Whether seeking an internship, Co-op, full-time position, or additional industry information, CEAT students have a wealth of opportunities available through the variety of Career Fairs hosted by OSU. Here are some tips to make your Career Fair experience a success!

Before the Career Fair:

- Have a resume completed and reviewed by CEAT Career Services. Print a sufficient quantity on resume paper, and have them ready for the recruiters. Re-read your resume before the Career Fair so you can answer questions confidently.
- Research the organizations that are registered to attend. You can view a list of companies for each career fair on the OSU Career Services web site: <https://careerservices.okstate.edu>. Target the organizations that are seeking candidates with your qualifications.
- Be prepared to ask questions. Have a list of questions prepared and practice asking them. (For a list of questions see Ready Reference G6: Asking Questions in the Interview.)
- Identify and know specific experiences where you have demonstrated your strengths.
- Know why you want to work for their organization. If you don't know, they won't either.

During the Career Fair:

There is more to going to a Career Fair than putting on your suit and having resumes in hand. You will be surrounded by company representatives of organizations where you may be interviewing and perhaps working someday. You can be certain of one thing at a career fair – you are being observed. That includes your body language, your verbal expressions and the way you interact with others. Nonverbal communication is just as important as verbal communication. Therefore, be aware of your surroundings and be cautious of how you approach people and converse with them.

- Make a positive first impression. Knowing how to initiate contact with an employer is a valuable skill (See *Ready Reference D3* for tips on first impressions).
- Dress professionally. Wearing a suit shows you have pride in your appearance and take the job search process seriously.
- Make eye contact immediately as you introduce yourself.
- Give a firm handshake to get off to a good start.

Hot Tip: For a confident handshake, lock thumbs, and then pump one to two times. You don't want a limp handshake, nor do you want to shake them to death.

- Remember the representative's name; if not, casually refer to his/her nametag.
- Smile and be polite – enthusiasm is an important quality.

Be careful of your body language. Your actions tell the employer how nervous you may be or how confident you are.

- Do not fidget or play with your hair.
- Do not rock from side to side.
- Do not look around when conversing.
- Do not chew gum.

Good communication skills are also essential to having a successful Career Fair experience. You have a limited amount of time to speak with employers and it is likely that other students will be waiting to speak with the same recruiter. You must express yourself concisely and completely within this timeframe. A few tips:

- Listen carefully to what the representative has to say. If you don't understand a statement, ask for clarification
- Hot Tip: Don't tell different employers different things – they do talk among themselves about recruits.
- Avoid using filler words such as "um", "like", and "you know."
- Show confidence in your voice. The exhibit hall may be noisy and if the recruiters can't hear you, they won't remember you.
- Speak slowly and clearly. If asked to repeat an answer, do so in a manner that is polite and understandable. You might ask what part of your answer you can explain in more detail.
- Offer your resume. You might also consider including a business card that includes your name, University, address, home address, telephone, e-mail address and graduation date.

Hot Tip: Have your resumes in a portfolio or folder. Nothing says "unprofessional" more than clearing space on the table for your backpack, then digging around inside to produce a wrinkled copy of your resume. Leather portfolios are available from OSU Career Services for \$10.

- Pick up company literature; this shows your interest in the employer, as well as providing you with valuable resources. These materials can be of great assistance in preparing for an interview, or simply for writing a letter to the company representative.
- Ask for a business card or write down the representative's name. It is also okay to ask what the hiring procedure is. You want to make sure you're doing it right. This will also guide you in timing any future communication with the organization.
- Take brief notes on the back of the business card or on the company brochure. You may want to refer to your conversation during later correspondence.
- A few additional tips for gathering information during the Career Fair will help you build your network of contacts, as well as leave a positive impression on recruiters.
- Speak with organizations that you had not considered before.
- Take initiative and engage in meaningful conversations with representatives.

Hot Tip: Representatives attend career fairs specifically to meet students and to provide information about their organizations and career fields. Don't be afraid to question them in depth and to ask if you may contact them in the future.

After the Career Fair:

- Mailing a thank you letter is not only appropriate; it can also bring attention to your name. Career Services in 360 Student Union has the business cards of all representatives if you need contact information. You can pick up free thank you cards and tips on writing thank-you letters in the CEAT Career Services office.
- You may wish to send an additional or updated resume with your thank you letter. In this way, the correspondence serves as a combination of a thank you letter and a cover letter. For cover letter tips, see Ready Reference F2.
- You may call to make sure that your application is complete. Rehearse what you plan to say beforehand. This will add confidence to your voice.
- Make sure all of your communications are professional. If you need assistance in communicating with employers, Ready Reference Set F has examples of letters addressing various issues of the job search process.

Five Things To Avoid:

- Approaching a campus recruiter when the person is talking with another student, or monopolizing a recruiter
- Starting a conversation without introducing yourself with a smile and a handshake.
- Rambling rather than asking specific questions during your few minutes with the recruiter.
- Leaving the brief meeting knowing no more than you knew when you approached the person.
- Letting the conversation continue for too long. (Recognize that the recruiters' time is valuable and end the conversation with something like: "Thank you for taking time to speak with me. I will contact you this Spring to schedule an interview as you requested.").