

# Getting results at a career fair

## What to wear to the fair

- ▶ **It's best to err on the side of more formal:** We recommend business professional. Dress for the most conservative company on your list. Don't be remembered as "the extremely under dressed one!"

### ▶ Men

- Suit – matching jacket + pants in gray, black or navy
- Shirt – light colored or lightly patterned oxford
- Tie – a little style is okay, but nothing too flashy
- Shoes – polished black or brown dress and a belt!

### ▶ Women

- Suit - two piece suit; if skirt, hemline near the knee
- Shirt - oxford, sweater or sleeveless with modest neckline
- Shoes - heels under 3 inches (no strappy shoes or sandals)
- Jewelry - small earrings, necklace and wristwatch (a classic look!)

### ▶ Notes for everyone

- Don't bring a backpack to lug around - opt for a messenger bag or purse
- Bring a pad folio with resumes and paper/pen to take notes about employers
- Visit [CareerNetwork.msu.edu](http://CareerNetwork.msu.edu) and click "Jobs + Internships" then "Appearance and Attire"

## ✓ before the fair . . .

- ▶ **Know who will be attending.** Before the fair begins, know which organizations will attend and what positions they are hiring for currently. Get this information through **Handshake**. Make a ranked list of employers that interest you.
- ▶ **Research employers of interest.** If you want to stand apart, be able to talk to the recruiter about what the organization does and how your skill set fits. At a minimum, go to their website, learn about products, services, or clients, and read the annual report. *See pages 52-54 for more ideas.*
- ▶ **Prepare your resume(s).** Make sure your resume effectively reflects your knowledge, skills, and abilities. You can have a general resume to hand out, but if you really want to make a great impression, make different versions of your resume that target the specific industry or job that interests you. Make sure you give the right resume to the right organization! (*See pages 32-39.*)
- ▶ **Develop your elevator pitch.** You only have about 30 seconds to make an impression with a recruiter, so you need to be able to quickly introduce yourself and let them know your interests and qualifications. Practice a short 30-second to one-minute story that you can present easily while still sounding natural. Things to include:
  - Your name
  - Your MSU program/major (optional)
  - When you're graduating
  - What you're looking for (more information, full-time employment, an internship or co-op, etc.)
  - Your area of interest within the organization and how your skills (or personal qualities or experience) relate to that area.

## ✓ . . . at the fair . . .

- ▶ **Get organized.** Pick up a map showing where organization booths are. You might also want to take a quick walk through the space to get a feel for the layout of the fair. *Then what? . . .*
- ▶ **They're watching you!** Keep in mind that the moment you enter the fair, recruiters are watching you. They take note of how you dress, how you behave, and how you interact with your friends and with other recruiters.
- ▶ **Approach an organization.** It can be intimidating to approach and introduce yourself to a recruiter. Students often say introductions at career fairs are "weird," "unnatural," or "forced." It helps if you remember the recruiter is here to meet you, so don't be shy! Offer a firm handshake, and then share your elevator pitch. Remember, be direct. If you're interested in a certain position, let them know.
- ▶ **TIP:** Depending on time and crowds, you might want to consider approaching an employer towards the bottom of your list to start off. This gives you an opportunity to actually use your prepared introduction with a real recruiter and work out any nervousness before you visit the employers you're most interested in, where you want to be relaxed and confident.
- ▶ **Talk to the recruiter.** Don't talk over their shoulder or at the free stuff that they're giving away! Make eye contact and don't be afraid to let your enthusiasm show. Being truly passionate about the employer and the opportunities they have to offer can make all the difference.
- ▶ **Gather information and be respectful of the recruiter's time.** The truth is that most people at career fairs use them as an opportunity to gather information. This is perfectly fine and a great reason to go if you're not looking for a full-time job or internship. Remember, career fairs are all about networking, and recruiters love to see 1st- and 2nd-year students at fairs asking questions. It shows that the student is thinking about and making connections for the future!
- ▶ **If you're at the fair to try to land a job, recruiters need to know you've done your research and are ready to go.** While speaking with recruiters, be courteous to them and your fellow students by keeping your conversations short and purposeful.
- ▶ **Finally, make sure that you get the names of the recruiters you talk to and, if possible, get their business cards.**

## ✓ . . . after the fair . . .

- ▶ **Follow up.** If, during your conversation with a recruiter, you promised to follow up with more information (website link, portfolio, writing sample, etc.) then make sure that you get the information out right away.
- ▶ **Send thank-you notes.** Send a thank-you note within 24 hours to everyone you talked to. This is a little thing that really makes a difference! Almost everyone has the intention, but very few actually get around to it. Don't know what to write? *See information on thank-you letters on page 45 or at [CareerNetwork.msu.edu](http://CareerNetwork.msu.edu).* It doesn't have to be fancy—the point is to remind them of who you are and let them know you're serious about your job search.

