



Career Services Guide to Career Fairs

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WHAT IS A CAREER EXPO?

The purpose of a Career Expo is to bring students and alumni together with potential employers to explore opportunities and network with employers. Employers are seated either behind separate tables and provide information about internship and employment opportunities. When there are openings available at the company, hiring managers or recruiters may accept resumes and have a short interview with an attending student.

The following information is provided to help you maximize your success at Career Expos.



RSVP
HIRECAIMANS, SYMPPLICITY



HOW TO MAKE A CAREER EXPO WORK FOR YOU

Do Your Research: Before attending a career expo or job fair, it's important to do your research. Find out which employers will be in attendance and what types of positions they are looking to fill. Research the companies that interest you and come prepared with questions about the organization, its culture, and how your skills fit their needs.

Dress for Success: When attending a career expo or job fair, make sure you dress professionally. Wear clothes that are appropriate for the type of job you are seeking and make sure they are clean and pressed. This will help create a good impression when meeting potential employers.

Bring Copies of Your Resume: It's important to bring copies of your resume when attending a career expo or job fair so that employers can get an idea of who you are and what you have to offer. Make sure your resume is up-to-date with any recent accomplishments or certifications, as well as contact information for references.

Network with Other Attendees: Career expos provide an excellent opportunity to network with other professionals in your field or related fields. Introduce yourself to other attendees and exchange business cards if possible; this could lead to valuable connections down the line.

Basic types of interviews that take place at a Career Expo. As you watch and listen, you will be able to determine which type of interview is being conducted and modify your approach accordingly. The following are the three basic types:

1. **Screening Interview.** This interview usually lasts no more than two to three minutes and is usually conducted by companies whose main interest is gathering resumes. Your strategy should be to quickly direct recruiters to the key areas in your resume that reflect their needs. Ask for a business card and inquire as to the next step.
2. **Mini Interview.** Lasts five to ten minutes and is conducted at the employer's booth. Be prepared to give a full introduction of your background and quickly position yourself as someone who is a good fit in relation to the company's needs. Ask for a business card and inquire as to the next step.
3. **Full Interview.** Usually takes place mostly at large Career Expos and happens behind a curtain or screen at the employer's booth, or away from the employer booth. This interview takes place after an employer has already spoken to you and is interested in getting more information. Be prepared for a 30 minute interview. At the end of the interview, if you are truly interested, let the interviewer know and ask what the next step will be. At this point, assume that the interviewer is also interested.



GUIDELINES FOR SUCCESSFUL CAREER EXPO ATTIRE

- Wear a conservative color two-piece business suit, such as solid navy, black or gray. Subtle pin stripes and plaids are the next best.
- Conservative long-sleeved shirt/blouse, preferably white or pastel is acceptable.
- Clean, polished conservative shoes with no scuffmarks and run-down heels.
- Well-groomed conservative hairstyle.
- Clean, trimmed fingernails.
- Minimal use of cologne or perfume.
- Small, light briefcase or portfolio case (no back packs or shopping bags). The amount of information you pick up at a **Career Expo** can sometimes be overwhelming. A briefcase gives you a mini-office from which to operate and provides a more professional appearance.
- Empty pockets of large or noisy items such as coins or keys.
- Do not use cigarettes, gum or candy before or during the interview.
- No cell phones, two-way pagers, cd players or other electrical devices.
- Silk conservative pattern necktie.
- Dark socks, preferably black. Never wear white socks.
- Dark black lace-ups shoes are best.
- A leather belt that matches the color of your shoes and has a small buckle is acceptable.
- Get a haircut. If you have long hair keep it as neat as possible.
- Clean shaved face. Remove beards and mustaches, but if you must they should be neat and trimmed.
- Do not wear rings other than a wedding or college ring.
- Acceptable skirt length is generally at the knee.
- No revealing, ruffles, frills or see-through blouses.
- No high heels, open-toe shoes or sling backs. Heels should be 2 inches or less.
- Wear conservative hosiery close to skin color. Bring an extra pair for an emergency.
- Carry a briefcase, no small or large purses.
- Use minimal makeup it should not be too visible.
- Wear no more than one ring on each hand.
- Wear one set of small earrings only, such as small hoops or pearls

Keep your attire conservative so that the focus is on you and not your clothing.

If you need assistance ask about discount shopping resources.

The Career Services Office also has a “Caiman Professional Wardrobe,” where you can get a free suit (Limited availability)!

What to Wear to the Career Expo



Picture from Prior Job Fairs



BEFORE THE CAREER EXPO

- **RSVP on HIRECAIMANS, Symplicity and visit Career Services to pick up your ticket.** The Events tab allows students to view and RSVP to upcoming events presented by the Career Services Office.
- **Polish your resume.** Your appearance and your “resume,” are your marketing tools. A resume gives you a chance to describe your experiences and qualifications in the most professional manner possible. **As a student registered with Career Services, you have a professional resume ready for your job search.** If you do not have a resume already prepared, be sure to have one written and reviewed prior to attending a career fair. Some employers will collect resumes and some will refer you to their online application. Have a resume that is clear, concise (one page is preferred), easy to review by a reader within a short amount of time. Be sure you have enough copies for the number of companies you wish to visit and a few extras. Refer to our Resume Guide for more information.
- **Review your resume.** Strange as it sounds, you should be familiar with the information on your resume and be prepared to talk about your experience and skills in detail. Know how your experience, education and interests relate to the position and anticipate possible questions.
- **Research the employers you plan to visit at the Career Expo.** Obtain a list of participating companies from the Career Expo sponsor and identify the employers that interest you. Learn as much as you can about the size, location, products/services, competitors, culture, history, and benefits by reading company literature. Visit company websites, and don't hesitate to request information directly from the companies.
- **Prepare a script of your qualifications and experience to introduce yourself.** In one minute or less, you need to introduce yourself, demonstrate your knowledge of the company, express enthusiasm and interest and relate your background to the company's need, if possible. Be comfortable with your script so that you present yourself in an intelligent and organized fashion but don't memorize. **Choose at least five major skills you would most like recruiters to remember after the Career Expo.**
- **Examples of skills to get you started:** *organized, reliable, motivated, patient, responsible, problem solver, patient care, loyal, flexible/adaptable, computer proficient, multitask, leadership, honesty, team player, analytical, dedicated, creative etc.*

List your best five skills

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

- **Practice skill statements.** Rehearse your skill statements aloud in front of a mirror. Practice with friends and family members. If you need additional assistance arrange a mock interview with a Career Services staff member.
- **Prepare Career Expo materials.** When participating in Career Expos, always take **at least twenty copies of your resume on bond paper and keep it in a portfolio or folder** to keep the files neat and clean. Prepare a list of questions to ask. ([See questions to ask the employer, p. 11](#)).



THE NIGHT BEFORE

(Preparing the night before prevents last minute panic)

- Make sure your Career Expo suit is clean and pressed.
- Organize your briefcase/portfolio case to include at least twenty copies of your resume, list of questions to ask the employer, address and directions to the Career Expo, notepad, pen and other relevant items.
- Prepare a list of questions. Questions may range from specifics about the organizations to work tasks of typical positions. Based on your research, determine what you need to learn about the employer to decide if you are interested.
- Get to bed early to wake up refreshed.
- Make sure your nails are clean and manicured.
- Confirm childcare plans. Make alternative arrangements in case you need it.
- Check the weather forecast for the next day to see if you need an umbrella or coat.
- Check that you have at least 2 pairs of new or nearly new hosiery at or close to skin color.
- Put an extra pair of hosiery at or close to skin color in your briefcase/portfolio case.
- Plan how you will wear your hair and make up. Make up should be minimal and hairstyle conservative.
- Make sure your nails are conservative in length and color.
- Clean shave your face; remove beards and mustaches or trim neatly.
- Shoes should be polished.

THE DAY OF THE CAREER EXPO

First Impressions

- Image is crucial at a **Career Expo** since decisions are made quickly. It is important that you wear business attire.
- Arrive with plenty of time to visit all employer tables you are interested in. The very best time to attend is early in the morning and then again late in the day. By arriving early, you can usually beat long lines and meet with the most popular companies first. During the “prime time mid-day crunch,” you can usually expect long lines and lack of quality time with the recruiters.
- Don’t just drop your resume on an employer’s display table. Get it into a recruiter’s hand and introduce yourself with a firm handshake. Give the recruiters a neat, stain free resume and application (if necessary).
- Listen. While waiting in line, you will have the opportunity to listen to employers. You can hear what questions other candidates are asking and the responses to these questions.
- Act professionally. Introduce yourself and use a firm handshake and genuine smile to begin the conversation. Do not interrupt others that are in conversation.
- Answer questions directly and concisely. The conversation should be two-sided, with both parties asking questions and providing information.
- Ask well-thought out questions from the list you prepared. You may think of additional questions as you circulate through the fair.
- Take notes. You will be able to use these after the fair to assess your interest in certain organizations or compare organizations.

- Be positive. Even if an employer doesn't sound like a good fit for you, be gracious and thank them for their time.
- Collect business cards and company literature. You will be able to use these to do further research as well as to send an application or thank you note after the fair.
- Network. Keep an open mind while you talk to employers, as they may be able to provide you with resources, ideas and contacts.
- Stand up straight, relax, show enthusiasm, and **SMILE!** Have fun and enjoy meeting other people. Your enthusiasm may translate into employment.
- Maintain good eye contact it shows interest and confidence.
- Walk confidently and with good posture.
- **Do not** bring your children or other relatives to the Career Expo.
- **Do not** eat or drink while circulating through the booths.

Communication Tips

- Organize your thoughts and ideas before speaking
- Don't interrupt when someone else is speaking
- Listen attentively—Take notes to help you remember
- Ask questions to clarify
- Keep an open mind to others' ideas

An example of a good greeting:

"Hello, I'm Linda Smith. I'm a business major and will graduate in June. I'm glad to see your company here and would like to ask you ..."

Communication

- In most Career Expos, you are given a **list of companies and/or a floor plan**. Take a few minutes to review the information and make a schedule or plan as to the employers you will visit. Walk around the entire room to get a feel for the layout and where each employer is located.
- **Don't approach your first-choice employer(s) upon entrance. Perform a "dry run" with one of your secondary employers. This will enable you to relax and provide you an opportunity to practice interviewing.**
- Listen and answer the questions that you are asked. Be brief and concise.
- Pause and plan an organized response before answering a question. Try not to fill silences with nervous responses.
- Don't answer questions with a simple "yes" or "no." Whenever possible use specific examples that support your answer.
- Showcase the research you have done on the company and industry when responding to questions. Use proper grammar. Avoid using pause words (such as "like," "uh," and "um").
- Ask insightful questions about the job, company, or industry. Ask how the position fits into the department and the department into the company.
- **Don't inquire about salary, vacations, bonuses, or anything that you can get from the Internet.**
- If a table of an employer that you are interested in is too crowded, write a note on your resume to the effect of, "you were so busy that we didn't get a chance to meet. I'm very interested in talking to you." Look around the display for the recruiter's business card and send a follow-up note and another copy of your resume.
- While waiting in line, try to pick up materials from the company table. Read this information so that you are prepared and knowledgeable about the company when your turn comes.
- Network! Talk to other people waiting in line. Ask them about companies they have already visited. This is a good way to find out which companies are good and which are not. Remember to listen.

ASSERTIVENESS, THE WINNING ATTITUDE ON A CAREER EXPO INTERVIEW

Assertiveness is the ability to communicate with others in a clear and direct manner.

It can be applied to many situations, but can be an important factor in performing well at interviews. In interviews, assertive behavior will help you to come across as a confident candidate who is likely to be able to get things done. Assertiveness can be demonstrated with: a firm clear voice, eye contact with the interviewer, being relaxed rather than nervous, an open body posture (e.g. don't have your arms and legs folded tightly) saying what you want to say using simple, clear language in a direct open manner.

If you are assertive, you:

- Say "No" to the requests of others in a firm but polite way when you don't want to do as they say.
- Avoid being manipulated or put off by others.
- Listen better to what others are saying.
- Stand up for your rights.
- Ask for what you want.
- Achieve "win-win" situations where both parties are happy with the outcome of the situation.

Being assertive helps you to exercise more control over your life and relationships, and thus may help to increase your self-confidence. It helps you to reduce the stress in your life as you are less bothered about the opinions of others. Non-assertive behavior can lead to loss of respect from others and loss of self-respect in the long term.

**On an attitude continuum,
assertive behavior falls in between passivity and aggressiveness.**



“ummm..... I’m not sure why I’m the best.”

I feel I am well suited for this position because.....

“You WILL hire me!”

A **Passive** interviewee will not present their skills with confidence and display less energy and passion for the job. If you tend to be passive you let others get their own way in most situations and don't stand up for your rights. An interview is not the place to demonstrate your humility; it is the time to demonstrate who you are and why you are the best for the position. The employer will be reluctant to hire a passive candidate who appears less interested and motivated.



An **Aggressive** interviewee comes across too strong and may overwhelm the employer. If you tend to be aggressive, you may get what you want frequently, but may upset people. This may hinder your progress in the long run. Confidence is important, but being perceived as a threat is a definite disadvantage. If the interviewer is afraid or intimidated, you will not get hired.

QUESTIONS THE EMPLOYER MAY ASK

What are you looking for here at the job fair?

This is the most common introduction question at a job fair. “A job” is not an acceptable answer. You should have a clear and succinct description of exactly what you are looking for. If you have done research, what you are looking for should match with what the employer is looking for. After you have told the recruiter what you are looking for, ask “what type of candidates are you looking for here today?” This has established common ground and is a good opening for you to tell the recruiter how “you are an excellent candidate.”

What are your goals?

Focus on short term and intermediate goals rather than long-term goals. For example, “my immediate goal is to work in a customer service-oriented company. My long-term goal will depend on the direction the company is going. Eventually, I hope to grow into a position with more responsibility.

Tell me about yourself?

Now is your chance to “sell yourself.” Talk about your accomplishments, skills and experience. Do not talk about your childhood, family, hobbies or interests. Prepare a script of five strengths that are relevant to the job (experience, skills, traits etc.) Practice with the script until you feel confident but do not memorize.

What are your weaknesses?

Minimize your weaknesses and emphasize your strengths. Concentrate on professional traits and stay away from personal qualities: “I am sometimes nervous when presenting to a large audience. I recently joined toastmasters and have gained more confidence in my presentations.”

Why are you interested in working for this company?

This is your opportunity to show the interviewer you have done your research. For example, “I have selected this company because it’s mission fits closely with my values. I know I will be excited about what the company does.”



QUESTIONS TO ASK THE EMPLOYER **(Invest five to ten minutes asking some of these questions)**

- What is a typical day like at this job?
- What types of projects will I be working on?
- How is an employee in this position evaluated?
- What type of training would I receive?
- When can I expect to hear from you?
- What characteristics best describe individuals who are successful in this position?
- What are the challenges that face this company in the next year?
- How does this position fit into the overall organization?
- How does the company promote personal and professional growth?

CLOSING THE CAREER EXPO INTERVIEW

- Thank the recruiter for his/her time with a firm hand shake and restate your interest in the job.
- Ask the recruiter about the next step in the process. When you can expect to hear from him/her.
- Get business cards from the recruiter (s) or the correct spelling of the first and last names.

FOLLOW UP (After the Career Expo interview)

The absolutely last critical step of the Career Expo is to follow up. Very few students follow up with employers and this can give you an edge over students that do not.

- **Keep a Career Expo interview journal.** Immediately write notes to remember important details when you write your thank you letters. Record any follow up action you should take and put dates on your calendar. Review your performance and keep a journal of how you answered questions and what needs improvement.
- **Write thank you letters** within 24 hours to each employer who interviewed you. Thank the recruiter(s), summarize what you learned from the Career Expo interview, reaffirm your interest in the job and request a meeting to further discuss how your skills can benefit the organization. This should be e-mailed or sent on LinkedIn the same day or next day. Make sure you know the most appropriate method of reaching the employer, whether by mail or email. Sample thank you letters are available in the Career Services website.
- **Wait the allotted period of time** mentioned during the Career Expo interview for the company to contact you. This may be a few days or a few weeks.
- **If you haven't heard from the company within the time period specified.** Contact the recruiter at the number on the business card and if you are unable to reach the recruiter leave a message. Mention your name, the date and time of the Career Expo interview, the position you are interested in and inquire about the status of the position.

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND:

- You get only one chance to make a great first impression!
- Rarely, if ever, are employers going to extend an offer at a career fair. Do not expect it!
- Career fairs offer the opportunity to present yourself to potential employers, and the opportunity for you to interview them!
- Be confident!

THINGS TO AVOID:

- Unprofessional/inappropriate attire
- Not asking the employer any questions
- Questions about salary
- Lack of goals or career direction, preparation of questions, enthusiasm or interest in a company
- Taking the freebies and walking away
- Poor communication skills (eye contact, speech, interrupting others, weak handshake)
- Waiting until the end of the fair to arrive



CAREER EXPO CHECKLIST

- Research participating employers
- At least 20** copies of your resume on bond paper in a folder or portfolio.(Visit your Career Services office for assistance in reviewing/printing your resume)
- Have your CUNY ID
- Select appropriate professional business attire
- Pen and pad to take notes on
- Review your resume thoroughly to be able to talk about experience confidently
- Prepare a list of questions to ask the interviewer (p.11)
- Confirm the date, time, and location of the Career Fair