

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT URBANA - CHAMPAIGN

**HOW TO PREPARE
FOR A CAREER FAIR**

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Why Attend a Career Fair?

- To meet and network with company representatives- in person
- To learn more about companies of interest
- Explore possible career options
- Potentially secure chance to interview following day
- Possibly secure an internship/job!



Top Seven Career Fair Mistakes

(as reported by employers)

1. Lacking focus, not knowing what type of position to look for (also admitting, “I’ll take anything,” or other similar statements)
2. Not dressing professionally and/or not bringing a résumé
3. Lacking knowledge of a company and/or confusing company with a competitor



Mistakes Cont.

4. Lacking enthusiasm or interest
5. Asking about salary
6. Not asking any questions or asking inappropriate questions
7. Having a poor or unprofessional attitude



Before the Career Fair

- Know your objectives & be prepared to speak to them
- Know your skills and strengths and think of examples to demonstrate those skills
- Practice your answers to:
 - “What are you looking for at the job fair?”
 - “Tell me about yourself.”
 - “Why are you interested in Company X?”
 - “What makes you a fit for this position?”



The Pitch: Your Introduction

- Short but impressive and confident introduction designed to market yourself
- May be tailored to the company of interest
- Includes some of the following:
 - Name
 - Year in school and/or when expected to graduate
 - What type of employment/position you are looking for
 - Strongest skills, accomplishments and/or unique contributions you will bring
 - Why this matters to the company of interest



The Pitch- Do's & Don't's

EXAMPLE



The Pitch: Your Introduction

“My name is Anna Chan and I am a senior in microbiology. I have an outstanding academic record and have worked the last two summers as a pharmacy tech intern at Walgreens where I developed strong communication, teamwork and customer service skills. I am very interested in Eli Lilly and would love to hear more about the pharmaceutical sales rep position you have available as I believe I would be an excellent fit for this position.”

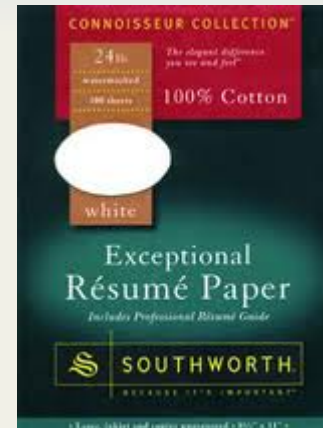


Practice Your Pitch

- Hand out pitch worksheet
- Spend 2-3 minutes developing
- Have someone demonstrate



Prepping: Resumes & Other Materials



ILLINOIS Student Job Search Card

JOSEPH SMITH

Speech and Hearing Science, PhD, 2009
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign



STUDENT

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Look the Part

Grooming

- Comb hair (should be away from the face)
- Remove any lint, check for stitched flaps, and make sure collars are down etc.

Presentation

- Store over-the-shoulder bags or backpacks- cumbersome and distracting
- Carry a leather portfolio to hold resumes, business cards, pens, and handouts



Look The Part

NO

Maybe
with tie
and jacket

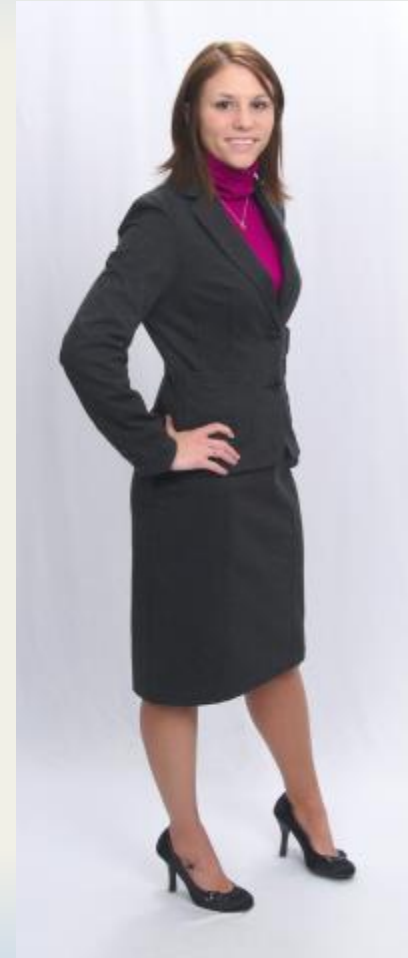
YES



Look The Part

NO

YES



Research Companies

- I-Link
- Lexis-Nexis (Hoovers.com) or Glassdoor
- Specific company websites
- Network (earlier grads, friends, family, etc.)
- LinkedIn



Prepping Based on Your Goals

- Create a strategic list separating companies into Lists: “A” (must see) and “B” (would like to see) “C” (can see if enough time)
- Now determine what are the skills you bring and what is the fit with each of the companies on your list.

Prepare Questions to Ask

- What do you like best about working for company X?
- What skills do you find most marketable in your industry today?
- What advice do you have for me in regards to entering the industry
- Can you describe a typical day?
- Can you describe your corporate culture?

Before the Fair- PRACTICE

- Be sure to use a firm handshake, and make eye contact with your introduction
- The pitch- practice until it sounds natural to both you and the other party



At the Career Fair

- Demonstrate familiarity with the organization
- Enunciate clearly, use proper grammar, and speak loudly enough to be heard (w/o shouting)
- Make eye contact and present a firm handshake
- Don't chew gum, use a cell phone, fidget, etc.
- Smile & be polite
- Remember the recruiter's name



At the Career Fair

- Listen first...try not to just focus on what you're going to say
- Show confidence in your voice... avoid using fillers and remember you are in a loud, distracting room



Maintain the Right Attitude

- Not all companies have immediate openings.
- Don't ask, "What jobs do you have for me?"
- Keep an open mind to organizations.
- View a career fair as a networking event.
- Be assertive and approachable, take initiative.
- Be conscientious when taking 'freebies.'



Make a Navigational Plan

- Get your bearings upon entering the room
- Been to a Career Fair before?
 - Head for your favorite employer and make sure he/she knows their company is #1 on your list)
- First time?
 - Start with one of your others and get warmed up and then head to your favorite...
- Don't waste time waiting in line
 - Go to your next choice and come back later (or at the end)



Dealing with Common Issues

- How do you respond when an employer says, “Please apply online...”
- If an employer told you to apply through I-Link, but you do not meet the screening criteria, is there anything you can do?

The Next Steps...

- Learn what's going to happen next
- Ask what, if anything, you can do to advance your candidacy
- Obtain business cards and send thank-you notes!



Questions?

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