

PREPARING FOR VIRTUAL CAREER FAIRS

Job and career fairs are just one of the many ways that communities and organizations highlight employers who are seeking employees. While they often take place in-person, certain situations may arise (e.g., a global pandemic) that prohibit people from physically gathering for these events. But the use of technology has allowed these events to shift to an online format. Virtual job and career fairs are different from their in-person equivalent, but still have the same goals of connecting job seekers with prospective employers and helping them learn about companies and available positions. Virtual career fairs will differ depending on the organization hosting the event and the software that is being used. Some might feature virtual booths with simple explanations of what each employer does and who they are hoping to hire. Others might feature more in-depth experiences, with drop-in chat sessions and opportunities to video chat with recruiters. Be sure to read the event description for any key information on what to expect.

No matter what situation you find yourself in—virtual or in-person—it’s important to be prepared and set yourself up for success when attending a career fair. Here are a few tips for before, during, and after to help you successfully prepare.

Before

- Register ahead of time, and note the time zone of the event. Once you are registered, add it to your calendar or planner with a reminder. Check back often for updates to participating employers.
- Check your technology and software, and make sure you have a secure and reliable internet connection.
- Update your résumé, and research the companies and organizations that will be in attendance.
- Practice your introduction and pitch, and prepare questions to ask.

During

- Dress professionally—wear what you would to an in-person event!
- Make sure your background is not distracting, find a quiet place with minimal noise, and use headphones if you have them.
- Use clear, professional business communication—much of the communication will take place via chat functions, so don’t forget to address individuals properly and to use correct grammar.
- Demonstrate confidence through strong body language—make eye contact, speak clearly, and avoid slouching.
- Take notes as you listen to recruiters—use the notes you take to develop questions to understand more about your potential role at the company. These notes will also help you to articulate how you will be a valuable part of their team (describe how your experience translates to their goals).
- Ask for next steps and contact information—make sure to write down names and ask for the best method of communication when reaching out. *For example: “I’ve really enjoyed learning more about your company. I’d love to learn about your upcoming job opportunities. How should I stay in touch? May I email you directly if I have questions?”*

After

- Send thank-you notes to each employer you visited with, within 24 hours of the fair.
- Be sure to mention specifics that you talked about, and let them know you wish to add them to your network or connect on LinkedIn. *For example: “I found our brief conversation quite enjoyable and would love to stay updated on the work that you’re doing.”*