

# 8 Tips for Preparing for a Job Fair

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**D**uring the school year, many colleges and universities hold job fairs for their students. If you don't know when the next job fair is or you are looking for one specific to teachers, head to your career center to find out.

To ease you into the job fair experience, here are eight tips that will help you get ready for your next job fair and maximize your opportunities while you're there.

## 1. Dress for success

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, approximately 20 percent of job seekers find jobs at career fairs. Therefore, first impressions count. Your interview process may begin the moment you step into the fair.

Arrive at the job fair in professional attire. For males, this may include a clean suit, shirt, and tie. If you do not own a suit, wear clean dress pants with a button-up shirt and a tie, or a nice sweater. A variety of ties are acceptable to wear, but keep in mind that muted, solid colors, stripes or small patterns are preferred.

Females can wear suits as well in neutral or dark colors, such as black, navy, brown or grey. For a job fair, it is acceptable to wear a sweater set with a skirt, a dress, or dress pants rather than a full suit. It is important to remember that skirts and dresses be knee length.

Additionally, wear comfortable dress shoes. You will be on your feet and walking around the job fair. For males, make sure your socks are a dark color – never white – when wearing dress shoes. For females, it is

professional to wear neutral hosiery if wearing a dress or a skirt.

## 2. Prepare your elevator pitch

Prepare and practice your one-minute elevator pitch to prospective school districts/organizations. Your pitch may include your name, major, career interests, prior work experience, and information connecting your background to a school district's needs.

Similarly, when a school district asks you what type of position you are seeking, your answer shouldn't be "anything." Think about teaching positions you are looking for and what excites you most about entering the classroom.

## 3. Show initiative

Take initiative and introduce yourself with a handshake and a smile to school district representatives. Follow this by handing the representative your resume, then launch into your elevator pitch.

## 4. Network and collect information

Review pre-registered school districts/organizations before attending the job fair. For example, research their website and current job openings. Gathering information ahead of time will help you target the school district recruiters that you want to meet and collect further information from. Likewise, get to know less familiar districts at the fair. They may have unexpected opportunities that you might be very interested in.

Lastly, keep a file of all the contacts you have made at the job fair and include the school district/organization name, the date, and the place where you met. You may be attending more than one fair so looking back on this information will be very helpful during follow-up communication or while completing the application process.

## 5. Bring extra

Before attending any job fair, it is essential to gather core items, including a portfolio with notepad and pen, research notes on the school districts, and copies of your resume.

Find the number of school districts/organizations prior to the job fair to determine the number of resumes to bring, and then bring extra. Organizations may have more than one representative at the fair, and all may want to receive a copy of your resume when speaking with you.

## 6. Ask questions

When you speak to a school district recruiter, you should ask about job opportunities, the application process, qualifications, and career development opportunities.

## 7. Show respect to fellow candidates

School districts and organizations are usually given one table for two representatives at a job fair. They are just as excited to meet you as you are to meet them. As a result, these recruiters want to spend time meeting potential candidates and may incur a line during the process.

Be patient, show respect to the line, and be professional. If you get stuck in a line, take the time to practice your elevator speech in your head or take out a fresh copy of your resume. If you don't want to wait in a line, move on to the next table and remember to come back to visit those you've missed.

## 8. Say thank you

After a representative takes the time to get to know you at a job fair, say thank you.

Since you have collected the organization's contact information, send an email or note after the job fair. Thank them for their time, acknowledge any opportunities you may be interested in, include a copy of your resume, and, if requested, provide any additional information.