

Monthly tips and resources featured in **What's Next?** are created for young adults, their families, and supporters who are exploring options for life after high school in Indiana.

## How to Make the Most of a Job Fair

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Job fairs are an excellent way to explore career opportunities and meet prospective employers. A job fair can be valuable to job seekers not only when they are searching for their first career but also down the road when they are looking for a new job.

A job fair also gives students a place where they can practice communication and networking skills. Writing a résumé, small talk with employers, and preparing for interviews are new skills for many students. Job fairs let you learn from mistakes and then start fresh at the next employer's table.

### 10 tips to job fair success

1. **Have a goal**

Whatever your goal—to market yourself, collect employer information, apply for a job, interview for a job on the spot—it is important to know it before the event. Focus and obtain the results you want.

2. **Have a plan**

When you know who the employers are at the event, plan who you want to see first and who you want to spend the most time with. Have questions ready for each, and ensure you put the most effort into the employers you are most interested in.

3. **Dress professionally**

The way you appear matters. Make sure your clothes are neat and fit well. It might be warm, and you will be talking to a lot of people, so a good deodorant and breath mints are recommended.

4. **Talk to other people**

Make conversation with other job seekers. You never know: Someone could give you a tip or provide an important connection. Building relationships and networking are essential skills to learn and can help you find a job.

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5. **Do background research**

If the event organizer provides a list of the businesses that will be present, learn a little about what they do. Employers will be impressed.

6. **Practice interactions**

The more you meet employers and practice networking, the easier it becomes. Practicing handshakes, making eye contact, and honing your “elevator pitch”—*briefly* explaining who you are and what your skills are—are important keys to building your confidence. You will also want to practice asking the employer what the next step is in the hiring process.

7. **Bring needed items**

Copies of your résumé, pen, and paper to take notes, and your contact information are important items to bring to the job fair. You don't want to be unprepared.

8. **Bring a friend**

Bringing a friend can help you feel confident. You'll go solo as you meet and talk with employers, but having a friend to talk to between meetings can be a good support.

9. **Be prepared to adapt**

It is important to be ready for whatever question an employer may ask. You may also need to go to a different location to meet with them, need to find information on the internet, or need to talk to someone over the phone or online. Being able to adapt is important for a successful job search (and life in general).

10. **Send thank you notes**

After the fair is over, sending thank you notes to the employers you met is a good follow-up. This will remind the employers of who you are and why they should hire you.

Job fairs can be a great way to explore your career options. Keeping these tips in mind will make the most out of going to these events.

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*What's Next?* is a project of the Center on Community Living and Careers and the Indiana Department of Education.

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