

Western Michigan University

Career and Student Employment Services

Virtual Job Fair and Interview Resource Guide



Types of interviews

Telephone or conference

A recruiter or hiring team schedule an interview which is conducted over the phone or scheduled through a conferencing service provider. You answer questions which will determine if you advance to the next step in the employers hiring process.

In-person

A one-on-one, or group, interview between you and a recruiter or hiring team. You are asked questions about your work experience, personality, and competencies to determine if you are the optimal candidate for the job.

One-way video

A recruiter or hiring team sends you interview questions and you record your answers on video using a phone or video camera and send your video to the employer for review.

Virtual

A live cloud-based video, instant messaging program, or web-conference service, where you and the recruiter, or hiring team, connect face to face by webcam. The structure is the same format as an in-person interview.

Attending a virtual job fair

How does a virtual job fair differ from an in-person fair?

- Virtual and traditional job fairs are very similar. With both, employers register to attend a job fair because they want to engage with, interview and potentially hire student candidates.
- Students attend because they are hoping to be offered a position. The only difference between the two types of events is that a virtual job fair is held on an interactive platform in an online format using a computer or phone.
- Preparation for both types of events is very similar.

What to expect when participating in a virtual job fair?

- To attend a virtual event, you will be asked to register. Once registered, you will be given instructions on how to join the online job fair.
- Virtual job fairs are like online discussion posts. Most have a format where each employer has their own “chat room” and you choose if you want to enter to engage in a discussion. When you enter, the employer receives a notification and a representative will greet you via a chat function.
- Sometimes, you may be the only person in a chat room with an employer, but most of the time, others will also be having conversations with representatives that you can view. Employers want student participants to be engaging, so if a conversation interests you, it is acceptable to chime in.
- You also have the option to speak privately with an employer if you want to ask about available opportunities, discuss your experience and qualifications, etc. If an employer requests it, you may be invited to video chat face to face.

In many ways, virtual job fairs mirror in-person fairs. Now that you have an understanding of a virtual job fair format, below are tips on what to do before, during and after the event.

Virtual job fair tips for success

Register ahead of time

- With an online event, you’ll want to register beforehand to receive instruction on how to login, navigate the job fair, and view the list of employers attending.

Confirm what technology is needed

- A few days before the fair, confirm that the device you plan to use is able to support a virtual job fair and download any necessary software. Doing this gives you time to troubleshoot and ask questions if needed.
- Using a desktop, laptop, or tablet with a stand, rather than a phone, helps to avoid shaky camera syndrome, which can be very distracting for the interviewer. Also, it may be wise to use headphones if you are not able to interview in a private and quiet location.
- Conduct a dry run to ensure everything is working before the event.
- If you are able to use a device with camera capabilities, it is preferred, in case the employer requests a video chat to speak with you face to face.

Prepare your resume

- Have your **resume reviewed** by a Career Development Specialist at least two weeks before the event. You need to make an optimal first impression, and having an up to date, polished resume, is the first step. Upload your revised resume, and update your profiles, on Handshake and LinkedIn.

Pre-fair employer research

- **Review the organizations** attending the job fair and decide what employers you want to visit. Check the employer's website to learn their **mission** and **goals**. Research where the employer is **located**, the **products or services** they offer, and the **projects** they work on. Google the employer name to see if they've recently made local, state, or national **news**. Learn more about the **job openings** and how you are qualified.

Dress for success

- **You need to dress professionally for a virtual job fair.** Doing so will make you feel put together and confident. Most of the time, you will be in a chat room setting, but an employer might invite you to a video meeting, and if they do, you will want to be ready if this happens.
- **Wear a conservative**, matching two-piece suit, or a jacket with grey, navy or black pants and dress shoes. **Hair** should be clean, neat, and well-groomed. **Jewelry** should be conservative in amount and size. Remove or cover **piercings** (other than earrings) and **tattoos**. Have a notepad, pen, copy of your questions to ask and resume easily accessible.



The 30-second commercial

This is your chance to make a **quick, impressive introduction**. It should be **conversational** and natural (not memorized). You want to appear **confident, poised, and professional**. Your commercial should define **who you are, what you want**, and most importantly, how you would **benefit an employer**. After your commercial, discuss what you have **researched about the employer** and **ask questions** to keep the conversation going to show them you are interested.

GREETING: "Hello, my name is _____."

EXPERIENCE: "I am a _____ studying _____ at Western Michigan University."

INTEREST: "I am mainly interested in _____."

STRENGTHS: "My strengths include _____ and _____."

BRIEF EXAMPLE: "Last summer, I interned at _____ and I _____." **OR** "In the research lab I work in, I _____."

GOAL: "I believe my ability to _____ and experience in _____ would benefit your company by _____."

Be ready to put yourself out there

Once you **engage** with an employer in a chat, the ball is in your court to **introduce yourself** and ask questions about the organization and available opportunities. Attendees are expected to be confident and present themselves to recruiters. A virtual job fair requires you to **exert yourself** to make connections and initiate conversation.

Professional business communication

Since most of your communication will be done through **written interactions** in the chat function, you will need to write responses that are business professional, grammatically correct, free of slang words, or the use of acronyms people are not familiar with. To make a great first impression, you'll want to demonstrate coherent written communication.

The wrap-up

When the conversation is coming to a close, remember to **ask for the individual's name and their email address and thank** the employer for their time. It is appropriate to ask about **next steps**; for example, "what is the application process for this position?" or "who should I contact to get more information?" Be sure to send a **thank you** email 24 hours later to reiterate your interest.

Video chat or interview tips

Background check. What's going on behind you?

It is important to review what will be **recorded behind you**. If possible, select a blank wall or wall with minimal décor on it. If a window is behind you, shut the blind to avoid being washed out. No inappropriate artwork, signage, etc., should be behind you. Select a room with **no distractions** so you can **fully concentrate** on the chat or interview. Use headphones if you are not able to interview in a private location.

Body language

Be sure to sit in a comfortable chair and have good posture. Position your camera so that your face and part of your upper body is included in the frame. You don't want to be too close to the camera, or too far away. Make **good eye contact into the camera** when you speak and **smile**. Keep movements to a minimum so you always remain in the camera frame and place your hands on your lap.

Helpful resources



Resume Reviews

Email your resume to wmu-handshake@wmich.edu for a critique by a Career Development Specialist



<https://wmich.biginterview.com>
<https://biginterview.com/video-interview>



<https://learn.joinhandshake.com/students/category/get-hired-remotely>

Job Fair Checklist

Before the fair

- Have your resume updated
- Draft and practice a 30-second personal commercial
- Plan your professional dress wardrobe
- Get a notepad and pen
- Research employers you want to meet
- Prepare questions to ask employers
- Review the STAR interview method
- Practice video interviewing using Big Interview
- Register for the virtual job fair and understand the login instructions, software requirements, format, etc.

During the fair

- Take time to confirm the login procedure and software or downloads needed to attend
- Identify what employers you want to meet and in what order
- Give yourself a pep talk and take a deep breath before you login
- Have your notepad, pen and copies of your resume easily accessible
- Be prepared to electronically send your resume to an employer if they request it
- Collect contact information from the employers you meet
- Thank the employer for speaking with you and ask what the next step is in their process
- After chatting with an employer, write down meaningful notes from your conversation

After the fair

- Send a thank you letter or email to the employers you had conversations with
- Follow up with each employer based on what they instructed you to do
- Keep all your notes from the fair, as this will help if you are selected for an interview
- Maintain contact with the employers – perseverance pays off



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Employment Services

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

(269) 387-2745 | www.wmich.edu/career