

# Making the Most of the Engineering Career Fair

## Preparing

### Knowing Yourself

Before attending a fair or beginning your job search it is very important to have an understanding of who you are, what you enjoy, what you value, what you know, what you're good at, and what your goals are. You can do this reflection on your own by asking yourself those questions or you can attend Career Centre workshops like Identifying Transferable Skills, Planning Your Career, and Exploring Meaningful Work. See the full list of Career Centre workshops by visiting the [Career Learning Network](#).

What do Engineers with Graduate Degrees do? Researching Labour Market Information  
Places you might look online based on the questions you have.

- What can I do with my degree in \_\_\_\_\_? <http://benschmidt.org/jobs>
- What is the value of a PhD in Canada? <http://www.conferenceboard.ca/e-library/abstract.aspx?did=7564&AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1> (No one has yet asked this question about the Master's.)
- What careers do people have who have earned a PhD in \_\_\_\_\_ from the University of Toronto? <http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/data/Pages/employment-outcomes.aspx>
- What are the labour market projections for \_\_\_\_\_ profession in Canada? [https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/content\\_pieces-eng.do?cid=1403](https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/content_pieces-eng.do?cid=1403) (Underlying assumption of these projections is that people have the jobs they want.)
- How much will I make if I become a \_\_\_\_\_? *The link above will answer this, as will* <https://www.glassdoor.ca/Salaries/index.htm>
- What growth has company \_\_\_\_\_ seen in the past three years and what projects are they expecting to undertake in the near future? Company website and <https://search.library.utoronto.ca/details?7911635>

Other valuable resources: professional association and company websites, resources within the Career Learning Network, eBooks on the Career Exploration & Education website, National Occupation Classification (NOC) Codes, Statistics Canada, Industry Canada, Ontario Job Futures, Employment and Social Development Canada, Chambers of Commerce, etc.

### Researching Companies

The Career Fair webpage includes the list participating companies, so check back often! Familiarize yourself with companies of interest, and the kinds of positions they're seeking to fill immediately. Research information on the Internet about the companies that will be attending the career fair, ensure that those are the companies that you would like to approach, check their website, read about the career section, about us, etc. Using the University of Toronto Library you can access a [database called Factiva](#) that can provide extensive news and insights about companies (you can get less sophisticated

results using Google News). [Career Centre workshops](#) like Job Search and the Labour Market or Career Research Resources can introduce you to the variety of tools available to you to research organizations.

### Tailoring Your Resume

When applying for jobs you must tailor your resume by speaking specifically to the job posting. Companies at the Career Fair may not have current job postings, so you will have to speak to the skills you think they are most likely to be interested in. Generally, recruiters at fairs are looking to distribute their advertising materials and direct prospects to the company's online application system. You should have a customized resume available, just in case they will take it, but you can also incorporate the information you glean from the recruiters to further customize your application before submitting it online.

The Career Centre offers [resume workshops](#) every one to two weeks. The resume [workbook](#) and [toolkit](#) found on the [resume section of the Career Centre's website](#) are also valuable tools for building and customizing your resume.

### Printing Business Cards

Some departments/supervisors will provide official University of Toronto business cards for you. Check with your supervisor or departmental administrator to find out. If not, your business card should include your name, professional email account (i.e. your University account), phone number (make sure your voicemail is professional), and link to a relevant online account (i.e. LinkedIn). If your work lends itself to something that can be easily photographed or visualized, then consider adding a relevant image to your card. Otherwise, consider including a few keywords highlighting your expertise and skills.

### Dressing for Success

Make a good first impression by dressing professionally. Aim for business or business casual – business casual means no jeans, track pants, t-shirts, or sneakers. Dress as you would for a job interview.

### At the Fair

When you arrive at the Career Fair, you'll receive a booklet with a brief description of each employer and where they're located on the floor. Make the most of your time by visiting the companies that align best with your interests first. The fair runs from 10am to 4pm on May 2. It's hard to anticipate how much time you'll need, but don't risk cutting important conversations short if you can avoid it.

### What to Ask Them

You want to spend most of your time talking with a recruiter asking them questions about their organization – questions that will help you decide if they are the right organization for you, improve your application materials, and prepare you for an interview.

Questions that could help you determine if this organization/job is the right fit for you:

1. How would you describe the organizational culture? What do you like and dislike about your role? What do your colleagues like and dislike about their roles?
2. What and how might this organization, or the industry more broadly, change in the next five years? What competencies will be advantageous in that period?
3. Is there support for professional/personal development?

4. Are there opportunities for promotion or to make lateral moves? What might a career path look like in this company?
5. Etc.

Questions that could help you improve your application and prepare for an interview:

1. What would an average day or week look like?
2. What will a successful applicant be able to do within six months of starting? One year?
3. What projects or initiatives is the successful applicant likely to take on?
4. What are the three most important skills/knowledge a successful applicant would have? What competencies could someone develop once they've started working here?
5. Etc.

For more support with networking and informational interviewing check out [Career Centre workshops](#) (Career Exploration Orientation, Talking to Professionals, and Networking to Find Meaningful Work).

### What to Say about Yourself

Whether you're looking to land a job interview with a specific company or network with several employers to explore your options, you need to present yourself professionally, confidently, and succinctly. Be prepared to speak with employers about your strengths, areas of expertise, and previous experience. You'll leave a positive and lasting impression if you can articulate that you understand the employers' needs, and that your expertise can help to fulfill those needs.

### Following Up

Follow up with recruiters and thank them for their time; ensure you express interest in any opportunities or a position that was mentioned. If emailing, enclose a copy of your resume just to be sure they have a copy.

### LinkedIn

LinkedIn is one popular website for showcasing a generic version of your resume, and maintaining connections with colleagues. It might not be the place for you, as some industries have stronger preferences for places like GitHub, Twitter, personal websites/blogs, etc. You can also use LinkedIn, [Engineering Connect](#) and [Ten Thousand Coffees](#), to reach out to new connections for informational interviews. Your LinkedIn profile should include a headshot, a tagline, a profile summary that expresses enough relevant keywords that a recruiter might find it be searching LinkedIn, a complete work history, and descriptions of each of your experiences that highlights core skills you demonstrated in those experiences. If you want to build your LinkedIn profile, you can attend the [Career Centre workshop](#).

### Maintaining Connections

People you meet will fall into a number of different categories. The majority of people you meet will be one-time conversations. Some people you meet you will reach out to them again for a specific reason (a job is posted in their company, you want to facilitate an introduction to someone else you know, etc.). A few people that you meet will turn into mentors and advocates. Mentors are people that you can meet with regularly, and who provide consistently meaningful feedback and information – you never approach someone and ask them to be your mentor, it usually evolves into a mentor-mentee relationship as you check-in with them multiple times. Advocates are similar to mentors, in that you

check-in with them regularly, but rather than providing useful advice, they are excellent at speaking highly of you to their colleagues and opening opportunities for you.

### Preparing for Interviews

One of the most common questions about preparing for interviews is how to reduce nerves. The first thing to note is that this is normal, and interviewers expect you to be at least a little bit nervous. Leann Schneider and Deborah Powell of the University of Guelph Personnel Selection and Performance Lab discovered two strategies for coping with interview anxiety:

- Positive Imagery
  - Telling yourself one positive story about your previous experience as you wait for the interview to start.
- Field Technique
  - Imagining the interview from the interviewer's perspective (anticipating their questions and framing your answers).

Another common concern about preparing for interviews is how to answer questions. The most effective answers, regardless of type of question, are **specific** and *relevant*.

CAR or CARL (or STAR) is one way of structure answers to questions that rely on the narration of stories.

- **Context**
  - When and where did you demonstrate the skill/qualification?
  - What was your role or task that best demonstrates the skill/qualification?
- **Actions**
  - What did you do? (It's also helpful, but should never be the focus of your response, to talk about what other people did.)
- **Results/Reflection**
  - What came out of the experience? How do you know you succeeded
  - What did you learn from this experience? What might you do differently next time?
- **Linking Statement** (mostly only useful for open-ended questions)
  - How is this story, or the traits/skills you demonstrated in this story, relevant to the job?

The best way to improve your interviews is to practice. Practice and reflect on your own. Practice with feedback from others (book a Career Educator appointment). Record yourself (particularly helpful for phone or videoconference interviews) and reflect/review.

On the Career Centre website, we have a [great handout](#), but you can also sign up for our [workshops](#) (Own Your Interview, Practice Your Interview, or Interviewing for Work).