Before the fair
Prepare, prepare, prepare. These are the things you’ll want to do ahead of time to set yourself up for success.

Register ahead of time
You’re going to want to register beforehand. Not only will this prevent any last minute hiccups before the career fair, but it will allow you to get a glimpse at the employers participating in the fair.

Research participating organizations
After registering in CareerEco (the virtual career fair platform), take some time to review the organizations attending the career fair. You’ll want to get an idea of some of the companies you’d like to meet with. You also don’t want to walk in unprepared—learn about the companies and think of questions you’ll want to ask. At virtual career fairs, companies look for candidates who are curious and ask questions. In order to stand out from the crowd, candidates should do their research and know about the companies and positions they are interested in.

Prepare your resume
Because you’re going to include your resume in your fair profile for employers to review, you’ll want it up-to-date and spotless for the optimal first impression. Make sure it’s updated, proofed and reviewed by someone else ahead of time. The same goes for your LinkedIn account, or a portfolio of your work samples (which you can also include in your CareerEco fair profile).

Practice your pitch
How will you introduce yourself? Why are you interested in the company? What types of positions are you seeking? How is your previous work experience relevant? What do you plan on asking the representatives at the virtual career fair? You’ll want to spend some time mulling over questions like these so you’re ready to answer them without hesitation when the time comes. Your well-thought-out responses could impress a recruiter—and even allow you to stand out from the crowd of applicants. Prepare your pitch, specific questions per employer, and information about yourself in advance. Have your pitch and boilerplate information about yourself ready to cut and paste into text chats, and be ready for one-on-one video chats with employer representatives.

Make sure your technology is ready to go
You’ll want to make sure your device is capable of supporting you in the virtual career fair. For best results, login using an up-to-date version of Google Chrome or Firefox on a desktop or laptop computer. It is definitely preferable to have camera capabilities in case an employer would like to speak with you face to face. Be sure to download necessary software for the fair, if need be. Install these a day early, leaving enough time to clarify any troubleshooting questions you may have and to allow for a dry run to ensure smooth sailing on the big day. Choose your device wisely. To avoid a shaky camera, use a desktop, laptop or propped-up tablet rather than a smartphone that you’ll need to hold throughout the conversation. If you are using your smartphone, try to use a tripod to support a steady view. You may also want headphones if you cannot attend from a quiet, private location. For more help, click on “Instructions” on the CareerEco platform (upper right) where you will find video and PDF tutorials, or contact CareerEco directly with technical or setup questions: 770-980-0088 or UC@CareerEco.com
Once you log in, how can you stand out from the crowd at a virtual career fair? Here are a few pieces of key advice.

**Wear a professional outfit**
You can expect to interact with employers at a virtual career fair through chat functions. However, some employers may wish to speak with you face to face. Make the most out of this opportunity to make a connection by looking professional and presentable. If you have the opportunity to meet face to face with an employer, you'll want to be ready. If you’re going to be on camera, be prepared to look professional from at least the waist up.

**Attend from a distraction-free environment**
In addition to your professional attire, you will also want to plan out where you’ll be attending the virtual career fair from. A quiet location is ideal—and camera capabilities mean that you’ll want to ensure it is distraction-free for employers. Even on a small screen, potential employers can still see plenty of background. Make sure the room you’re in is clean, quiet and well lit. Your expertise should be the focal point of the conversation, not a distracting background.

**Be ready to put yourself out there**
At virtual career fairs, it’s all the more important to exert yourself to make connections. Once an employer engages you in a chat, the ball is in your court to introduce yourself and ask questions about the organization and open positions. Attendees must present themselves to employers and feel confident doing so.

**Use clear, professional business communication**
Being a virtual career fair, much of your communication will be done through written interactions in the chat function of the platform. To make a great first impression, you’ll want to demonstrate articulate written communication. Grammar matters, and text lingo, emoji’s and slang are not appropriate. Your professional written communication needs to be on point. Open your chat with a greeting and be sure to say goodbye and thank you and close out your presence in a text chat when the conversation is finished and/or when you are leaving a chat room.

**Demonstrate strong body language in video chats**
Just like in a traditional career fair, you’ll want to present yourself as a confident and competent job seeker. One way that employers pick up on this is through your body language. If you’re on a video chat with a recruiter at the virtual career fair, you’ll want to stay conscious of your body language. On camera, it’s even more critical to hold eye contact with the employers you’re interacting with. Speak clearly and avoid slouching. Keep hand gestures to a minimum so you don’t distract the person you’re talking to or block your face from the camera.

**Ask for next steps and contact information**
When talking to recruiters at the fair, don’t hesitate to be forward and offer to send a copy of your resume. You can also ask about the next steps in the process—whether that means getting in touch with HR, filling out a job application or sitting down for a formal interview. Before parting ways, be sure to take down their contact information. Some employers may have it accessible within the virtual fair platform. If not, ask how you can stay in touch, and consider taking a screenshot of any chats you’d like to save. You’ll need this information for following up after the virtual career fair.
Don’t let your efforts go to waste by neglecting to follow up with connection after the virtual career fair.

**Reach out the next day with a thank you**

Whether it’s an email, phone call or hand-written thank-you note, be sure to reach out to the connections you made at the fair, thanking them for their time and further expressing your interest. Because recruiters at career fairs come in contact with many candidates and resumes, you can use this chance to refresh their memory and remind them about why you’re a promising candidate, why you’re interested in the company and the skills or experience you bring to the table.

You may also want to send them your resume if you haven’t already, along with your portfolio or work samples if you have any. You can also stay in touch by adding the recruiter on LinkedIn. If you’d like help with your follow up, schedule an appointment with a career counselor on Handshake.