Mastering the Self-Introduction

What is it?
An introduction, written or verbal, used in professional settings to introduce yourself as a candidate to key employer contacts or interviewers. It outlines who you are, what you have done and connects your experiences and skills to what you want to do in the future.

Why is it important?
It sets the tone and topical focus of a first meeting, such as at a career fair. It is often the response to a question at the start of nearly every interview, which gives an interviewer their first impression of you as a candidate.

Easy formula to ensure that you communicate key details:
- Past + Present + Future

CAREER FAIRS:
What are the key points to include when introducing yourself at a career fair?
- Current related details: academic and professional
- Past related details: academic or professional, depending upon your unique background, and what is most relevant for the recruiter of a particular company
- Future professional goals: future plans, position(s) of interest, field of interest, etc.

Pro-Tip: Tailor the "future" element of your introduction to the company of interest by highlighting the specific type of opportunity / team you are interested in and explaining how your background / interests align.

Pro-Tip: Your introduction can be directed towards your interest in the company, the company's hiring process, or even better, a specific position of interest.
- Your spoken introduction will be very close to your text chat introduction, but instead of writing it out, you will say it directly to the recruiter.

How to introduce yourself for a text-based chat with a company contact:
How long should this be?
The length of your written self-introduction should be a few sentences or a short paragraph. Focus on key points only, remember this is the start of the chat and serves as an introduction only.

Pro-Tip: For chat-based interactions, type out your introduction and key points about yourself along with summaries of your projects, skills, etc. prior to the career fair. This will help chat sessions to move forward quickly, ensure that your messages are grammatically correct, and help you focus more on what the employer is sharing with you!

Example- *Text-based chat introduction for a virtual career fair*:
Hi, my name is Jing Wen. I am a senior majoring in Statistics and Data Science here at Carnegie Mellon, and I am currently seeking a full-time Business Analyst position. My background and current coursework are in data analysis and visualization, which directly aligns with your position. Last summer I completed an abbreviated, two-week "micro-internship" where I analyzed large data sets using R and Python, and prepared summary reports for department managers. I also have a minor in Business Administration. I am very interested in working with your team, and would greatly appreciate the opportunity to learn more about and be considered for this opportunity.

How to introduce yourself for a video / in-person chat with a company contact:
How do I prepare for this?
It is always best to practice this verbally. Instead of memorizing your introduction word for word, you can focus on including important key points. Record yourself practicing with your phone/computer- this will allow you to see what you look like while giving the introduction. Remember to find a balance between over-preparing (you do not want to sound like you are reading the introduction off a piece of paper) and under-preparing (you do not want to forget the key points or sound unprepared).

Pro-Tip: Keep your self-introduction to 30-45 seconds for career fair settings: this is not a speech!
Pro-Tip: Create an outline of key points you want to make: full, written-out sentences are not needed
Pro-Tip: Review company information in Handshake as well as job/internship postings to prepare and tailor your introduction.

Example- *Video / in-person self-introduction at a Career Fair*:
Hi, my name is Seema. I am a junior in the Mechanical Engineering department at Carnegie Mellon. My interests are in product design and testing specifically, which directly aligns with your Design Engineer Internship position. This summer I engaged in an employer-led professional development series, where I developed skills in design thinking, project management and storytelling with data. This semester, I will be completing projects at CMU, such as building kits for labs, remote test rig operation, and consultations in courses such as Mechatronic Design, Structural Design and Manufacturing Design. The specialized equipment your company designs for construction work is clearly state of the art. Completing an internship for summer 2021 with your company, specifically in construction equipment design, would be an amazing opportunity. I believe, given my background and experience, that I could be a strong contributor as an intern for you as well. I appreciate the opportunity to discuss my experiences and qualifications with you today.

INTERVIEWS:
How is this different from my introduction at a career fair?
In an interview setting, you will introduce yourself in more detail, providing some specifics from your background that connect to the position you are being interviewed for. You should highlight key elements of your experience that are related to the company and supportive of your candidacy for the specific role for which you are being considered.

How will I know when to introduce my background?
The interviewer will ask you a question / request that you introduce yourself with statements such as:
- Tell me about yourself
- Walk me through your resume
- Give me a high level overview of your experience and tell me why you are interested in this role

Pro-Tip: In an interview, you should connect your past and present experiences to how you are a fit for the position for which you are being considered. Tailor the key points of your introduction to the company and position. The job description is a great tool to reference to prepare your introduction!
Pro-Tip: An introduction in an interview is longer than one for a career fair, approximately 90 seconds.