

Internship Intelligence

Getting Hired





Positioning Yourself for Success

Now that you know how to pick out a rewarding internship opportunity, it's time to go for it. Your task is to clearly articulate your strengths and experiences and how they will benefit the companies you are applying to. It is also important to find unique ways of making your application stand out from others. The competition for most internships is stiff.

1. Application Checklist

There are two key components to most job applications: a resume and a cover letter. Some companies require forms to be filled out and submitted online. The essentials are still the same. You share what you have done in the past and how that translates into what you can do for a company in the future.

2. Resume Essentials

As a college student, it is likely that your past work experience is limited. Whether you babysat, shoveled snow, or had a minimum wage hourly job, previous work experience demonstrates ambition and is an opportunity to cultivate valuable [skills](#). Past work experience also extends to the classroom.

Past Work Experience

- Include work experience that is relevant to the job you are applying for.
- List one or two big school projects that are most closely aligned with the position you are seeking.
- Include the parameters of the projects and the challenges you faced.
- Share specific steps taken to overcome those challenges.

Technical Skills

- It is expected that you know how to operate a personal computer. Skip the minutia.
- Only list technical skills that are relevant to the position. Do not feel pressured to embellish.

Soft Skills

- Soft skills equate to great people skills.
- Demonstrate your ability to collaborate, empathize, listen, and lead through overcoming challenges in your past work and university experience.
- Convey other essential soft skills such as curiosity, problem-solving, critical thinking, and a strong work ethic however you can. Try to write brief, compelling examples of how you have used them in school and in prior work experiences.



3. Cover Letter 101

The beauty of a cover letter is that it provides a place to highlight relevant skills that you either haven't been able to fit into your resume or that you want to really reinforce.

- Introduce yourself and express interest in a particular position.
- Articulate what makes the internship appealing.
- Share how your skills will serve the company.
- Express specifically why you are the right person for the job.
- Tailor your cover letter to each opportunity.
- Proactively include at least two references.

4. References

- Supplying a handful of references before being asked demonstrates a level of professionalism that will impress prospective employers.
- If possible, offer up one personal and one professional reference.
- It is perfectly reasonable to share the characteristics and/or job responsibilities you would like a reference to highlight.
- Think about which people will provide the strongest references and give them time to think it over.
- You may want different references for different jobs.
- Like everything else, the sooner you get started the better.

5. Review

A really important part of the application process is review. It is so easy to overlook small errors that will make a negative impression. Most career service centers offer help crafting and editing resumes and cover letters. Ask friends to take a quick pass as you tailor each cover letter and offer to do the same for them.

Presenting Your Best Self

You have put in the hard work and submitted applications to the internships most aligned with your skills and broad interests. Ideally, you will hear back from a handful of companies that are interested in taking the next step: meeting for an interview. As thrilling as it is to receive an invitation, it can also feel nerve-wracking. The way to quell feelings of anxiety is through preparation. The following simple steps will put you in the driver's seat before, during, and after an interview.

1. Before The Main Event

There are several key areas of preparation that will give you all the confidence you need to succeed in an interview situation.

Research

- Read up on the company, including its history, product offering, and leadership team.
- Familiarize yourself with the latest news announcements by reading press releases on the company website and mentions in the media.
- Have a general sense of primary competitors.
- Conduct a web and LinkedIn search on the person you are interviewing with.
- Based on your research, compile a list of questions that you can ask during the interview both about the company and the role itself.
- Do not expect to apply every piece of information from your research. You may be able to draw on some of the knowledge, but being prepared is essential to nailing an interview.

Samples & Stories

- If the internship requires writing samples or a portfolio of any kind, pull together your best and most relevant work. Don't overwhelm your interviewer with everything under the sun. Stick to your best work.
- It is expected that prospective interns will have limited work experience. Instead, start a written list of essential school projects that enable you to share the narrative of a challenge, your role in the resolution, and what you gleaned from the experience.
- Most importantly, be ready to explain how your experience has better prepared you to be an excellent intern at that company.

Role-Playing

- Read up on the most common [interview questions](#) and practice answering them.
- Kick things up a notch by asking a family member or friend to run through some of the more challenging questions.
- Identify the key experiences and interpersonal strengths you want to convey in an interview situation and pay extra attention to having those messages down pat.
- Do not try to memorize answers, because it is difficult to express authenticity when you are trying to deliver lines versus sharing who you really are.

2. Go Time

Interviewing is an essential life skill. Consider this practice for something you will be doing throughout your lifetime. Your ultimate goal is to be enthusiastic and demonstrate preparedness.



- Get a great night of sleep the day before your interview.
- Choose your favorite professional outfit that makes you feel confident and poised for success. Better to be overdressed than under.
- Practice a few minutes of deep breathing exercises to calm your nerves as they creep up.
- Greet your interviewer with a smile, direct eye contact, and a firm handshake.
- Even though they know who you are and what your name is, formally introduce yourself and take a moment to express your gratitude for the opportunity.
- As you sit down, take a deep breath and remind yourself, “I can do this!”
- Be curious.
- Feel free to refer to a list of prepared questions, as well as to take notes during the interview.
- Remember: this is an opportunity to seek out a mutual fit. You are assessing the opportunity as much as the interviewer is evaluating you.
- At the end of the interview, thank the hiring manager for their time and remind them of your enthusiasm for the job.
- Ask about the next steps and timing.

3. Virtual Interviews

Given the amount of time and effort it saves, it is likely that [virtual interviews](#) will be around for years to come. It is important to try to be as professional in every way as you would for an in-person interview.

Here are a few things to consider for a virtual experience:

- Test whatever technology platform your interview has been scheduled on. Glitches happen and are extraordinarily frustrating. You don’t want to be late or flustered over something you can control ahead of time.
- If you will be conducting the interview at your home or another shared space, make sure to let your roommates or family members know that you will be busy.
- Reduce distractions by closing windows and keeping your environment as quiet and calm as possible.

4. Following Up

- As soon as you have a moment after the interview, take a few minutes to write down which moments left the biggest impressions.
- Identify which job responsibilities and aspects of the company ethos were most exciting to you. These will become the basis for your follow-up note.
- Ideally, you will send a thank you note on the day of your interview.
- If you are genuinely interested in the opportunity, let them know why. Be specific on what you can bring to the company.
- If you don’t hear back, follow up one week later to inquire about the status of the position.
- If you are turned down for the opportunity, request feedback on how you fell short. Most importantly, remember that rejection is part of the process. A terrific internship is out there. Just keep going.