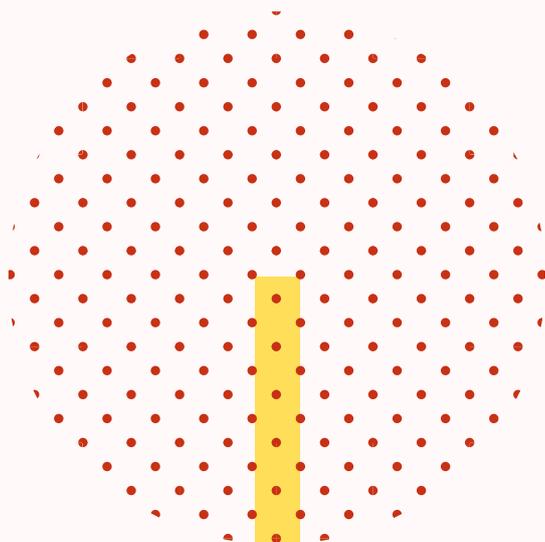




HOW TO LAND A GREAT INTERNSHIP & MAKE IT COUNT

A GUIDE



You are thinking ahead and want to gain the work experience that will complement your education and get you a dream job right out of college. That's great!

Landing a great internship isn't a simple task. It takes a bit of hard work, but it is possible.

Follow this guide and you'll find yourself closer to landing and thriving in that great internship.

1. Understand your goals.

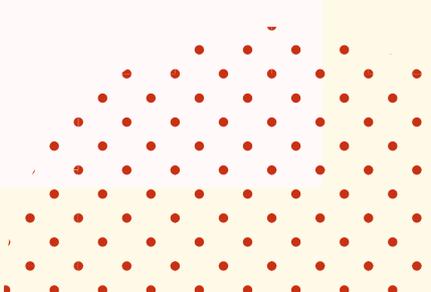
The first step to getting an internship is understanding your goals. To do this you must ask yourself what you want to learn through work experience. Figuring out what you want to learn at an internship is very important because it will inform where you apply and help you set goals. This step isn't necessarily easy, but once you know what it is you want, the rest of the steps will feel much easier.

If you are uncertain about the specifics of what you hope to learn, that is okay! Write down general skills, experience, and understanding that you hope to gain from the job.

At most internships you will gain knowledge and skills in broad areas, like:

- Company structure
- Following standard operating procedures
- Team dynamics
- Goal setting
- Client management systems
- Delegation
- Data entry and management
- Whether or not you enjoy that specific niche in your field of work (which is probably the most helpful to you)

If the above is what you hope to gain from an internship experience, great! You can be confident that most internship programs will provide you with the opportunity you desire.



Many people hope to also gain specific knowledge within their field of study. If this is you, it is also important that you articulate specifics of what you hope to gain.

Below are some examples of specific concepts and skills you could grow in understanding during your internship:

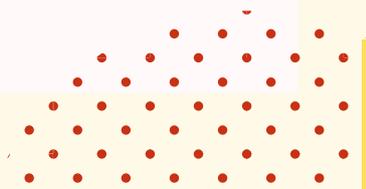
- Well crafted design
- Engineering
- The process of reviewing editorial submissions
- Preparing to launch a new product
- Supply chain management
- Social media marketing strategy
- The art of writing strong grants
- Navigating lobbying and connecting with representatives at your state capitol

Unsure what you can learn by interning at a company? Ask the Student Support or Career Services at your college to help you get specific about what you want to learn at an internship. You can also ask friends who have participated in internships or reach out to businesses that offer internships (Side note: connecting with a company to ask these types of questions is a great way to get your foot in the door).

Feeling stuck about which questions to ask a company?

Here are a few questions you can ask businesses directly:

- What do you hope interns learn through their experience with your company?
- What specific skills do you help teach during the internship?
- What are the strengths of the intern supervisor(s)?
- What skills and areas of knowledge do you hope to strengthen in your interns?
- Do you offer any type of assessment (personality, skills, outlook) that interns can take at the start and end of your program to observe their growth?
- What do the daily task of interns include in this program?
- Who in the office do interns interact with most and what are their skill sets?
- How often do you hire interns at your company?
- Where are your past interns working now?



Questions to ask friends who have held an internship:

What were your daily tasks as an intern?

What were your favorite projects to work on as an intern?

What did you learn as an intern?

How did you get your internship?

How did you prepare for your internship?

How do you recommend someone prepare for an internship that was similar to yours?

Feel free to list as many aspects of work that you want to learn about or apply during your internship. The more you know about what you want to learn, the better you'll be able to narrow down where you want to apply.

2. Decide where you want to apply.

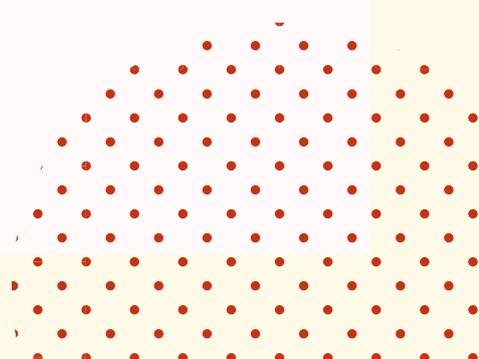
You can apply for an internship at most companies. This is great news, but this can also be overwhelming. That's why understanding your goals is an important first step to take before identifying where to apply.

Start your list with the businesses you already know and respect.

Important first questions to ask yourself:

As you develop your list keep two key questions in mind. "In what city should I live in during my internship?" and "Do I need to get paid at this internship?" By asking yourself about location and pay you'll be able to narrow down viable options.

To dig a little deeper when considering location, ask yourself, "am I willing and able to do an internship away from home?" If so, then consider which parts of the country or world you're willing to travel. Keep in mind choosing to relocate comes with additional expenses. Make sure you and your family are prepared for this financial commitment, especially if the internship is unpaid.





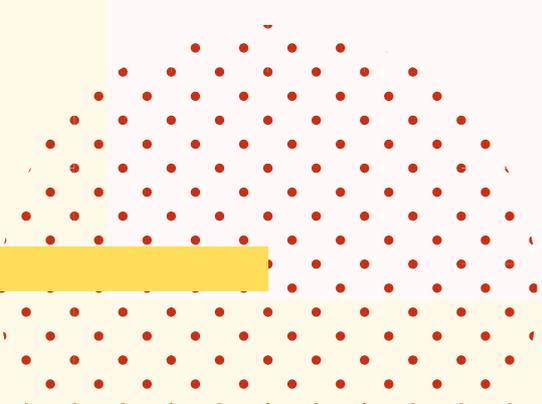
With the world as your oyster you can apply most anywhere. This is where knowing what you hope to gain in an internship can be very helpful. Use your “what I want to learn” list as a keyword resource. Google searching “engineering internships” or “hands on summer marketing internships” will lead you to some of the country’s top leading businesses that offer specific internships to college students. While typing in “internships” will direct you to long lists filled with opportunities that might not be pertinent to you. To get more specific include the city or state name when researching your specific type of internship.

While the options are more limited by staying local, you can still experience great benefits at your internship. Similar to researching global opportunities, you can search for “engineering internships near me.” You may be surprised by the opportunities that pop up!

Another avenue of research is speaking with your college. Reach out to your college’s Academic Support or Student Career Center about a list of companies other students from your college have interned at before. They may be able to connect you with a great local business that wants to hire interns from your college or university.

With your list of options in hand, do a little more digging. Read about the ethos, vision, and goals of each business or non-profit. Which ones resonate with you and seem like you’d be able to learn several of your goals with these companies?

While your future plans may differ slightly from the companies you are reviewing, if there is some overlap you likely have a great opportunity right in front of you. In this scenario it is highly likely that you will learn about one or two concepts or skills in which you hope to grow. Additionally, the experience will expose you to new processes and ideas. Businesses are looking for interns who will jump right in, learn, and explore. This is the time to learn as much as you can.



It is also great to ask yourself this question, “can I see myself working at this company one day?” It is perfectly normal and okay to apply to internships where you don’t necessarily see yourself working in the future (it can still be a great experience). However, interning with a company you want to eventually work for full-time can help you understand the company culture, be trained by their team, and connect with their hiring managers. By gaining internship experience at this place, you will learn if you can truly see yourself in a role at the company in the future as well as expose the team to you, your work ethic, and genius; all of which could lead to a job offer later on. Now that you have your list of places where you’d like to apply, it is time to prepare your application.

3. Prepare your resume.

If you are applying to your first internship, chances are you might not have a resume.

A resume is a brief document that outlines your skills, education, and experience. If you are limited in experience, do not worry! You can highlight and expand on the experience and education you do have. Consider including jobs you had in high school, volunteer experience, special awards, and any jobs you may hold on campus. Uncertain what to include in your resume, Glassdoor provides excellent instruction for writing a resume for an internship that doesn’t feel overwhelming.

Most people keep their resumes to one page since it is about highlighting your strongest achievements, experiences, and goals. Over the past few years, many applicants have chosen creative resume templates. Using color and modern organization of the items. If you choose to be creative, make sure your resume is still clear and understandable.

Many resumes outline the individual's goal for applying for the job, work experience, education, specific special skills, contact information, and sometimes names and contact information for references. Having the basics laid out, be certain to highlight aspects of your work and educational experiences that relate to the internship role to which you are applying. This serves as a quick snapshot for the interviewer as to why you are qualified for the job. Don't be shy about your interests either! Even if you do not possess much work experience, sharing your passion and desire to learn more about that role is very valuable to the company as well. It communicates that you will show up excited every day ready to learn and implement all that you are learning.

Another avenue to share your passion and articulate how you see yourself benefiting the company is through a cover letter. A cover letter is a way to go deeper with the experience highlighted on your resume while also sharing more about who you are and your goals. Not all internships require a cover letter in the application process. If it is not required and you would like to share more of your story, consider drafting a cover letter and proof reading it with a trusted professional in your life. Proofreading will ensure it comes across as personal, professional, and polished.

No matter what you include on your resume, it is very important that you follow the outlined instructions for applying for the internship.

4. Submit your application.

With your strong resume in hand, you are now ready to apply for your internship.

Research the application instructions and process online. If the instructions are unclear, reach out to the internship coordinator at the company by phone, email, or a LinkedIn message. This could also be a great opportunity to introduce yourself and learn more about the position.

Following the application guidelines demonstrates that you are attentive to detail and respect their company policies. This is not to say that creativity is unwelcome. Quite the contrary. Do your best to stand out amongst the other applicants. If you choose a creative element, be sure to do so within their guidelines.

The application process may include a form to complete online, submitting your resume and cover letter, sharing a writing sample, and an interview.

Speaking of being creative, there are several creative ways to apply for an internship.

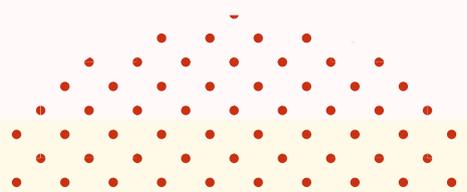
Other approaches to applying for an internship:

1. Reach out to the internship director and employees of the company with LinkedIn connection requests. First, make sure your LinkedIn profile is set up and professional, and then start requesting connections of those that work at the company or organization where you are applying. Always add a note to your LinkedIn connection request and make sure you present yourself professionally.

2. If you hear of an opportunity or are introduced to a company you admire in a class, don't be shy. After the presentation immediately introduce yourself to the speaker. Let them know your passions, what you appreciate about their presentation, and that you would be interested in interning with them. Be bold! Specifically, ask when and how you should apply. Ask for their card or contact information. Specifically follow up with them around the time they plan to bring on new interns. If they are not sure of when the internship program starts, ask if you can follow up with them next week after they've inquired about internship start dates with their team.

3. If you already have a job in a company, ask your supervisor if you can shadow under another department for one or two days to broaden your skill sets in the company. After you shadow ask that department if you can assist them with special projects. This could place you under the direct wing of someone who can mentor you in the company or help you grow in your field.

4. Applying to a large internship program (or one that you know receives many, many applications)? Place yourself at the top of the list! After reviewing the application guidelines, reach out to the company by phone or email with a genuine question that only the decision-maker (intern supervisor) will know the answer. Once they answer your question, submit your application. Your name will be familiar to them as they review applications. Not sure what to ask, head back to the list of questions in section one for sample questions.



5. Conduct a survey in your field to gain knowledge that will be helpful to you and the company where you are applying. Ask the decision-maker if you can submit a survey you are currently conducting as part of your application or to join the team as an intern on a trial period as you complete the survey (or expand it).

5. Stand out in your interview.

Your resume, cover letter, and application impressed the company. Congratulations!

Now it is time to shine face-to-face (or over the phone)!

The interview is a key part of the application process for any job, including an internship. Understanding what you can already offer the team and the areas in which you want to grow will be key to helping you have a successful interview. That and confidence.

Googling “questions I might be asked during an internship interview” could be a good place to start, but don’t stop there. Ask professors, friends, or even trusted adults to conduct practice interviews with you. Let them ask questions about your resume, cover letter, experience, and dreams. Answer honestly, and then prepare questions to ask the company. The more you practice the more comfortable you will feel with your answers. Be sure to remain natural and honest in your answers.

Dressing to impress certainly applies here. When you arrive at an interview it is important that you are clean and professional in attire, attitude, and speech. Remain positive and honest in your conversations with the receptionist all the way through your final goodbye.

During your interview, remember that the interviewer(s) has already read your resume. They will likely ask you to expand on the experiences you highlighted on your resume. Be prepared to give more context and insight into your prior experience. With that said, it is also to your benefit to acknowledge the professional areas you hope to grow in and master while interning with the company. Your vulnerability in this area shows the company that you will be invested in this opportunity because you already see the value they will offer you--and that is valuable to them!

As mentioned above, having questions prepared for the interviewers is always a good idea. By having questions ready you demonstrate your curiosity about the company and reveal that you think ahead. While technical questions about hours and pay are valid, it is also to your benefit to ask questions regarding the team culture and what success looks like in your role.

6. Follow up and follow through.

After your interview, open your laptop and write a thank you email or send a handwritten note to the manager or team who interviewed you. In your message, highlight aspects that you appreciate about the company and the role. Specificity is your friend. End your note with an affirmation that they will be happy to hire you! This shows professionalism, initiative, follow-through, and confidence.

In your thank you email or note, make sure to triple check names, titles, spelling, and grammar. Uncertain if your grammar is correct, use tools like spellcheck or Grammarly. Again, attention to detail here is important. You want every aspect of their interactions with you to feel professional, natural, and positive.

During the days or few weeks after the interview, be mindful that the company may be interviewing several other applicants. If the interviewer mentioned that they would follow up with you by a specific date, and the day passes without their outreach, that is when it is appropriate to send a second follow up email to check in. Please never harass the interviewer demanding a response. Forcefulness can actually lead to them not choosing you. Be professional, prompt, show your interest while being patient.

Once you land that dream interview it's time to follow through on the promises you made during your interview. For more tips on making the most of your internship, keep reading!

Now that you have the job...

“How do I make the most of my internship?”

Just like anything in life, when you have an internship you will get out of it whatever you put into it.

If you want to have a great internship experience, show up every day expecting to learn something new, ask questions, take initiative, ask your supervisor how you can do more and exceed the company's expectations. Below are the top tips on thriving in your internship.

Ask questions.

No one wants to be annoying, and we've all witnessed scenarios where someone asks unnecessary questions.

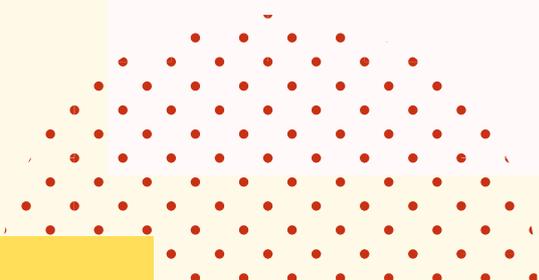
However, it is important to confidently ask questions when:

- You don't understand your responsibility in an assignment
- You have a genuine question about a concept
- Additional clarity is needed for you and/or the team
- You sense that an aspect of a project hasn't been thoroughly thought through
- When you want to grow in knowledge or skills

If you anticipate that your questions will take significant time to answer, request a meeting with your supervisor.

When asking questions, be sure that you are genuinely curious and not just trying to stump a teammate or supervisor. The former fosters a sense of wanting to grow while the latter could create resentment and tension.

Keep in mind that your internship experience is primarily viewed by your supervisor as a learning opportunity. This is your chance to learn as much as you can under a company that you admire. Soak up as much information as you can.



Take initiative.

Most companies look for interns and employees who take initiative. This does not mean always doing what you want and how you want. However, taking initiative in a respectful and timely manner will demonstrate your passion and work ethic.

“How do I show respect when taking initiative?” I’m glad you asked!

Before you take initiative, ensure that the work you are responsible for is completed! Do not allow a side project you are excited about steal away from your actual responsibilities.

If a project you are overseeing is delayed due to a lack of communication or confusion, then it is appropriate to respectfully ask the person directly responsible for that area to clarify or contribute the missing information. If you are uncertain who the correct person is, then check in with your supervisor to learn who you should follow up with to move the task forward.

Think critically. What areas of a project could improve? Is there a different process that would help a department or the company grow? If so, ask questions to better understand the current processes and the reasons behind the company’s current decisions. Once you have a decent handle, approach your supervisor in a current meet to present your idea with openness and curiosity. Be open to them wanting you to initiate the change, them wanting to put this suggestion on hold, or them shutting down the idea. Curiosity is also important. Using a phrase like, “I have an idea, and I wonder if it could work well. Would you like to hear it? I’d love to hear your feedback?” Approaching your supervisor with genuine curiosity and humility will reveal that you want the best for the company and help you not to feel defensive if they begin to ask questions or shut it down. The important thing is you tried!

If you are struggling to come up with an innovative idea, that’s okay! Don’t force it. No one is expecting you to come up with new ideas as an intern (unless that is explicitly stated as part of your role).



Learn expectations (and how to exceed them).

While expectations were likely reviewed in your interview, it is important to confirm that you understand all expectations of you and your role during your first week at the internship. These expectations could include your professionalism and desired outcomes of projects.

Once you understand the expectations, aim to meet them. If you have trouble in an area, be brave. Speak with your supervisor about how you can grow in an area to better meet the expectation and hopefully exceed it!

Once you are confident that you can meet the expectations (without burning yourself out), choose one to two areas that you can impress your supervisor by aiming to exceed specific expectations.

Communicate clearly.

Nothing makes a supervisor happier than clear and concise communication. Your supervisor is likely balancing their full-time workload in addition to overseeing your work. Providing them with clear and concise communication helps them be more effective with their time with you, leaving them with more space to offer you more mentoring, training, and guidance.

Be clear about:

Your schedule, especially if any trips were pre-planned before taking the internship

If you are unable to make it into work for something like an illness

What you hope to learn in the internship or with a specific assignment

Review of an assignment

Answering their questions

Now, this is not to say that being detailed isn't important. However, maintaining respectful communication (including avoiding over-communication) can help with efficiency and give more time for you to grow in your role.

Be sure to ask how your supervisor prefers to communicate with you. This could be via email, slack, etc. Work with their preferred channel of communication. It shows respect.



Another way to show respect is to receive communication well! Pay attention and engage in meetings. Read emails and respond if necessary or to confirm your receipt of the email. Pay attention to calendar invitations and project deadlines. People are communicating with you to help you do your job well. They may be relying on your communication to do their job well too.

Keep your foot in the door.

Remaining in contact with your supervisor, teammates, or intern peers can prove helpful to you in the future, especially if you left a great impression during your internship.

To keep your foot in the door with the company you can:
Add your supervisor, teammates, or intern peers on LinkedIn
If appropriate, add personnel to your Facebook or social media platforms (this might only be appropriate with your peers, but could also include your supervisor. It simply depends on the team culture at the company). Follow up with an email or handwritten note of thanks to your supervisor or department teammates with specific details as to what you learned and how you are excited to move forward in your field.

Send a holiday card, note or email.

Check in every 6 - 12 months to see how they are doing. Even if you are not ready for a job with the company just yet, it shows that you are personable.

Ask about upcoming job openings the company anticipates having during the time you will be starting to apply for a job and what skills they are specifically looking for. You guessed it, then practice those skills!

Your former supervisor and teammates are well connected. They often want to help the business, and if you were an asset to their team, they likely want to help you too!

Good luck on your internship application!

Want more work experience while earning your degree? Check out the [7 Best Campus Rep Jobs to Apply to.](#)

References & Resources

(in the order in which mentioned in the guide)

Glassdoor - writing a resume:

<https://www.glassdoor.com/blog/guide/how-to-write-a-resume/>

Glassdoor- writing a cover letter:

<https://www.glassdoor.com/blog/guide/how-to-write-a-cover-letter/>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/>

Forbes - interview with confidence:

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/louisefron/2013/12/23/get-that-job-nine-ways-to-interview-with-confidence/#d776e7a93c62>

The Muse - questions you may be asked in an internship interview:

<https://www.themuse.com/advice/the-best-interview-questions-to-ask-interns>

Grammarly: <https://app.grammarly.com/>

7 Best Campus Rep Jobs: <https://bookscouter.com/blog/2019/06/7-best-campus-rep-jobs-to-apply-to-before-the-fall-semester>