

Locating and Applying for Internships

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An internship allows you to test your career objectives, helps you identify your talents, and directs you toward an appropriate career, while helping you acquire essential practical and professional skills you need in the business world. It also lets you see how well you fit into a specific company's culture.

But finding an internship takes some preparation. Before setting out to find an internship, ask yourself these questions:

- Where do I want to do an internship? My hometown? Out-of-state?
- What type of work would I like to do? In what field?
- What type of organization would I like to do an internship for?
- What do I want to gain from an internship? What specific skills or experiences do I want to acquire?

Locating opportunities

- After you've answered these questions, you're ready to start searching for internships. Here are some suggestions for locating employers and internship opportunities:
- Visit your career services office. Many offices have internship listings and may be able to help you locate other resources such as books, employer files and directories, and websites.
- Check with your academic adviser to see if your department maintains listings of internship opportunities in your field of study.
- Attend job fairs. Employers often use fairs to identify students for internships as well as for full-time employment.
- Visit the websites of companies where you might want to do your internship so that you can tailor your resume and cover letter to the employer.
- Contact the Chamber of Commerce of the city where you would like to work to obtain information about local employers.
- Network. Talk with friends, family, co-workers, supervisors, instructors, administrators, and professionals in your field of study, and let them know you are searching for an internship.

Applying for an internship

Each employer has its own application process. Does the company want you to apply online? What is the deadline? What will the employer need from you to make your application complete? Start the process early. Here are a few tips to get you started:

- Keep your resume to one page.

- Place contact information at the top of your resume. Include your name, address, and phone number.
- Use an objective near the top of your resume that is general enough to encompass all the opportunities you would consider but specific enough to let the reader know what type of position you seek.
- Your education section should include your degree, major and minor, anticipated graduation date, and name and location of the college you are attending. You may also want to include a list of related course work.
- Describe your related experience using action verbs.
- Visit your career services office for sample resumes and have a career counselor review your resume.

You will also need to write a cover letter to accompany your resume. Structure your letter along these lines:

- First paragraph—State your purpose for writing—your interest in the internship opportunity.
- Second paragraph—Highlight your education, experience, and personal qualities that you can bring to the position.
- Final paragraph—This is your "action" paragraph. Ask for an interview and let the employer know how you plan to follow up. Include information that will help the employer contact you for an interview.
- Close—Thank the employer for considering your application.
- Make your cover letter reflect your personality and unique qualities while also showing off your great writing skills.
- Proofread. Remember that you never get a second chance to make a good first impression.

Choosing an internship

Your final task is to select the internship opportunity that is the best match for you. Review your goals for doing an internship and choose the opportunity that best meets those goals.

- An internship offers many benefits, including:
- Valuable experience. Many employers want to hire people who have experience and can step into the job and be productive right from the start.
- Information. An internship will help you make contacts, get ideas, and learn about the field.
- Practical application. You will have the chance to apply theories learned in the classroom to a real-world setting. When you return to the classroom after your internship, you will better understand the many nuances of business operations that relate to the theories you study.
- In many cases, an internship can lead to a job offer.

Courtesy of the National Association of Colleges and Employers.