



Quick Tips: Finding a Co-op/Internship

BASIC TIPS:

Internships are one of the most effective ways to help you define your career goals and figure out what career you may want to pursue in life. Internships are an invaluable learning tool for college students and an ideal way to evaluate potential careers and employers. They also offer “real world” experience which many of today’s employers are looking for when hiring students. By taking the following steps, you will be more likely to achieve job search and career success after graduating from college.

1. Identify Your Career Interests

Think about what type of field you want to work in and what interests you. Do you like to work outdoors, with children, or with money? Are you interested in making a difference in the world and working for a non-profit organization? Are you interested in investment banking, the law, or in working with the elderly? Internships can give you hands on experience and firsthand exposure to opportunities in nearly every field imaginable, and they offer you a valuable way to check out exciting career fields.

2. Determine Your Requirements/Goals

You need to consider what you are looking for in an internship. Do you need to earn money or can you work for free? How far can you realistically travel for your internship?

Here is a list of some key points for you to consider:

- Full-time or Part-Time Internship
- Paid or Unpaid Position
- Summer Internship or Year Round Internship
- Geographic Restrictions
- Transportation Requirements
- Type of Company/Organization and Corporate Culture Desired
- College Credit Needed or Not

3. Start Early

Begin researching internships sooner rather than later, so you have a “leg up” on the process. Plan to give yourself a couple months at least to identify potential internships and apply for them. Some industries have early deadlines and others are extreme competitive to land, so you want to know



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this well in advance in order to keep your options open. Check with your Career Services Office at your school to learn about potential internships as well as deadlines for applying. Freshman year is not too soon to start looking into internships, since you will learn a lot about potential employers and about the interviewing process in general.

4. **Check out Online Resources**

There are numerous websites that list internships and offer great leads. Some of these websites include www.Internships.com, www.CollegeGrad.com, www.CollegeRecruiter.com, <http://www.Monster.com> and <http://www.About.com> (see our **How to Research Companies video** for additional information). Check with your career center, since it may have an online data base of potential internships with particular ties to your school's alumni which can be helpful. You can also check out the online classified ads of your local newspaper to identify employers who may be interested in hiring interns.

5. **Network, Network, Network!**

Speak with your parents, relatives, friends, parent's friends, college faculty and advisors, and career counselors in your school's Career Services Office to let them know you are seeking an internship and what type of internship you want (see our **Networking video** for tips). Contact alumni and recent graduates from your school with the help of your career counselors. Check with local businesses that you enjoy visiting including restaurants and shops, since they may have internships available. Informational interviews are a great way to network, identify possible internships, and get some practice interviewing (see our **Informational Interviewing video** for tips). Always send thank you notes to those who help you or meet with you to show your appreciation for their expertise and time given (see our **Thank You Note video** for tips).

6. **Attend Career Fairs**

Check with your Career Services Office to learn about career and/or internship fairs at your school, in the local community, and/or in nearby major cities. Top recruiters attend these fairs to recruit and hire talented interns and potential employees. Be sure to have your resume in hand and be prepared to give a 1 minute "Elevator Pitch" or introduction to the recruiter, describing your skills, educational background, relevant experience, and interests (see our **Elevator Pitch video** for details). Make sure you follow up with recruiters after the career fair to let them know of your genuine interest in interning with their company.

7. Contact Employers

Email, write a letter, or phone employers in your region and/or in your career area of interest to inquire about potential internships. Be prepared to give your 1 minute “elevator pitch,” highlighting your skills, education, experience, and interest in interning for the company. Attempt to set up in-person interviews whenever possible, since nothing beats a personal meeting. If an employer can put a face and voice to a name, you will stick out among the stacks of resumes potential employers receive. If a company doesn’t have an internship available currently, consider setting up an informational interview which could potentially lead to an internship in the future.

8. Practice Your Interview Skills

As internships become more competitive to land, it becomes more important for you to perfect your job search skills. Spend time polishing your resume, cover letter, elevator pitch, and interview skills. Review our CareerSpots videos on these topics for critical tips. Counselors at your career center can help you improve these skills, and there are many online articles that are also helpful.

9. Follow up with Employers

Once you have found some internship possibilities and applied for them, be sure to follow up with each company. Call or email the key contact and be persistent without being a pest. Send a thank you note after an in-person interview, and several days later follow up with a thank you call.

10. Find Your Passions

Look at every internship opportunity as a chance to learn something new about your future career. Even if it’s not a dream internship, don’t write it off. Go in with an open mind, look for the immediate opportunities as well as what experiences the internship may present down the road. Work hard once in the position, always with an eye on the next step.