



# Internships: Be an Interview MVP

Avoid rookie interview errors and score your dream internship.

## Ace the interview. Win the internship.

You've applied for your dream internship and landed that big interview. Congratulations! Recruiters may screen through hundreds of applicants to identify a handful of interview candidates. So making it to the interview is proof that you meet critical qualifications for the role.

However, even if you have worked hard up to the interview date, you can still lose out on an internship by making any one of several common rookie mistakes. Know what to look out for. Don't give your interviewer a reason to pass on your candidacy.

## Know your strengths.

Many students and young professionals feel like they do not have the skills or experience to qualify for an internship. That is simply not the case! An internship is an opportunity for a company to teach you skills, while you contribute your knowledge of industry basics and current market trends that you have learned during your studies.

For example, if a recruiter asks if you have prior experience creating marketing collateral, instead of saying "No, I do not have experience designing marketing materials," say, "Yes, I have learned the basic principles of marketing communication in my Design 101 class. I am eager to apply what I have learned and contribute my knowledge during my internship." Emphasize the skills and knowledge that you do have, including volunteer, class project, and extracurricular activities. These all count!

## Know the company.

You don't have to know everything about your field of study before interviewing for an internship, but you should be an expert on two simple things: yourself and the role for which you are applying. One of the biggest rookie mistakes that internship candidates make is not researching the company and role before the interview date. Search for the company using online news sites, and look at the company website for relevant information. Identify the company values. And don't forget to look at

the internship job description carefully before you interview. What skills are most important for the role? Think of specific examples of when you have performed similar tasks and used similar skills.

## Act like a professional.

This means dressing appropriately, no electronic device distractions, and showing up on time, well prepared. You will not be taken seriously if you dress in anything other than business attire. Your clothes should be neat and clean. Make sure your phone is turned off and in your pocket or purse. Also, do not text while you are waiting for your interviewer; use the time to quietly gather your thoughts. If you have to, leave your phone or mobile device in your car or at home to guarantee it doesn't interrupt your interview. Show up 10 to 15 minutes early. Arriving on time is the same thing as being late; you want to demonstrate your enthusiasm for the job by arriving a few minutes ahead. Lastly, be prepared. Have at least five copies of your résumé in a folder or binder—you never know how many people you might be meeting. The general rule is, the more people you meet with, the better!

## Make a commitment. And keep it!

Finally, if you are interviewing for an internship, be prepared to commit to the entirety of that internship experience. If you can only intern eight hours a week during the semester, make sure you are meeting the minimum total hours required by the company and your school (if any). If your internship supervisor needs an intern on Mondays and Wednesdays, schedule your classes for Tuesdays and Thursdays. Be a pro—emphasize what you bring, show your enthusiasm, and demonstrate responsibility. You'll position yourself as the #1 draft pick everyone wants on their team!



## i n a nutshell:

Even if you qualify for an interview, you haven't yet won the internship. So focus on these key points:

- **Emphasize your skills and knowledge**
- **Highlight experience you DO have and the value it brings to the internship**
- **Research the company and internship role beforehand; never wing an interview**
- **Pair professional appearance and behavior with ability and enthusiasm; plus, don't be late**
- **Commit to the hours and days, and keep that commitment**

Treat your internship interview with the same respect you would for a job interview. An internship may be short-term, but the experience you gain—and the impressions you leave—are not.