MISSION AND VISION

The Greater Cleveland Partnership mobilizes private-sector leadership, expertise and resources to create attractive business conditions that create jobs, grow investment and improve the economic prosperity of the region.

Guidebook Contents
An Introduction to Internships 4
What is an Internship 6
Finding an Internship 10
The Application Process 14
The Interview Process 20
The First Day 26
Throughout your Internship 30
The Last Day and Beyond 34
AN INTRODUCTION TO INTERNSHIPS

The further you progress through your educational career, the more you’ll start hearing about internships. And the more you hear about them, the more you’re probably going to start wanting one for yourself.
WHY PURSUE AN INTERNSHIP
Maybe it’s to fulfill a graduation requirement, or maybe you’ve heard that an internship looks great on a resume. Or, if you’re anything like me, you might just be sick of working in the food industry.

No matter your reason for pursuing an internship, beginning your search will become a vital step in launching your professional career. Unfortunately, it might also be an intimidating one.

Most students don’t yet think of themselves as professionals and aren’t sure what they can expect when they finally make the transition to a more “grown-up job.” I know from firsthand experience how difficult the initial stages of that transition can be, but I also know a thing or two about how to get past them and to excel in your new position.

After careful observation, a little bit of research, and a great deal of conversation with my fellow interns, I was able to compile a list of tips and tricks that began to make my job much easier and much more enjoyable. I began building quality relationships with my mentors and co-workers, and, as a result, they started getting me involved in more and more engaging projects.

Eventually, they gave me the chance to take the lead on an exciting new project: turning what I learned throughout my internship into a comprehensive guide that would walk future interns completely through the process—from the job search to the last day. Essentially, to create the guide that I wish I had access to when I started the process.

This manual is designed to inspire confidence and prepare you to make the most out of your internship experience, no matter where you find yourself in the process. Feel free to navigate in whatever way seems helpful but be sure to constantly check back as you continue to check off steps.

Hopefully, this guide can help you transform your internship into much more than just a resume-booster or a check mark on your degree requirements list. Armed with the right information and an ability to hit the ground running, you’ll be able to apply skills you’ve learned in the classroom, make connections in your local business community, and potentially even discover a direction in which you might want to move your future career.

And you should be able to have a little fun along the way, too.

— Nate Roman
Former GCP Marketing and Communications Intern
WHAT IS AN INTERNSHIP
THE BASICS OF AN INTERNSHIP

An internship is an employer-based learning experience that allows a student to apply academic content in a professional setting. For many high school and college students, an internship is their first voyage into the “adult” job market or office setting and often their first chance to apply what they’ve been studying.

Most students already have some concept of what an internship is and what an intern can expect to be doing, but often this is a bit skewed. We’ll try our best to straighten it all out for you. The following pages contain just a few of the basics.
Internships promote career and personal development
That’s the end goal of all this—that you, the intern, are influenced by a whole new set of experiences and that these experiences help you to make wise career choices in the future.

Internships exist in a variety of formats. This guide will focus primarily on summer internships, meaning that you’ll probably need to tweak the timelines a little, if you’re looking for an internship that takes place during the school year. If this is the case, you’ll probably want to pay attention to your university’s job listings site when it comes to finding your internship.

Internships are temporary
The time range for an internship can vary considerably, but most last around three months, roughly the length of a summer break from college.

Internships can be part-time or full-time
This also varies from company to company. You’ll find that a common theme throughout this manual. No two internships are the same, but we’ll do our best to prepare you for whatever the “real world” throws at you.

The internship schedule should be mutually determined by the intern and employer. Do not accept a full-time internship if you can only work part-time. Look for internships that best fit your schedule.

Internships can be paid or unpaid
We know working for free sounds like a drag but don’t let that discourage you from pursuing an internship. An internship is designed to benefit a student as much as possible in the long term, and sometimes that means putting off short-term compensation in favor of benefits down the road.

Sure, a summer job will put a couple thousand dollars in your pocket, but it might not do much to give you a sense of career direction or set you apart from other candidates applying for a job after you graduate.

“My internship has given me a great taste of the business world in Cleveland and taught me valuable new professional skills. My end goal is to eventually work for myself, and I feel like my internship gave me a great idea of the tools I’ll need to make this possible.”

— Andre Cartagena
Former GCP Business Development Intern
Interns are highly valuable to companies

Let’s make this very clear: interns aren’t nuisances. Your boss won’t be annoyed by questions, and he or she won’t just be looking for ways to keep you busy and out of the way. An intern is a valuable asset to any company, and you’ll find yourself appreciated for a wide variety of reasons, namely:

» Your fresh perspective on organizational issues: A new pair of eyes often catches what more seasoned ones have grown accustomed to not seeing. Interns are capable of seeing beyond “the way we’ve always done it” approach and questioning processes that have become outdated or that could be improved.

» Your familiarity with technology and social media: Interns grew up doing everything with 14 browser windows open at a time and usually speak social media as a second language. Businesses love this technological know-how and hope that interns will share some of this knowledge with them in order to maximize efficiency. Many companies may be wasting countless hours on projects that could easily be solved by an intern’s natural instincts, such as, “Google it,” or, “there’s probably an app for that.”

» Cost-effective assistance on projects: As an intern, you’ll do so much more than fetch coffee and make copies (although you can expect to do a little of that as well). An energetic, motivated intern can help staff make quick work of a project that has been hanging over everyone’s heads for far too long. Your willingness to participate or to dedicate your youthful enthusiasm to whatever project is assigned to you can make you quite a hero around the office.

*When you begin an internship, you’ll get so much more than just busy work. They’re going to be giving you real work that’s important to the company every single day.*

— Avery Porco
Former COSE Workers’ Compensation Intern

Additional benefits for companies

In addition, employers see internships as a way to give back to the community. Without even realizing it, you’ll be playing a huge role in revitalizing and reenergizing your city’s economy by:

» Playing a critical role in developing the workforce: Obviously, you’re developing your own professional skills and laying the groundwork for a promising career, but it doesn’t stop there. Your internship is a win-win for business. You’ll learn a lot about what you can expect from your future jobs, and your employer will learn a lot about what they can expect from (and how they can most effectively manage) the next generation of up-and-coming professionals.

» Providing a cost-effective way for employers to recruit and evaluate potential employees: We can’t emphasize this enough: You want to impress your employer. The companies that are hiring interns now are going to be the same companies hiring young professionals in a few years. These industry connections will be priceless when you begin a career search. There’s no easier way to get your resume sorted to the top of a pile of applicants than having internship experience (and a positive reputation) at that company.

» Bringing diversity into the workforce: Internships funnel creative energy into the downtown area, and everyone appreciates seeing this lively spirit in action, whether it’s by the water cooler, in a meeting, or out and about during a lunch hour. Many employers are also using their internship programs to recruit diverse talent to their organizations.

*The business community really does care about so much more than improving profits. They’re constantly making efforts to better all of the places and people that they interact with.*

— Isabelle Hanna
Former GCP Economic Inclusion Intern
FINDING AN INTERNSHIP
WHERE AND HOW TO BEGIN
Finding the right internship isn’t easy, but a wide variety of online tools have been designed specifically to make this search easier. We’ve done our best to compile a comprehensive list of resources that may be useful throughout the search process. Make no mistake: This will be a time-consuming search, so it’s never too early to start.

It’s critical that you find an internship that will be both beneficial and enjoyable, and to do so, you’ll probably have to look through several job descriptions that wouldn’t be logical next steps in your personal career development.

Don’t rush to send applications to the first somewhat suitable positions that pop up; invest extra time and energy into your search and find something that you’ll be excited to wake up for every morning. The goal is to find a few positions that you’re really interested in by the middle of March for a summer internship.

The first step in seeking an internship is to identify the kind of position where you would “fit.” This means carefully surveying your personal interests and skills to get a better sense of departments, companies or job settings that would (or would not) be well-suited to you.

Here are a few guiding questions to help you out along your journey:
**What’s my major?**

Or, if you don’t have one yet, what are you considering? This will probably play heavily into the career you eventually choose, so try to align this with your internship as much as possible. For example, a political science major should probably look for internships tied to the government in some way, while an accounting major would probably be better served in (brace yourself) an accounting internship.

“As a political science major, I came in with interests in politics and law, and my internship built my understanding of these fields by allowing me to get in-depth looks at political issues and to speak with the local professionals who know these issues the best.”

—* Michael Ittu  
Former GCP Government Advocacy Intern

**Where do I want to work?**

Downtown, in the suburbs, or somewhere else? This one’s all personal preference.

**What do I want to do?**

Is there one particular skill (writing, networking, etc.) that you want to develop, or are you just looking for any internship in a particular department?

“I realized that I like to have a lot of creative tasks and that I tend to get bored too easily with research projects. Ideally, I want to have something different to do every day.”

—* Alexis Millard  
Former COSE Digital Marketing Intern

**What kind of company can I see myself working for?**

Big, small, or mid-market? Think about it, because interning at a company that’s a similar size to the one you’d work for in your dream job can be advantageous.

**Company size by number of employees:**

- 100 or less: Small Business
- 100 - 499: Middle-Market Business
- 500 or more: Large Corporation

**Still stumped?**

That’s not a problem; career choices can seem daunting in the early stages of a professional career. We recommend taking a look at the iSeek Career Cluster Guide.

Organized to offer insight into each of the 16 different career clusters, this guide will walk you through the hobbies and majors that usually indicate a match for a specific cluster, as well as the different careers and pathways you can expect to find within it.

Once you have a more refined sense of what you’re looking for, it’s time to start tapping into some of those resources we mentioned earlier. It’s important that you familiarize yourself with all of them, because you never know which avenue will hold the link to your dream internship.

The best approach would be to start with the more concentrated local resources before moving on to the national sites.

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**The best times to search for an internship**

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Personal connections
This doesn’t mean pulling strings or calling in favors (usually), but your friends and family might have some knowledge about internships or internship programs that are hard to find through anything but good old-fashioned word-of-mouth.

University job listings or alumni networks
You know those “Career Services Spotlight” or “Hire a (insert your mascot name)” e-mails that your school floods your inbox with?

It’s finally time to start reading them or to check out some of the dustier tabs on your university’s website. You’ll often find some incredible internship opportunities, and these might be available exclusively to students at your college. Just be sure to brush up on the “glory days” of your school’s football team before you head into the interview.

Local employers
You might be surprised at the internships available on the websites of some of our region’s most exciting businesses. Take a look at companies that cater to a specific interest of yours, whether it be sports (Cleveland Indians), art (Cleveland Museum of Art), health services (Cleveland Clinic), or music (Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and Museum).

Whatever your interest, check to see if one of the local companies you already love does any work with internships.

Regional and statewide internship resources
These are absolute must-stops, even if you’ve already found a few intriguing positions. These organizations are dedicated to pairing aspiring young professionals (that’s you) with quality internships.

» NEO Talent Exchange: Cultivates homegrown talent through a variety of internship and co-op programs.

» Cleveland Foundation: Links students with local nonprofits and governmental agencies through a summer internship program.

» Summer on the Cuyahoga: Offers students a wide variety of internships that fully reflect the diversity of the Northeast Ohio economy.

» OhioMeansInternships: Allows students to post resumes and search hundreds of local internships through the OhioMeansJobs database.

National websites and social media
Buyer beware. These larger websites should be your last resort. They are typically cluttered with information and are difficult to sort through, and this can often mean a lot of wasted time digging through pages and pages of irrelevant search results. Always narrow search parameters and evaluate listings carefully.

» LinkedIn: This isn’t a very time-consuming step, but setting up a LinkedIn account that accurately reflects your experiences and presents you in a professional light is crucial to an online first impression, should that become necessary.

» Internships.com: More than 100,000 internships, all listed in one place. The catch: you only need one. Patience and common sense are virtues in this super-competitive job listings haystack.

» Glassdoor: Another overstocked website, but it does have a couple additional perks. Listings often contain detailed reviews of the company, the position, and even the interviewer. It’s worth checking out.

» Google: The haystack of all haystacks. You never know what might be posted on a site you’re not familiar with. When all else fails, Google it.
THE APPLICATION PROCESS
GET NOTICED AND STAND OUT

You did it, congratulations! You’ve waded through hundreds of search results, carefully compared dozens of job listings, and finally found a position that fits you and is accepting applications. Or maybe you just did some string-pulling. Either way, it’s time to apply.

It’s important to note that most summer internships will be accepting applications in late March or early April, so you’ll want to have all of your materials squared away by then. The application process can stressful, but the tips and links in the next sections should help simplify and streamline that process and ensure that you lock down a deal-sealing interview in the near future.
Creating a resume

Studies have shown that reviewers typically spend less than six seconds looking over a resume. Less than six. First impressions are vital when up against such a short time window, but if you know exactly what reviewers will be looking for, you might be able to keep their attention for a little longer. Think seven seconds. Maybe even eight. Here’s what you need to show them:

- **Professional font**: Sticking with the classics is always a good approach. You can’t go wrong with a Size 11 Times New Roman, Arial, or Calibri font.

- **Flawless spelling and grammar**: Proofread your resume until you’re thoroughly sick of reading it. And after that, ask your friends and family to look it over until they’re sick of it, too.

- **One page only**: A staple on an entry-level resume is almost guaranteed to send an applicant to the “no” pile. Reviewers are looking for concise, organized resumes with a “quality over quantity” approach.

- **Prominent contact info**: This is the first thing reviewers will try to find. Making it easy to locate will give them more time to look over your job-winning info. Be sure to have a professional email or school email address. Employers will not be impressed by “cutesy” email addresses.

- **Bullet points**: This organizational scheme makes your resume easily “skimmable” and a time saver for your reviewer.

- **A work experience section**: Feature the experience section as close to the top of your resume as possible, since it’s the section that potential employers care about the most. Tailor descriptions of your experience to the job description of the position you’re applying for. For example, if you’re applying for a sales internship and used to work at a sandwich shop, make sure you highlight your experience interacting with customers rather than your ability to grill mouth-watering cheese steaks. Clearly label company names and years worked. This allows reviewers who skim over information to get a solid general idea of your career path.

- **An education section**: At this point in your career, this should probably include both your high school and your college experiences, awards and distinctions, and a major if you have one. If your GPA is lower than a 3.0, feel free to leave it out, but don’t “fix” it. Be honest.

- **A skills section**: Just a bulleted list of a few succinct taglines will do. Maybe something like, “confident, enthusiastic oral communicator,” or “somewhat competent writer of internship manuals.” Or whatever applies. The goal here is to give your employer an idea of what they can expect from you or what sort of project your skills might benefit the most.

- **Leadership experience**: If you’ve been involved as a leader in any sort of organization or company, include it. This could even be its own section if you feel you have enough leadership experience to fill it up.

- **Impact**: Potential employers want to see what you did, not what you were. This means your resume should read, “increased club membership by 13 people through a targeted recruiting campaign,” rather than, “was responsible for club recruiting campaigns.” Employers want employees who can make a difference. Show them that you’ve done it before.
Other resume considerations
What’s the correct margin size? Should my name be centered or aligned left? When is it appropriate to use italics? The questions go on and on. The truth is, there is no one right way to lay out a resume. As long as it includes the appropriate information and looks professional, you’re golden.

That being said, we understand if you’re not a graphic design pro. There are a wealth of online resume building sites that can make the whole process as easy as picking a template you like and filling in text boxes, using our tips, of course.

Lastly, find someone with business experience to give your resume a final review. A parent or family friend can work in a pinch, but the best place to look for this type of service is usually within your college’s career services department. Many schools have scheduled resume review workshops on a fairly regular basis.

Resume resources
» ResumeHelp.com
» ResumeGenius.com
» LiveCareer.com
Creating a cover letter

No templates for this. Cover letters can’t be reduced to a simple formula and mass-produced. This is all about displaying your unique strengths and the unique advantage that you can provide to the company that you’re applying for. So be sure to:

» **Adapt it to fit the internship:** You can’t just write one cover letter and expect to be able to use it for every job you apply for. A cover letter should be customized for each individual job listing to ensure that you’re highlighting what that company wants to see in a candidate.

» **Lead with an attention-grabbing headline:** This could be something like, “Available Immediately: Sales Intern Who Routinely Sells Water to Fish.” Get creative on this one.

» **Personalize a greeting:** If at all possible, try to figure out who will be reviewing your application. Carefully read the job listing for clues of who the hiring manager is and search the company website for additional information. If you cannot find the name, use a generic and gender neutral salutation such as “Dear Hiring Manager” or “To Whom it May Concern.”

» **Use references:** If you were referred by a specific person, include their name and any relevant context in the letter.

» **Never use the following phrase:** “My name is ______, and I’m applying for…” The reader already knows this and doesn’t need to be reminded.

» **Don’t repeat your resume:** You’re not just converting your resume into paragraphs here. You’re creating a completely new product that’s meant to complement your resume, but not imitate it.

» **Highlight what sets you apart:** If you have any sort of experience that other applicants may not have, or you made some sort of monumental impact on a prior company or project, that should show up pretty early in your letter. Use your cover letter to draw attention to common themes form the different experiences and show how they combine to make you a qualified candidate for the internship you’re applying for.

» **Close strong—and quickly:** This is critical: Don’t ramble or repeat in your conclusion. Quickly explain how your experiences have prepared you for the job, and then get on with it.

» **Sign your name in pen:** You might even want to include a very brief handwritten note as well. Something like, “Eagerly awaiting a chance to talk.”

» **And just like on your resume, keep it to a page or less:** Spend most of your time addressing experience; make contact info prominent; focus on impact and use as many action verbs as possible; thank the reader for taking the time to read; proofread and have a friend, family member or counselor read, as well.
Cleaning up your social media accounts

Recent studies have shown that around half of employers use some sort of social media evaluation when trying to figure out whether a job candidate would be a good fit for their company.

If reading that sentence gave you a lump in your throat, then it looks like we've got some work to do, and this all has to be done before you finally send in your applications.

» **First, Google yourself:** This allows you to see which of your social media accounts pop up and to review any articles or websites where your name was featured. At this point in your life, you probably (hopefully) don’t have too much negative publicity in the press, but it’s still important to know what an employer would see if they were to type your name in the search bar.

» **Consider going private:** All of the largest social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) allow you to make your account “private,” essentially hiding all personal information from users that you haven’t given permission to see your posts. While this does prevent a potential employer from being able to easily find anything inappropriate, it also prevents you from being able to use social media to your advantage. An up-beat, professional, and carefully monitored social media presence can impress a potential employer, and many appreciate seeing this level of openness from a job candidate.

» **Profile information:** Review this on all different social media platforms. Employers could be looking for a few key items in the first section that they read.

» **Appropriate usernames:** Your Facebook username should be your real name; Twitter and Instagram handles should ideally be as close to your name as possible.

» **Accurate information:** Update your education and work information. As fun as it was to have 137 friends tagged as siblings, it’s finally time to delete the ones who really aren’t actual relatives.

» **Appropriate profile picture:** This doesn’t mean you need a professional headshot taken; there is such a thing as a picture that’s both fun and wholesome. Just remember: no bathing suits and no alcohol. Basically, avoid anything you wouldn’t want to explain to your grandma at the Thanksgiving dinner table.

» **Review your previous posts:** Look to remove anything inappropriate. Unfortunately, once you post something on the internet, its traces will always be out there for anyone who wants to take the time to look. Luckily for you though, most employers won’t break their backs to find deleted posts when reviewing entry-level candidates. A quick clean-up should have your accounts ready to go.

» **Delete posts that contain any of the following:** Political or religious rants; criticisms of previous employers; particularly poor grammar; offensive or crude language; references to drugs or alcohol; anything that makes you wince and think, “Who was I two years ago?”

» **Use the “grandma rule” for photos:** This doesn’t mean you have to delete your personality. Your pictures should still give anyone who views your profile a sense of what you’ve done and what you and your friends like to do, assuming you have other hobbies besides wearing bathing suits and drinking alcohol.

» **Review your interactions:** The people and pages that you interact with can speak volumes about you, and it’s easy for employers to click on your likes, friends, or followers tab. Cleaning up your interactions means managing your retweets and reposts, as well as monitoring the reputations of the accounts and pages that you follow. You should review all content that you’ve reposted using the same criteria as you used when reviewing your own posts.

» **Think about your activity:** Your account should be active, but not too active. Employers like seeing candidates who are engaged online, but you’re bound to scare them away if you post four new tweets during the couple of minutes they take to look over your account. It might be time to tone it down a few notches.

» **Should you follow up your application?** Simply put, don’t. For an entry-level or internship level position, this is often viewed as unnecessary, aggressive, or annoying. You have put a lot of work into your application, but you need to give the employer time, recognizing that there is a chance that you might not hear from them at all. If you’ve put together a quality resume and cover letter, though, these will do all the work for you at this point in the process. However, the rules will change a little after your interview. Don’t forget to check back.
THE INTERVIEW PROCESS
HERE’S YOUR TIME TO SHINE

Good news! You already made the most difficult impression and did so well enough to secure an interview.

Now you have a chance to interact directly with your future employer, and you’ll soon find that makes this whole process a lot easier than sending off a little bit of information about yourself and hoping that whoever is reading it happens to be having a pleasant day at work.

You’re in control of the way you’re viewed from here on out, and you’re in luck because we’ve got all the tips you need to knock your first business communication out of the park.
Scheduling an interview

The first impression in an interview starts long before the handshake. Your first communication with an employer sets the tone for your interview and often doesn’t take place until after they’ve looked over (and fallen in love with) your resume.

For a summer internship, you’ll most likely be trying to find times towards the end of April or even in the early weeks of May. Scheduling isn’t rocket science; be accommodating and find a time that works for both of you.

Our goal, though, is to keep the tiny details of professional e-mail or phone etiquette from feeling like life-or-death, “can’t-remember-if-it’s-the-red-or-the-green-wire” decision, and to send you into your first business in-person interaction poised and confident. Also, don’t forget to add your interview date and time in your calendar.

Email etiquette

This one’s easy. You’re not on the spot, and the backspace feature is one that we’ve all found ourselves wishing existed during a phone call or face-to-face conversation at some point.

Take advantage of it and write a few drafts, if you need to feel comfortable. Just be sure you’re following these basic rules while spelling out your gratitude for the invitation to interview (and for all the other e-mails you’ll need to send once hired).

» **Respond promptly:** This doesn’t mean you have to respond within four minutes of receiving an e-mail, but you should try to get back to the sender on the same business day.

» **Include a subject line:** Generally, this is only four to six words, but it should give an idea of the e-mail’s content.

» **Include a formal, professional greeting:** This can be as simple as “Dear Mr. Insert Last Name of person who emailed you,” or “Ms. Insert Last Name of person who emailed you.”

» **Introduce yourself:** Quickly state your purpose to every new contact that you find it necessary to e-mail.

» **Avoid text slang:** No matter how colloquial it’s become, it needs to be left out. Remember, Mr. Employer is not your “bro,” and would “probly” appreciate it if you took the time to spell out “probably.”

» **Be concise:** Say everything that you need to say, but get to the point. It’s courteous not to take up too much of your reader’s time.

» **Don’t be shy:** If you have a question, don’t be afraid to ask it. Potential employers won’t think something like, “Where would be the best place to park around the office?” is annoying. More than likely, they’ll actually be impressed by your thoughtfulness.

» **Be professional but warm:** Formal doesn’t mean rigid. Read over all your e-mails before you send them to make sure that you haven’t become some sort of corporate robot. You want your reader to be able to picture you saying anything you wrote with a polite smile.

» **Give your reader an invitation to respond:** “Let me know if this is agreeable,” or, “I’d be happy to answer any additional questions,” goes a long way towards making you seem concerned with your reader’s opinion.

» **Thank the reader in your conclusion:** Let the employer know that you appreciate him or her taking the time to invite you in or for answering questions you might have had.

» **Include a signature:** Always make sure to sign your e-mails. Closing with a simple “Thanks,” or “Best,” before your name is all it takes. You should also consider creating a signature template that displays your full name and contact info at the bottom of all of your e-mails.
Phone etiquette

A telephone interview can be a little more stressful, as it demands a quicker response. On the bright side, it does guarantee that you won’t make any embarrassing spelling errors.

Just as with e-mail, there is a standard procedure. This list of etiquette tips will ensure that you present yourself favorably to your future supervisor and will remain a useful guide as you start making more important phone calls through your professional career.

» Minimize background noise: Be sure to choose a quiet setting where your call can be carried out uninterrupted. Let anyone who might interrupt know that you’re going to be on an important call and that you need them to keep it down until after you’re off the phone.

» Lead with a strong introduction: Introduce yourself and tell why you’re calling. Maybe even practice this out loud a few times before the call. Trust me: It’s embarrassing if your employer has to ask.

» Ask if this is a convenient time: Chances are that it is. However, taking one quick second to verify this with your employer conveys a great deal of respect and courtesy.

» Sound interested and interesting: When your employer can’t see your facial expressions or body language, your voice is the only tool you have to keep them interested in what you’re saying. The easiest way to keep them interested is to sound interested. Even if it might feel a little ridiculous at first, walking around the room and smiling while talking on the phone goes a long way towards helping your pitch to sound varied and engaging.

» Record a clear, professional voicemail: You probably haven’t heard your own voicemail in quite a while, but if it’s left over from sixth grade, you need to change that right now.

When employers try to return or follow up one of your calls, they want to hear something like, “Hi, you’ve reached the voicemail of...” They do not want to hear the old, “Hello? (pause) Oh, I’m doing well, how are you?” skit that eventually ends in a “Gotcha! This isn’t me; it’s my voicemail!” This would throw all the hard work you’ve done up to this point completely out the window.
Preparing for the interview

Deep breaths now. Remember, this is a conversation, not an interrogation. Candidates often put far too much pressure on themselves by expecting to be put under a microscope or grilled by the "bad cop," but when they finally sit down for the interview, they often realize that it’s a whole lot more light-hearted than they expected and that the interviewer will do just as much (if not more) of the talking.

If we could offer only one tip to an intern walking into an interview, it would be to simply relax. We figured you’re probably looking for few more, so here’s a list:

» Do your research. You’re not expected to be an expert on the company, but the only question that’s guaranteed to be in the interview is, “What do you already know about what we do here?” The only bad answer is “Nothing.” Familiarize yourself with the company’s website, mission, and important employees before you show up to the interview.

» Get plenty of sleep. On the day of the interview, you don’t want to be relying on your second cup of coffee to keep your eyes open. A full night’s sleep will keep you alert and attentive.

» Dress to impress. You only get one shot at this. Look like the young professional you’re aspiring to be. Even if the job itself doesn’t require you to dress formally, the interview does. Think one step beyond what you’ll be wearing to the job every day.

» Bring a copy of your resume. It’s always smart to carry a copy of your resume or of anything (a report or paper, for example) referenced in your resume to the interview. “Yes, I’ve actually got a couple of them right here if you wanted to take a look.” Sounds good, right? It would be a good idea to carry a simple portfolio with your resume, cover letter and a notepad.

» Arrive on time. You probably guessed it: On time means early. For an interview, you should have already checked in with a receptionist by about 15 minutes before the interview is scheduled to begin. This means that your commute should be planned carefully, taking parking and traffic into account, to ensure that you show up with plenty of time to spare.

» Confidence is key. Proceed straight to the reception desk and introduce yourself and your reason for coming in. If you can’t find the desk, ask someone nearby immediately. You shouldn’t try to navigate the office on your own; always ask for assistance when you first show up.

» Stay off your phone: You can go without checking Twitter or Instagram for 15 minutes. You don’t want your employer to see a millennial glued to their smartphone screen when they come out to greet you. You want them to see a poised young professional waiting patiently or consulting company info that’s often available in the reception area. And remember to turn off your phone for the interview. Nothing will distract you and the interviewer more than a ringing or vibrating phone.

» Introduce yourself with a firm handshake: Everyone knows this step, but not everyone does it well. Firm pressure, strong eye contact, a winning smile, and a warm “nice to meet you” are all it takes. If you’re nervous about this step, practice. Your friends and family would be happy to help. Or just go to door to door and introduce yourself to strangers. Whatever it takes.

» Take notes: Your interviewer will most likely begin with some sort of overview of what their company does. You should already know most of this from your research, but jotting down a few notes (with a pen and piece of paper that you brought with you) shows that you’re engaged and that you’re trying to absorb the info. Just be sure to keep the note taking brief and to spend the vast majority of time making eye contact with your interviewer.

» Keep your answers relatively short: First-date rules apply, so don’t bore your future boss with a never-ending stream of stories about the mission trip you took two years ago. Answer questions completely but do so as quickly and naturally as you can.

» Maintain good posture: Strong body language throughout the interview goes a long way. Avoid nervous fidgeting and slouching at all costs.

» Ask questions. Most, if not all interviews, will end with your interviewer asking if you have any questions. They WANT you to have questions. “Where would I be helping out the most?” or “How would you describe your office setting?” are welcome additions to any interview. Write down a couple of questions you want answered before you step into the interview. Still feeling nervous? That’s not uncommon. Want us to make it even easier? Of course you do.

» Be ready to answer their questions too. Nothing relaxes nerves like knowing what you’re going to be asked and having a chance to think through your responses. See page 25 for a list of the most frequently asked questions in interviews for internships. Be warned, though, this list is far from comprehensive, and you’re still going to have to think on your feet. Don’t memorize responses, but make a mental outline of what an appropriate response to each question would entail.
**Interviewing by phone or Skype**

Often, a student's course schedule makes coming in for an interview difficult, particularly if you happen to attend a school that's more than a few hours away from the company where you're interviewing.

You should always try to interview face-to-face, but you might have to be ready for a couple additional interview formats, namely over-the-phone or Skype. Thankfully, all the rules outlined above still apply. We just need to make a couple additions.

» **Over-the-phone interviews:** We've covered proper phone etiquette in a previous section and this is worth reviewing if you end up having to fall back on this method.

» **Skype interviews:** If your interviewer asks to conduct the interview over Skype rather than over the phone, accept the offer. You'll be much more memorable if your interviewer has a chance to see your facial expressions. And they'll feel much more confident hiring you once they can be 100 percent positive that your neck isn't covered with offensive tattoos (which hopefully it isn't).

» **Your username:** Sixth-grade user names and sixth-grade email addresses are just as bad as sixth-grade voicemails. You can always create a new account.

» **Your environment:** The background will say a lot about you. If your room is messy or covered in posters of your favorite band, then it isn't the spot to conduct the interview. Consider reserving a quiet study room at your local library.

» **A reliable Internet connection:** You don't want your call to be constantly "lagging" or to freeze while your mouth is halfway through a word and your eyes are halfway through a blink. And you don't want to be sitting inside a noisy Starbucks, either.

» **Dress to impress still.** Skype doesn't make the dress code any less formal. Dress the same way you would for an in-person interview. And, yes, that means no sweatpants below the desk.

» **No "Skype handshakes" or "Skype high-fives."** It's just not professional. And it's kind of corny. Stick to a verbal introduction.

» **Send a thank you note or email:** Send a thank you note or email immediately following the interview. Reaffirm any points of importance from the interview and express your confirmed interest in the internship. And say thank you!

**Commonly asked interview questions**

Here are some of the most commonly asked questions you might hear during an internship interview.

» Tell me a little about yourself.

» Describe a situation (can be at work or at school) where your judgment proved to be valuable.

» Do you work better under pressure or with time to plan and organize?

» Which is more important, completing a job on time or doing it right?

» What are your strengths and weaknesses?

» What accomplishments are you most proud of?

» How would your boss/friends/co-workers, etc. describe you?

» Which three words would you choose to best describe yourself?

» Why do you consider this to be a good opportunity?

» What makes you unique from other candidates?

» Have you had previous internship experience? If so, tell me about it.

» What do you want to learn from this internship?

» Why are you interested in this industry/company?

» Tell us about your knowledge of this company.

» Give an example of how you dealt with a conflict with another person/customer/classmate/professor/boss, etc.

» Give me an example of a time you worked under a tight deadline.

» What is the most challenging part of your current studies?

**Following up after an interview**

Earlier, we recommended not following up an application. However, once you've been interviewed and you and the employer have invested considerable time in the process, the rules change.

If you don't hear back within about two weeks, it's perfectly acceptable to send a short, polite e-mail that: (1) reaffirms your interest in the position; and (2) delicately asks about the timeframe in which you can expect a response from the company.
THE FIRST DAY
HOW TO JUMP IN RIGHT AWAY

Look out, world. Here comes Joe Intern. And it looks like he came prepared with his internship manual’s guide to everything the dreaded first day might throw at him.

Well-played, Joe. Well-played.

The first day doesn’t have to be stressful. On the contrary, it should be one of the most exciting days of your entire internship.
Transportation and parking
First, it’s always worth checking out the public transit that’s available near your company’s offices. Public transportation is often cheaper than driving, allows you to avoid the stress of commute traffic, and allows you to get a good deal of work done while on the way to and from work.

If you’ve never tried using your city’s bus or rail system, you’d probably be surprised at how easy it is to get the hang of it. After all, it’s really just getting on and getting off.

If public transportation isn’t a reliable option for you, be sure that you’ve figured out a reliable route and parking spot before you leave for work on your first day.

What to bring
You’ll most likely need to speak with your supervisor on this one (at least for a couple of items), and the best way to do so is probably through a quick e-mail. You need to know, for instance, whether or not your computer will be provided by your company. There are some items that you should count on bringing, though, including:

» A backpack or briefcase
» Your driver’s license (or other identification)
» A voided check
» A notebook and pens
» A reusable water bottle
» A small snack
» A packed lunch (just in case)
» A little cash (just in case)

Your “personal brand”
Your personal brand is the way you represent yourself to others and is something that will follow you from job to job throughout your working career. Good thing you started reading this manual before you made a mess of it, right? Carefully monitoring your brand in each of its three alliterative dimensions is the only way to turn this into something that plays in your favor down the road.

How to dress
The AAAC rule is in effect. That’s Appropriate, Attractive, Affordable, and Conservative. All clothing should be professional and appealing, but should avoid attracting attention. Unless you landed a fashion design internship, now is not the time to be concerned with the latest trends.

Demeanor
It’s attitude adjustment time. A fit attitude for business and industry involves a “glass half-full” spirit, a willingness to commit to any task assigned, and a readiness to cooperate and consider the ideas of others. If you can demonstrate each of these characteristics, people will genuinely enjoy working with you (and eventually promoting you).

Your display factor
Often, it’s not what we say, but how we say it. Your “display factor” will center on the way you present yourself in face-to-face communication. In this regard, it’s critical to be known as a good listener and a civil conversationalist. This means suspending judgment, allowing others to speak, and making every effort to truly engage with your co-workers.

Arriving
Just as you did when you arrived for your interview, proceed to the reception desk and check in, unless your supervisor has informed you otherwise. The receptionist will typically be able to point you in the right direction or to get in contact with the person who can.

The tour
A supervisor will usually take you on a tour of the office on your first day. This has two purposes: (1) to familiarize you with office facilities (kitchen areas, bathroom and copier locations, etc.) and (2) to introduce you to your coworkers.

Meeting your coworkers will become crucial to both your job success and your job enjoyment throughout your internship. Here’s what you need to do:
Remembering names
If you struggle with this, you’re not alone. Check to see if there is an employee roster. Many will have pictures, names, titles and departments.

Remembering departments
Don’t strain yourself with specific positions within a department, but remembering the general field of your co-workers can be great if your supervisor asks you to simply “talk to someone in accounting.”

Learn something other than just someone’s name and department. Maybe you played the same sport in high school or go to the same school as their cousin’s niece’s best friend.

It doesn’t matter what the connection is, but finding a connection, or even just learning some non-work-related detail, can make a huge difference in cultivating lasting business relationships.

Share something about yourself
Everyone will ask what school you attend, but that isn’t the only thing they want to know. Let them know what clubs you’re involved in or what brought you to this company. Openness is a key attribute for a new intern.

Pay attention to whoever seems particularly interested. If someone asks you to stop by sometime and talk about how you’re enjoying the job so far, or to take a look at what they’re working on, do it. Chances are that they’ll be happy to involve you in a project or to get you out of the office on a fun errand (those do exist in the business world, believe it or not).

Paperwork
At some point on the first day, you’ll probably sit down with someone from the HR department to fill out some paperwork regarding payroll and employment records. Make sure you have some form of identification.

Most businesses now pay their employees through direct deposit, so bringing a voided check with your checking account number and routing information can make setting up this process considerably smoother. You should also have your Social Security number memorized.

Questions to ask on the first day
You’ll usually be working directly under a supervisor or a couple of supervisors, and if you want this to go smoothly, then you’ll need to understand their management style.

If they don’t address any of these topics, you need to. You can avoid “being in limbo” about whether now is a good time to stop into their office or if they would prefer work submitted in print, through e-mail or in person.

» What time do you want me to arrive every day?
» What time do you want me to work until every day?
» When would be the best time for me to take my lunch break?
» How do you want me to check in with you throughout the day?
» Should I wait for you to assign me work or should I continually check in to see if there’s anything that needs doing?
» How would you prefer me to submit completed projects?
» Are there any policy handbooks I should review?
» What should I avoid doing?
THROUGHOUT THE INTERNSHIP
Fitting in and Finding Your Place
Adapting is the name of the game. Just as no two internships are the same, neither are any two office settings.

Keeping this in mind, it’s probably best to air on the side of caution for the first couple of days. You’ll quickly get a feel for how your unique office operates, but it never hurts to have a few solid recommendations to guide you through the opening weeks.
Get comfortable in your space
Feels good to have your own office, right? Feel free to add some personal décor, such as pictures, plants, or posters, but you should avoid anything that could be construed as offensive or that creates a sense of disorganization.

Observe the company carefully
See where and how you might want to get involved. If you see anything—from a meeting to a training session to a marketing campaign—that you might want to be a part of, it never hurts to ask.

“If you’re curious about anything your supervisor, someone in the department, or anyone in the company is working on, just ask questions and they’ll be happy to inform you or involve you.”
— Michael Ittu
Former GCP Government Advocacy Intern

Take advantage of resources within the company
You are now surrounded by a team of experienced specialists within the business world, and each of them has something valuable to offer you. For example, you now have the chance to ask the person who reviewed your resume what they thought of it and how you can improve it.

Get to know your supervisor
Where did they go to college? Where do they like to eat lunch? Do they have any kids? The more comfortable you are around your mentor, the easier it will be to ask questions or to genuinely enjoy the time you spend working together. It will also make that person much more likely to give a gushing review of your performance when the next company you apply to begins calling some of your references.

“My supervisor turned out to be a really cool guy, once I got to know him personally. He even told me that he used to breakdance, which I never would have expected.”
— Juord Duraj
Former Cleveland Development Advisors Finance Intern

Ask for explanations
Clarify the goal and details of any task as much as possible with your manager before you begin. An extra two minutes spent asking questions can often save you several hours of work and can ensure that the final product is something that your manager will be pleased with.

“Set deadlines with your supervisor for every project you’re given and make sure you know the urgency of every task. You want to be very clear on whether they want something done in the next three days or the next two weeks.”
— Kevin McGann
Former GCP Physical Development Intern

Ask for feedback
When you send over a completed project, ask your manager to tell you what they think of your work and give them a chance to offer suggestions for improvement. They’ve been in this industry for a while, and any tips you can absorb from them will pay huge dividends in the future.

Come to meetings prepared
You should bring a pen and notebook to every meeting you attend and introduce yourself warmly to anyone you happen to be sitting near.

Be smart about cell phone usage
It’s completely fine to check your phone throughout the day. Just make sure not to let your cell phone usage become excessive or distract you from a task. If you have to make a personal call, it’s usually best to step out of the office for a second.

Be smart about social media usage
It’s not just what you post, but when you post. If your boss happens to recheck your accounts halfway through your internship and notices a spike in activity on weekdays between 9 and 5, you’re in trouble. If they notice posts where you’ve bad-mouthed the company or your co-workers, you’ll need a new job. Never post anything negative about your job (or even your boss’s hairstyle) on social media and avoid interacting with co-workers on all sites except LinkedIn.
Learn how to network
You’re not too young to start making business connections. Don’t stand in the back of a room if you have a chance to meet some of your community’s business professionals. Shake hands and tell them who you are, where you work, and what you do.

Connect with them on LinkedIn later in the day. If they give you a business card, shoot them a quick e-mail to let them know that you enjoyed meeting them.

Building a strong network of business connections can be extremely rewarding, but it can also be extremely fun, especially since even the top business executives will be impressed by a confident intern who takes initiative in a networking situation.

“I’ve learned that everyone in the business community always makes time for me. No one is going to turn me away because I’m young or they don’t think I’m important.”
— Gabriella Messina
 Former COSE Small Business Programs Intern

Understand confidentiality
As an employee, you’ll probably have access to more information about your company than the general public. You might even be working with time-sensitive information that needs to remain a company secret until a project is completed or publicized.

You don’t want to be the one who lets the cat out of the bag. Avoid discussing your company’s strategy with outsiders and use common sense when deciding whether your organization would want you bragging about certain developments. If you’re not sure, air on the side of caution and ask your manager before jumping to conclusions.

Know the right way to ask for time off. There’s a good chance you’ll have to ask for time off at some point during your internship. Your manager will understand that, but will expect you to (1) ask rather than tell and (2) give as much advance notice as possible.

Explore
Getting outside of your “bubble” is one of the most important things you can do as an intern. An internship can introduce you to a whole new neighborhood, whether this means a downtown setting or an area that specializes in one particular type of business.

Immerse yourself in this neighborhood. Try the local restaurants or find the best park bench where you can sit and enjoy a packed lunch.
THE LAST DAY AND BEYOND
WHERE TO TAKE WHAT YOU’VE LEARNED

The real key here is holding back your tears until you’re out of the office. Who knows? Maybe this same company will be willing to hire you back next summer or take you on as a full-time employee, if you’ll be a graduate by that time.

Whether coming back sounds like a dream come true or a nightmare, let’s take a minute to reflect on what you’ve accomplished during your internship.

By completing an internship, you made great strides toward a successful entry into the workforce and learned a lot about what you might want to look for in a career.

And, since you were following your handy-dandy manual’s tips, you made a lasting impression on a group of established professionals in your community. Let’s not mess it up on the last day.
Return company materials
Your company probably let you use a lot of their equipment throughout your internship. From keys and coffee mugs to phones and computers, this all needs to be returned properly. Ask someone in your HR department what needs to be done to make sure you know the proper way to return everything.

Fill out all necessary paperwork
While you’re speaking with your colleague in HR, don’t forget to ask if there’s any additional paperwork you need to fill out to finalize the end of your internship.

Tidy up your cubicle
If you brought in a lot of decorations, you might want to do this incrementally over the course of your last week. When you finally leave your office, your walls should be bare, your floor and countertops should be clean, and your trash and recycling bins should be emptied.

Leave feedback
Most companies will provide you some sort of evaluation form that allows you to provide feedback and comments about your internship experience. Praise the parts of the internship that you enjoyed the most, but be honest as well.

If there were aspects of your internship that you didn’t enjoy or that you would’ve changed, let your employer know. You’ll be doing both your company and the next intern that sits in your chair a tremendous favor.

Thank everyone
There were a lot of people involved in making your internship into the experience it was, and you need to thank every one of them for their involvement. Let your co-workers and mentors know that you appreciated the effort they put into making you feel welcome and that you enjoyed collaborating on projects.

Go out of your way to shake everyone’s hand one last time before you leave and let them know that you look forward to running into them again before your professional career is over.

“I’m so sad that my internship is coming to an end, but it really has prepared me to graduate. At first I was afraid of graduating and moving on to the real world, but my internship helped me to realize that this is something that I can do and that I really want to do.”

— Daria Gaither
Former COSE Public Relations Intern
**After your internship ends**

By now, you’ve probably put hundreds of hours into your internship. From here on out, it will only take a couple of minutes of maintenance every once in a while, to ensure that you get as many benefits as possible out of your internship. Don’t forget these last three steps:

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**Update your resume**

Right away, before you start forgetting some of the smaller impacts you made, add your internship experience to your resume. Right there at the top.

Be proud of it. You can even ask your supervisor or HR manager to review it to get some great feedback.

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**Maintain your connections**

These will remain valuable throughout your professional career. Make sure you’ve already connected with your co-workers on LinkedIn and have spoken to your managers and supervisors about potentially being used as references for future job applications.

Don’t be a stranger, either. If something you learned during your internship benefits you in the future, send your mentor an e-mail and let them know. They’ll be thrilled to know that they made a lasting impact in your life.

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**Apply your experiences in the futures**

You learned a lot of new skills over the course of your internship, and you probably started feeling like quite the young adult along the way. Don’t let those skills fade; find courses or settings that allow you to continue honing them.

Your internship was a fantastic learning experience, but it was only the tip of that massive career iceberg. Use it as a foundation upon which you can build a lifetime of rewarding professional decisions. Remember what you liked and what you didn’t, and carefully consider all of this while weighing future job listings.

In all aspects of your life, continue to be the enthusiastic, respectful young professional that your internship (and this manual) transformed you into and that your co-workers came to love.

And, finally, congratulations on surviving the real world! Or at least your first three months of it!

“My internship has prepared for me for the real world greatly, and has given me a great taste of what’s to come in the future. By waking me up at the time I normally will someday and allowing me to work in an office, it’s matured me and encouraged me to work in the Cleveland area when I graduate.”

— Andre Cartagena
Former GCP Business Development Intern

“Throughout my internship, I definitely learned a few things about myself that have helped to shape my idea of what I want to do in the future.”

— Gabriella Messina
Former COSE Small Business Programs Intern