

Career Guide to Internships



CONCORDIA
UNIVERSITY
IRVINE

CENTER FOR CAREER
AND VOCATION

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What is an Internship?

An internship is a short-term work experience that allows students to gain practical, hands-on experience in a professional setting related to their field of study.

Internships can be paid or unpaid, part-time or full-time, and may take place during the summer or academic year. They offer students the opportunity to apply classroom knowledge to real-world situations, develop new skills, and explore potential career paths. Many internships also provide valuable networking opportunities with professionals in the industry, which can lead to future job offers or mentorship.

Participating in an internship is especially important for undergraduate students because it enhances their resumes, builds confidence, and helps clarify career interests before graduation. Employers often look for candidates with relevant experience. Internships provide a way for students to stand out in a competitive job market. Additionally, some academic majors require internships as part of their graduation requirements to ensure students are adequately prepared for their chosen profession. Even when not mandatory, **internships are a strategic step toward career readiness and long-term success.**



Internship Search Strategies

Searching for an internship can feel overwhelming at first, but having a clear strategy can make the process more manageable and successful. This section will guide you through practical internship search strategies, including how to identify opportunities aligned with your interests, where to look for listings, and how to stay organized throughout your search. We'll also provide tips on keeping track of application deadlines, following up with contacts, and using tools like spreadsheets to manage your progress. A proactive and structured approach not only saves time but also increases your chances of finding the right internship fit.

In addition to using job boards and university career platforms, reaching out directly to companies (even if they haven't posted internship openings) can be a powerful tactic. This section includes a cold-email template you can adapt to introduce yourself to potential employers, express your interest, and inquire about internship opportunities. Starting your search early gives you more time to explore options, craft personalized outreach, and navigate any unexpected challenges along the way. Whether you're required to complete an internship or pursuing one to build experience, early and intentional preparation is key to making the most of the opportunity.



Internship Search Strategies

Where to Look

Job board sites we recommend students start looking for internships include Handshake, LinkedIn, Indeed, and Glassdoor. Each of these sites has their niches, so make sure to be aware of what platform your field typically utilizes.

Handshake: A platform connecting students with employers for job and internship opportunities. It provides tools for students, including a job and internship database, resume building features, networking opportunities through events, and application tracking. This service is paid for by career service.

LinkedIn: A professional networking platform where users can create profiles, connect with industry professionals, and search for internships and jobs. It also features a job board, company pages, and tools for networking directly with recruiters and hiring managers. LinkedIn has a free profile but will push the paid subscription. You do not need the paid subscription to find an internship.

Indeed: One of the largest job search engines, aggregating listings from company websites, job boards, and staffing agencies. Users can upload resumes, set up job alerts, and apply directly through the platform for a wide range of positions and industries.

Glassdoor: Offers job listings along with company reviews, salary data, and interview insights shared by current and former employees. It's a valuable tool for researching company culture and compensation while applying for internships and jobs.

Direct Websites: Some companies don't publicize their internships via job board sites. If there is a specific company you are interested in, check their direct website's job postings regularly.

Network: Ask your network if they are in the field you're interested in pursuing. Alumni, professors, friends, family; they count as your network too!



Internship Search Strategies

Where to Look

Make a list of internship roles you find on each of these sites:

Handshake:

LinkedIn:

Indeed:

Glassdoor:

Direct Websites:

Network:

What filters did you use?

Internship Search Strategies

Stay Organized

Staying organized during your internship search is essential for staying on top of deadlines, tailoring your applications, and following up professionally. With multiple listings, documents, and communication threads to manage, **it's easy to lose track of where you've applied or what each role requires.**

To streamline the process, follow these three key steps:

1. Download a copy of the internship position you're applying for. Sometimes these can disappear from a website, so it's best to keep a copy to remember what it was you applied for along with other details about the internship (e.g. paid or unpaid, location, description of responsibilities).
2. File the downloaded copy in the same folder with your resume, cover letter, and other application documents you used to apply for this position.
3. Track your applications using a Google Sheets or Excel Spreadsheet to stay organized. **The Center for Career and Vocation has a template they can provide if you make an appointment with one of their career counselors.** Your template should track: the company, contact person, location, pay range, number of hours, URL, due date, and the status.



Schedule an appointment with a career coach to gain access to job application organization tools!

Internship Search Strategies

Reach Out Directly

If you aren't seeing any internship opportunities on any of the job boards or if there's a specific company you'd like to intern at, **it doesn't hurt to reach out to them** requesting information about possible internships they may not have posted.

You will want to be mindful of the different tactics that come with the different mediums. For example, LinkedIn is a great place to find recruiters and hiring managers. However, you would want to **foster a relationship with them prior to reaching out** asking for help by engaging with their content.

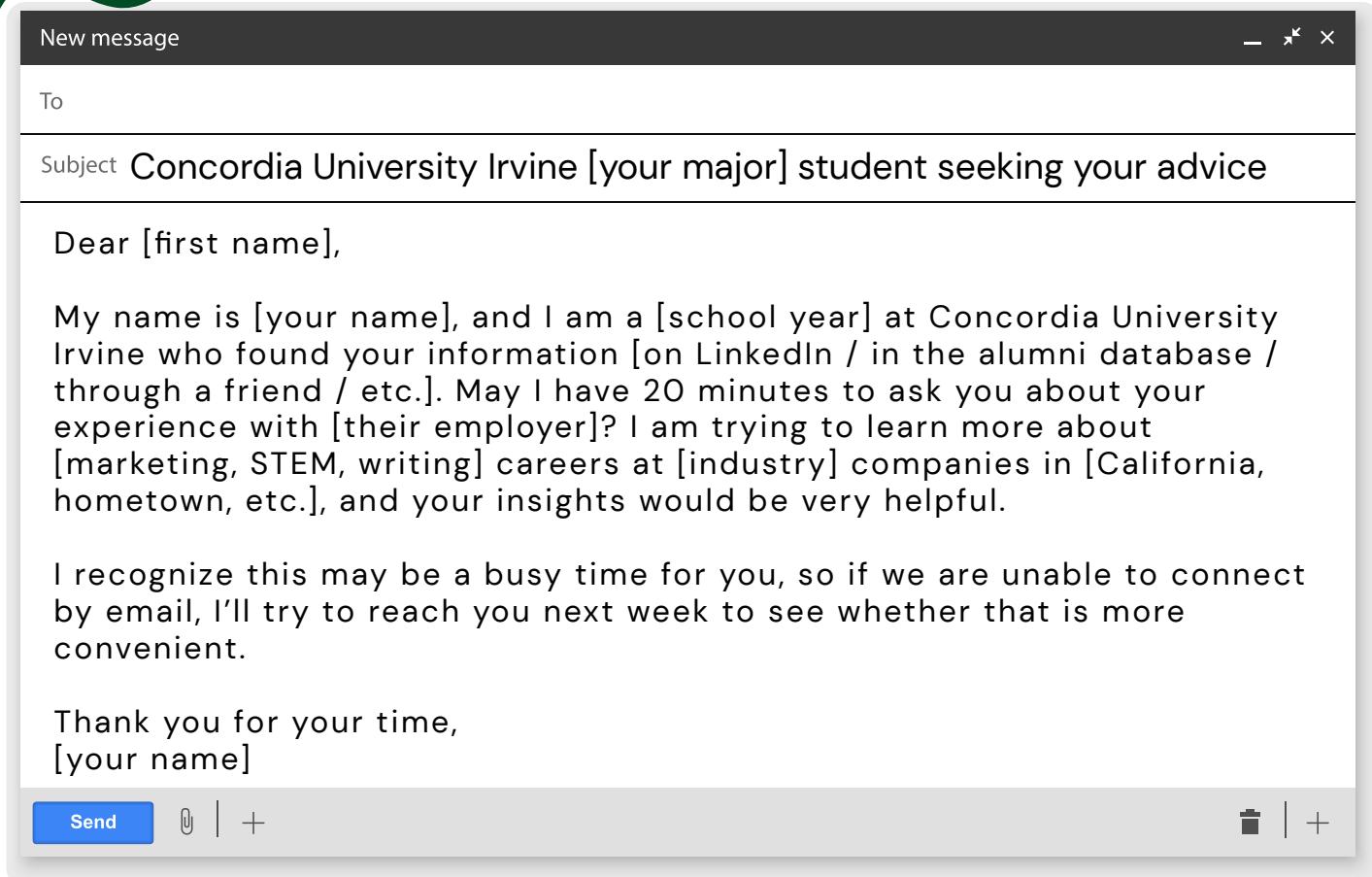
Cold-emailing is another tactic you can use if you have the recruiter or hiring manager's email address. You'll want your email subject line to be straightforward and not overwhelm the reader with a lengthy email. The template on the next page is a good starting point.

The provided email template follows the 5-point email method:

- 1. Fewer than 100 words:** Think of how you respond to lengthy emails. Keep it short and sweet; this shows you're respecting their time.
- 2. No mention of jobs anywhere:** It's obvious that's what you're asking for. Keep it classy.
- 3. Connection goes first:** Leading with connection first starts your relationship off on the right foot. "Your network is your net worth."
- 4. Generalize your interest:** Since this is a request for an informational interview, be open to receiving information.
- 5. Maintain control of follow-up:** If you say you're going to follow up, then follow up. This shows determination and initiative.



Cold-email template
this way!



Draft your version of a cold-email.

Only one follow up is socially acceptable!

Internship Search Strategies

Follow Up

Following up after submitting an internship application shows **professionalism, enthusiasm, and initiative**. It helps keep your name top of mind for employers and demonstrates that you're genuinely interested in the position. A polite follow-up email (typically sent about a week or two after applying) can confirm that your materials were received and express your continued interest. In competitive applicant pools, this extra step can help set you apart and **build a positive impression** with hiring managers.

Following up after an interview is equally important. Sending a thank-you email **within 24 hours** not only shows gratitude for the opportunity but also reinforces your interest in the role. It's a chance to briefly highlight why you're a strong fit and reference a meaningful part of the conversation. **Consistent, thoughtful communication** throughout the application process can reflect the kind of reliable and professional behavior employers look for in interns, and it may make the difference when final decisions are being made.



Internship Search Strategies

Follow Up

Create a template for following up with a company for a job application you submitted.

Create a template for a thank-you email for an interview opportunity.

Resumes

A resume is a concise document that presents your experience, skills, and education tailored to a specific position.

Make your resume stand out by:

- Tailoring your resume for each position you apply to
- Including keywords and skills from the job posting
- Emphasizing results and achievements

Resumes consist of the following:

Heading

- Full name (large font)
- Phone number and email address
- Optional: LinkedIn URL or online portfolio (if up to date)

Education

- Degree, major, and expected graduation date (Month Year)
- Institution, city, state – Concordia University Irvine | Irvine, CA
- Optional: GPA (if 3.8 or higher), relevant coursework, study abroad

Experience

- Job title, organization, city/state, and dates (Month Year – Month Year)
- Use bullet points to highlight accomplishments, not just duties
 - Avoid generic phrases like "responsible for" or "duties included"
 - Instead, use this formula: Action Word + Task + Purpose/Outcome
- Include internships, volunteer roles, part-time jobs, or research projects

Skills (Optional)

- Language proficiency, software, or job-specific tools

On the next page, see a few action words to get your bullet points started!

Circle 5 that best apply to your experience.

ACTION WORDS

HELPING SKILLS	MANAGERIAL SKILLS	CREATIVE SKILLS	COACHING SKILLS	DETAILED SKILLS
Administered	Analyzed	Acted	Adapted	Approved
Advised	Assigned	Built	Advocated	Arranged
Analyzed	Assessed	Conceptualized	Authored	Catalogued
Assessed	Contracted	Created	Briefed	Charted
Clarified	Controlled	Customized	Clarified	Checked
Collaborated	Coordinated	Designed	Coached	Clarified
Conducted	Delegated	Developed	Communicated	Classified
Coordinated	Determined	Devised	Coordinated	Collected
Demonstrated	Directed	Directed	Cultivated	Compiled
Developed	Established	Engineered	Developed	Customized
Diagnosed	Evaluated	Fashioned	Directed	Dispatched
Directed	Executed	Formulated	Empowered	Examined
Evaluated	Expedited	Fostered	Enabled	Executed
Facilitated	Hired	Generated	Encouraged	Implemented
Implemented	Organized	Illustrated	Evaluated	Inspected
Intervened	Planned	Implemented	Fostered	Monitored
Led	Prioritized	Innovated	Improved	Processed
Listened	Produced	Inspired	Informed	Recorded
Mediated	Proposed	Integrated	Initiated	Refined
Monitored	Recommended	Made	Instructed	Researched
Negotiated	Recruited	Performed	Interacted	Responded
Performed	Reported	Planned	Lectured	Retained
Provided	Reviewed	Produced	Prepared	Reviewed
Referred	Scheduled	Published	Supervised	Scheduled
Spoke	Supervised	Restructured	Taught	Standardized
Started	Tracked	Shaped	Trained	Streamlined
Treated	Trained	Wrote	Tutored	Validated

TECHNICAL SKILLS	RESEARCH SKILLS	FINANCIAL SKILLS	COMMUNICATION SKILLS
Adapted	Analyzed	Administered	Advised
Assembled	Assessed	Allocated	Advocated
Built	Audited	Analyzed	Arbitrated
Cleaned	Clarified	Appraised	Arranged
Coded	Collected	Audited	Briefed
Computed	Critiqued	Bought	Composed
Configured	Decided	Budgeted	Created
Constructed	Diagnosed	Calculated	Developed
Controlled	Discovered	Capitalized	Directed
Converted	Evaluated	Closed	Edited
Cut	Examined	Computed	Educated
Designed	Extracted	Consolidated	Enlisted
Engineered	Extrapolated	Developed	Influenced
Fabricated	Forecasted	Documented	Informed
Handled	Gathered	Expedited	Interpreted
Installed	Gleaned	Gained	Led
Maintained	Identified	Initiated	Mediated
Measured	Inspected	Maintained	Merged
Moved	Synthesized	Managed	Motivated
Operated	Interpreted	Maximized	Negotiated
Programmed	Investigated	Opened	Obtained
Pulled	Isolated	Planned	Persuaded
Set-up	Measured	Prepared	Reasoned
Shipped	Organized	Recommended	Reconciled
Sorted	Perceived	Reduced	Recruited
Supported	Recognized	Researched	Sold
Tested	Reviewed	Sold	Spoke
Utilized	Surveyed	Solved	Wrote

COMMON MISTAKES

- Using vague phrases like: “responsible for,” “helped,” “worked,” or “duties included”
- Listing tasks instead of showing specific results or achievements

Sample Resume

Marty Eagle

linkedin.com/martyeagle | marty.eagle@eagles.cui.edu | 949-123-0001 | Irvine, CA

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

I am a student at Concordia University Irvine majoring in Psychology with a strong interest in elderly therapy. Committed to addressing issues like cognitive decline and promoting emotional well-being, I leverage my skills in elderly in-home care. I excel at showing compassion and empathy, aiming to help seniors maintain their independence.

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Arts in Psychology

Concordia University Irvine

Expected Graduation May '26

Irvine, CA

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Resident Assistant

Concordia University Irvine

Aug '24 - Present

Irvine, CA

- Facilitate community-building activities and provide emotional support to 36 residents, fostering a safe and inclusive living environment
- Respond to student concerns with empathy and professionalism, developing strong communication and crisis management skills
- Promote wellness by distributing resources on mental health, stress management, and conflict resolution
- Practice confidentiality and discretion when handling sensitive personal information, in line with FERPA guidelines

Volunteer

Lake Forest Senior Center

Aug '23 - Aug '24

Lake Forest, CA

- Assisted with meal preparation, recreational activities, and social engagement for 25 elderly participants
- Built meaningful connections with seniors through daily conversations and personalized attention
- Monitored participant mobility and offered physical assistance to ensure a safe environment during activities
- Collaborated with staff to observe signs of cognitive or emotional changes, contributing to early identification of potential needs

KEY SKILLS

- Compassion
- Empathy
- Communication
- Patience

Cover Letter

The purpose of your cover letter is to tell the employer what you're applying for and why you're a strong fit. Always submit a tailored cover letter with your resume.

A strong, basic structure for your cover letter follows these guidelines:

Opening Paragraph

- State the job title and how you found the posting
- Share your interest and a preview of your strengths

Middle Paragraph

- Highlight relevant experiences and skills
- Connect your background to the role and organization

Closing Paragraph

- Express gratitude
- Mention availability and how to follow up

When writing a cover letter, there are a few key tips to keep in mind to ensure it makes a strong impression. Whenever possible, **address the letter to a specific** person—such as the hiring manager or internship coordinator—as this personal touch shows attention to detail. If a name isn't provided, using a general but professional greeting like "Dear Hiring Manager" is perfectly acceptable. For a polished and cohesive application, your **cover letter should match the formatting of your resume**, including consistent fonts, spacing, and headers. Lastly, if you're submitting your application by email, be sure to **paste the cover letter directly into the body of the message** rather than attaching it as a separate file. This makes it more accessible and easier for the employer to read.

Schedule a cover letter review via Handshake if you'd like one of our Career Coaches to proofread!

Personal Branding Statement

Use this customizable template to create a personal branding statement that can be used in your introductory paragraph in your cover letter, objective on your resume, or an introductory line while networking.

Customizable template:

I am a student at Concordia University Irvine majoring in **[Your Major]** with a strong interest in **[Key Area or Industry]**, committed to **[Your Key Contribution or Goal]**. Leveraging my skills in **[Relevant Skill or Experience]**, I excel at **[Specific Task or Activity]**, aiming to **[Desired Impact or Result]**.

Personal Branding Statement:

Networking

Networking is about building and maintaining relationships that support your career growth. It's the #1 way to discover job opportunities and is a skill you'll use throughout your professional life. According to Forbes, **85% of jobs come from networking**.

Before you start networking, it's important to prepare in advance. Begin by **researching the person or organization** you're planning to connect with so you can approach the conversation informed and confident. Then, craft a short **elevator pitch**, a brief introduction that highlights who you are and what your career interests are. Prepare a few **thoughtful questions** to ask during the conversation to show genuine interest. When it's time to meet, dress professionally, arrive on time, and bring a positive attitude. Be genuine, show enthusiasm, listen actively, and take notes if helpful. Remember, the goal of networking is to build relationships, not to directly ask for a job.

Once you've introduced yourself and have had a conversation, don't forget to follow up! Send a thank-you note or email within 24 hours, connect on LinkedIn and keep in touch periodically, and reflect on what you learned and how it impacts your career planning.

Below is a brief introduction to get the conversation started along with some follow-up questions to ask the person you are networking with.

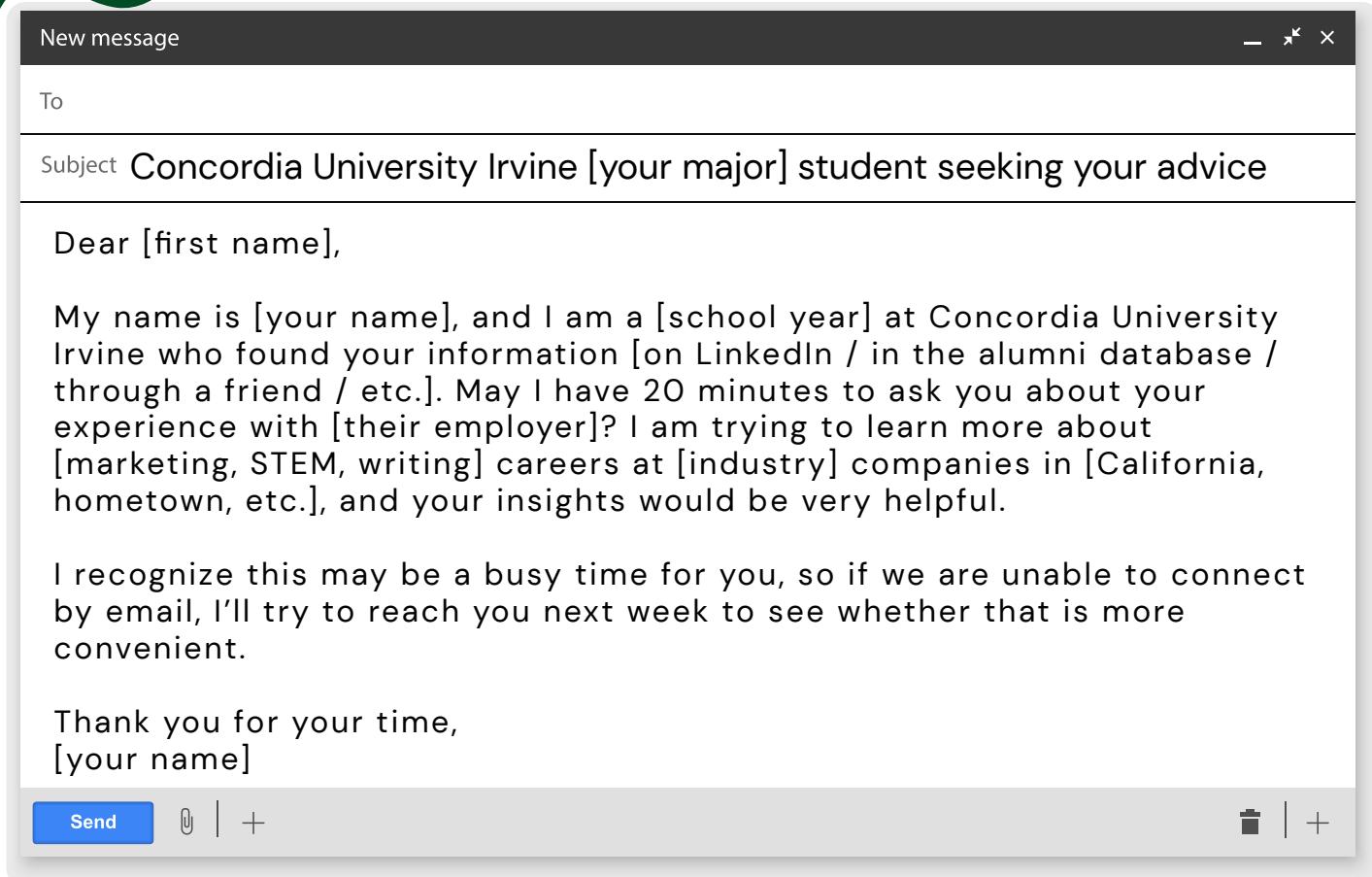
Remember, you can use the cold-email template from earlier to reach out to potential connections. The template can be found on the following page for reference.

Sample Introduction:

"Hi, my name is [Your Name], a [Your Year] majoring in [Your Major] at Concordia University Irvine. I'm exploring careers in [Industry] and would appreciate any insights you could share."

Sample Questions:

- How did you get started in your career?
- What does a typical day look like for you?
- What skills are essential for success in your field?
- Are there any professional associations you recommend?



Draft your version of a cold-email.

Only one follow up is socially acceptable!

Networking

Use this space to list out 8 potential networking connections you have.

Name:
Relation:
Company:
Contact Info:

Relevant Info:

Networking

Elevator Pitch

An elevator pitch is a simple and direct way of introducing yourself, your talents, and what you hope to gain from the relationship with the person you're networking with. Your elevator pitch should:

Introduce yourself and your current title: Student, major, university

List a relevant accomplishment: Major project, volunteer opportunity, prior work experience

State your intent: Grab lunch, informational interview, discuss certain topic in your industry

What is your elevator pitch?

Networking

Informational Interview

Talk to people who do the work you want to do. Informational interviewing helps you discover skills needed for specific jobs, find out about training/education, and learn how people feel about their work.

An informational interview is a way of building out your network by being curious about different roles in your field. **THIS IS NOT A JOB INTERVIEW!** A job may come down the road, but the purpose of an informational interview is to get your questions answered.

Possible questions can include:

- How did you get started in your career?
- What does a typical day look like for you?
- What skills are essential for success in your field?
- Are there any professional associations you recommend?

What are 2 possible questions to ask during an informational interview?

LinkedIn

Joining LinkedIn is a smart move for any college student or recent graduate looking to build a professional presence online. With over **500 million members**, and college students and recent grads being the fastest-growing user group, LinkedIn offers a powerful platform for networking and career exploration. In fact, **85% of employers** say that online profiles influence their hiring decisions, making it a key tool in today's job search. A well-crafted LinkedIn profile can also improve your visibility, thus **boosting your Google ranking** and making it easier for potential employers to find you. Plus, with **40% of users checking the site daily**, it's an active space to stay informed, connect with professionals, and discover new opportunities.

Build Your Profile

- **Photo:** Use a professional, field-appropriate photo.
- **Title:** Describe yourself and whether you're job hunting.
- **Summary:** Short professional bio; tell your story and goals.
- **Experience:** Highlight accomplishments beyond your resume.
- **Education:** Include colleges attended and activities/leadership roles.
- **Organizations/Groups:** Join and participate in relevant groups.
- **Recommendations:** Request strong references – one per experience preferred.
- **URL:** Customize your LinkedIn URL and add it to your email signature, business card, and resume.

Build Your Network

- **Connect:** Family, friends, professors, Career Center staff, coaches, bosses.
- **Requests:** Personalize connection requests; mention why you want to connect.
- **Address Book:** Upload contacts cautiously; only connect with people you know.
- **Groups:** Join alumni, university, and industry-specific groups.
- **Look Up People:** Meet someone at an event? Connect immediately.
- **Maintain:** Thank contacts and keep them updated.

Interviewing

The purpose of an interview is to articulate your experience in a way that is meaningful to the employer. You want to tell your story with **CONFIDENCE**, and building up your confidence takes practice!

Hiration offers **mock interviews** catered to your level of comfortability and your major. It's a great way to practice answering interview questions while gaining **instant feedback** to your answers, tone of voice, and body language.

A few practice questions are listed below for you to answer using the **STARR Method**, explained on the next page. As long as you have a handful of stories with examples, you should be able to answer most interview questions.

Self-Awareness

- Tell me about yourself.
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?

Communication

- Describe your communication style.
- How do you explain complex ideas to someone frustrated?

Digital Fluency

- How have you used tech to improve a process?
- How do you stay current with new tech?

Teamwork + Interpersonal

- Describe a time your team wasn't getting along.
- What's your ideal boss like?

Global Perspective

- How have you worked with diverse populations?
- Share experience relating with people of different backgrounds.

Problem Solving + Creativity

- Share a time you solved a problem under pressure.
- How do you approach decisions without full information?

Professionalism + Work Ethic

- How do you handle stress, success, or failure?
- Share a time you went the extra mile.

Leadership

- How do you build trust?
- Share a time you led a successful team project.

Interviewing

STARR Interview Method

When answering interview questions, utilize the STARR method:

- **Situation:** What is the context and background?
- **Task:** What was the ask or the assignment in question?
- **Action:** How did you respond to the situation?
- **Result:** What happened because of your actions?
- **Reflection:** Why does it apply to the role you're applying for?

Example Answer:

Describe a situation where you had to demonstrate strong teamwork skills.

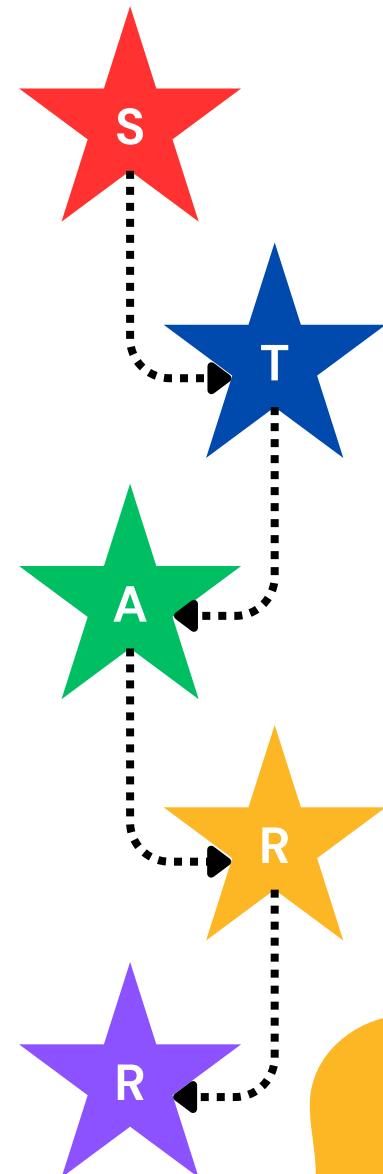
Last year, I worked on a group project for a mechanical engineering design course. Our task was to develop a small-scale wind turbine prototype that could efficiently generate power. The team consisted of five members, each assigned to specific roles like design, simulation, fabrication, and testing. Early in the project, we realized there were gaps in communication, which caused delays and misalignment between the design and fabrication phases.

As one of the team members responsible for the design phase, I realized that better teamwork and coordination were essential for us to meet our project deadlines and deliver a cohesive prototype.

I suggested we set up weekly progress meetings where each member could share updates and discuss challenges. I also created a shared document where we tracked tasks, deadlines, and dependencies, ensuring everyone stayed on the same page. To further enhance collaboration, I volunteered to help the fabrication team understand design specifications, so they could align their processes with the intended prototype.

The improved communication and task tracking allowed us to address issues early and streamline our work. We completed the prototype on time and received top marks for our project.

This experience taught me the value of proactive communication and teamwork, which I am eager to bring to an internship setting.



Interviewing

STARR Interview Method

Utilize the STARR method to practice answering 2 questions:

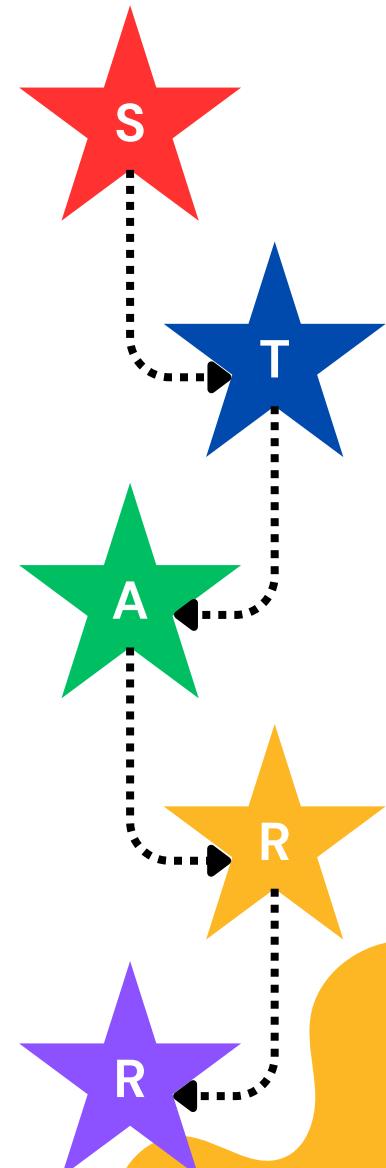
- **Situation:** What is the context and background?
- **Task:** What was the ask or the assignment in question?
- **Action:** How did you respond to the situation?
- **Result:** What happened because of your actions?
- **Reflection:** Why does it apply to the role you're applying for?

What steps do you take before making a decision on how to solve a problem and why?

What motivates you?

BONUS

Practice answering these questions with Hiration's mock interview feature!



Interviewing

What to Wear to an Interview

Selecting an outfit for an interview may not seem super important in the moment, but this is your first-impression that you are going to give the potential internship.

Your first impression should reinforce everything that they have read about you so far: **you're reliable, professional, and thoughtful.**

For Men, it's acceptable to wear:

- Blazer
- Tie
- Belt
- Polo shirt
- Dress shirt
- Dress pants
- Dress shoes

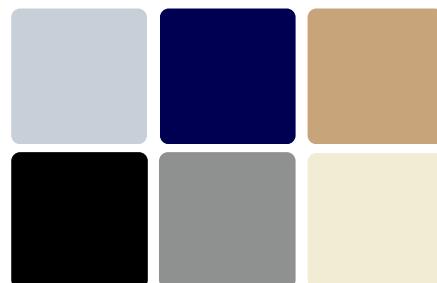
It's NOT acceptable to wear:

- Casual or revealing clothes
- Yoga pants
- Wrinkles
- Loud accessories
- Athletic sneakers or flip flops
- Strong cologne or perfume

For Women, it's acceptable to wear:

- Blazer
- Blouse
- Button up shirt
- Knee length dress
- Dress pants
- Knee length skirt
- Closed-toe shoes

Acceptable Color Palette



Accepting the Internship

Great! You received an internship offer. How do you go about accepting the offer?

First, you'll want to **review the offer thoroughly**. You should know:

- Base Pay (if applicable)?
- Start and End Dates?
- Location? (Is it remote?)
- Expenses Covered?
- Housing Assistance?
- Contact Information?
- Deadline to Accept Offer?

Next, you should **evaluate the offer**. Look at their:

- Company Culture: Is it a good fit for you?
- Career Alignment: Is this opportunity aligned with your goals?
- Experience & Training: What will you gain?
- Monthly Expenses: Does the salary cover your needs?

Now, this is when you can **respond to the offer**.

- Send a Thank-You Email: Express your appreciation for the offer.
- Ask for Clarifications: If anything is unclear or missing, ask.
- Communicate Your Timeline: Let them know when you plan to respond.
- Request an Extension: If you need more time, politely ask.

If you want to **accept the offer**:

- Send a Thank You Email: Express your gratitude.
- Confirm Details: Clearly state your:
- Start Date
- Position
- Salary
- Location
- Any other important information

If you feel like this internship is not the best next step, it's okay to **decline the offer**. You should still:

- Express Gratitude: Thank them for the opportunity and their time
- Be Professional: State your decision respectfully.
- Network: Maintain the professional relationship.

How to Be Successful During Your Internship

Performing well at your internship is crucial because it not only builds your skills and confidence but also shapes how you're perceived by professionals in your field. A strong performance can lead to **positive references, letters of recommendation, or even future job offers**. It shows that you're dependable, eager to learn, and capable of contributing to a team. These are qualities that **employers value**. Treat your internship like a real job, because how you show up now can have a lasting impact on your career path.

5 Tips to be successful during your internship:

- 1. Act professionally:** Treat the internship like a real job by arriving on time, dressing appropriately, meeting deadlines, and communicating respectfully with colleagues and supervisors. Making eye contact, offering a firm handshake, and keeping your phone put away are different examples of showcasing professionalism.
- 2. Ask questions and seek feedback:** Internships are learning experiences, so don't be afraid to ask clarifying questions or request feedback on your performance. It shows engagement and a desire to improve.
- 3. Be proactive and take initiative:** Don't wait to be told what to do. Look for ways to contribute, ask for additional tasks when you've completed your work, and show a willingness to learn and take on responsibility.
- 4. Build relationships and network:** Take advantage of the opportunity to connect with professionals in your field. Introduce yourself to coworkers, attend meetings or events when invited, and express genuine interest in others' roles and career paths.
- 5. Reflect and document your experience:** Keep notes on what you're learning, projects you've contributed to, and skills you've developed. This reflection can help you update your resume, prepare for future interviews, and better understand your career goals.

How to Be Successful During Your Internship

Act Professionally

First and foremost, act professionally at your internship site. You never know what skills you'll develop or who you'll meet that could help to further your career down the line. It's best to maintain a professional attitude throughout your internship.

As you progress through your internship, make notes about your professionalism here.

Write down 2 instances in which you met deadlines, or communicated effectively with a team.

Take this opportunity to also note areas for improvement. Did certain tasks trigger an unprofessional reflex?

How to Be Successful During Your Internship

Ask Questions & Seek Feedback

Internships are learning experiences. You aren't hired with the expectation that you know everything off the bat; the company wants you to ask questions. Do not be afraid to ask clarifying questions or request feedback on your performance.

Employers want you to take initiative, and asking questions is a great way to show your interest and desire to improve.

Ask your supervisor for feedback on one project and write the feedback here.

Does this same feedback come up often with other tasks assigned to you?

What is one step you could take toward making improvements during your internship?

How to Be Successful During Your Internship

Be Proactive & Take Initiative

Rather than waiting to be told what to do, observe the administrative culture of your internship site and find ways to contribute. Asking for tasks once you've completed yours goes further than waiting to be given something else to do. By showing your willingness to learn and taking ownership of your role at an internship site, you are setting yourself up for success. Future employers want to see new employees taking pride in their roles.

What is one way you took initiative at your internship site? Was it well-received by your supervisor? Why or why not?

How to Be Successful During Your Internship

Build Relationships & Network

Internships, summer jobs, and research experiences aren't just about gaining technical skills. They're also prime opportunities to build meaningful professional relationships. Don't hesitate to introduce yourself to colleagues, even outside your immediate team. Ask thoughtful questions about their career journeys and roles, and express sincere interest in what they do. These conversations can lead to valuable mentorship, future job leads, or even a strong recommendation down the line.

Whenever possible, attend staff meetings, networking events, or team lunches. Even casual interactions can help you understand workplace dynamics and broaden your network. Remember, people are more likely to support your future goals if they know who you are and have seen your curiosity, initiative, and professionalism in action.

What information can you walk away with after talking with employees at this internship site?

How to Be Successful During Your Internship

Reflect & Document Your Experience

Don't wait until the end of your internship or summer experience to think about what you've learned. Make it a habit to reflect and take notes along the way. Keep a running journal or digital document where you track key projects, new skills, technologies used, challenges you've overcome, and feedback you've received. Include specific accomplishments or measurable outcomes whenever possible.

This documentation becomes incredibly valuable when it's time to update your resume, write a LinkedIn post, or prepare for interviews. You'll have concrete examples of your contributions and growth, which will make your application materials stronger and your interview responses more compelling. Reflection also helps you recognize what kind of work you enjoy (or don't!) which is key in clarifying your long-term career goals.

Create 3 bullet points to add to your resume based on this experience. Use the template "Action Verb + Task + Purpose/Outcome."

1)

2)

3)

Quitting Well

At the Center for Career and Vocation, we encourage all undergraduate students to end their internships on a **professional and positive note**. Quitting well is key to maintaining strong relationships and leaving the door open for future opportunities. Be sure to **confirm your end date** with your supervisor, and if any changes arise, communicate them as early as possible (ideally giving at least two weeks' notice). Before you leave, take time to **genuinely thank your supervisor and colleagues** for their support. A thoughtful thank-you email or handwritten note can leave a lasting impression.

As your internship wraps up, be proactive in finishing your projects and organizing any materials you've worked on, so your team is **set up for success** after your departure. If appropriate, offer to leave behind notes or instructions for the next intern. This level of responsibility and care reflects well on you and the university. We also recommend asking your supervisor if they'd be open to writing a letter of recommendation or serving as a reference for **future opportunities**. Finally, don't let your last day be the end. **Stay connected** through LinkedIn or occasional email check-ins. Building and maintaining these professional relationships now can pay off in meaningful ways later in your career.

Remember:

1. Give proper notice
2. Express gratitude
3. Finish strong
4. Ask for a recommendation
5. Stay connected



Requesting a Letter of Recommendation

A letter of recommendation, or reference letter, is a written endorsement from someone who can speak to your skills, work ethic, and character often based on firsthand experience. Requesting one from your internship supervisor is especially valuable because it reflects your performance in a real-world setting. A strong recommendation can support future applications for jobs, internships, or graduate programs by providing insight into how you contribute in a professional environment. It's a great way to carry the benefits of your internship forward into your next opportunity.

Here are three key guidelines for requesting a letter of recommendation from your internship supervisor:

Ask early and professionally: Don't wait until the last minute. Ask your supervisor at least a few weeks in advance of when you'll need the letter. Make the request politely, either in person or via email, and clearly explain what the letter is for (e.g., graduate school, a future internship, or a job application).

Provide context and materials: Help your supervisor write a strong, tailored letter by providing your updated resume, the details of the opportunity you're applying for, and a brief summary of the work you did during your internship. You can also highlight any specific skills or achievements you'd like them to mention. A more detailed list about what to send them is included on the next page.

Follow up with gratitude: Whether they agree to write the letter or not, always thank them for their time and support. If they do write one, let them know the outcome of your application and express appreciation again. Maintaining professionalism throughout helps preserve a positive relationship for future networking or opportunities.

Requesting a Letter of Recommendation

When requesting a letter of recommendation, providing context and materials will be helpful for your contact to remember key things about you and highlight specific strengths in their letter endorsing you.

A few things to provide your contact include:

Updated Resume: Highlights your experience, skills, and education.

Purpose of the Letter: Why are you applying, and where are you applying?

Where to Send the Letter: Name, title, and address of the person to whom the letter should be addressed? If it's an electronic submission, send that information along with application number or any other relevant information.

Academic Data: Major, overall GPA, major-specific GPA, courses taken from them and grade earned?

Qualities: Academic or personal traits, how you stand out, campus activities or awards, hobbies/interests, long-term goals, etc.

Remember to follow up with your contact to let them know the final decision of the employer, school or program you are applying to!

Requesting a Letter of Recommendation

List potential contacts for letters of recommendation and their contact information.

Contact:

Email:

Phone:

Notes:

Reflection

The reflection process after a college internship is crucial because it helps solidify your learning, strengthen your professional network, and refine your career direction. Check off each one after you've completed the task.

LinkedIn updates: Sharing your experience on LinkedIn allows you to showcase your achievements, connect with professionals in your field, and increase visibility to potential employers. It also helps establish your presence in your industry and opens doors for future opportunities.

Thank-you email to your supervisor: Expressing gratitude demonstrates professionalism and helps maintain a positive relationship with your supervisor and colleagues. A well-written thank-you email can leave a lasting impression, potentially leading to mentorship, job referrals, or future collaboration.

Meeting with career faculty: Discussing your internship experience with career advisors or faculty members allows you to reflect on your learning, receive guidance on your next steps, and gain insights on how to leverage the experience for future opportunities. They can also help you identify additional skills to develop and connect you with other resources.

Each of these reflection steps helps transform the internship from just a work experience into a meaningful milestone in your professional journey.