

## Questions to ask when looking for an internship

One of the best ways to improve your chances of finding employment after graduation is to participate in an internship during your school years. You can gain hands-on experience in your chosen field, significantly increase your networking contacts, and learn how corporate cultures, environments, and structures work. However, it's also important that you put in the effort to [find the right internship](#) for you.

### 1. Your Objective

Before choosing an internship, you must determine for yourself what you expect to gain from it. Are you looking for general industry knowledge or are you focusing on a specific skill set? As you determine your objectives, don't be clouded by the allure of working at a major company when experience at a small business might be best for your career. Remember, when it comes to a job interview, your prospective employer is going to be more concerned with what you learned during your internship rather than where you worked. As you begin to investigate different internships, find out what you can expect to gain and make sure that lines up nicely with your own objectives.

### 2. Paid or Unpaid?

Obviously, a paid internship is in your best interest from a financial standpoint. However, money isn't everything and it's not a good idea to eliminate unpaid positions before you do your research. First of all, there may not be any paid internships available in your field of study. This happens frequently in government and public sector positions. Additionally, prospective employers may look only at how you performed during your internship and they won't care if you received a stipend or not.

With that said, it's always nice to be paid, and in a recent study done by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, close to two-thirds of college graduates who worked at a paid internship eventually received a job offer, compared to slightly more than one-third of those working at unpaid internships. If you do opt for an unpaid internship, find out about office perks. Free lunch on Fridays? What about a transit card? It never hurts to ask.

### 3. Is There Structure Put in Place?

Once you've narrowed down your search to your top company choices, make sure you find out what type of structure is in place for interns. This includes, among other things, a list of learning objectives, expectations, responsibilities, and the evaluation process. You could ask the hiring manager or even reach out to other interns who have had experiences there before. While a smaller company with no intern structure doesn't necessarily provide a bad experience, you want to avoid getting stuck in a dead-end internship where you spend your days running errands. If the company has an official intern program in place, that's a good sign.

### 4. Big or Small Organization?

Deciding whether to intern at a large company or a smaller company isn't easy – there are pros and cons to both. A big company comes with name brand recognition and may offer you an opportunity to work with more experienced mentors. The work environment at larger companies, however, can be much more competitive, and you may struggle to interact with the

higher-level executives within the organization. Choose a small company and you can typically get a feel for how the organization operates overall, and gain more hands-on learning experience as well. You won't benefit, however, from any name brand recognition, and if the company isn't experienced with interns, you may not find much structure.

### **Final Thoughts**

Take as long as you like to find the right internship but remember that it's how you perform in the job that counts. Dress professionally, show up on time, and willingly accept any assignment given to you. Consider meeting with your supervisor to set some goals for your experience, and always do your best work. Once your internship is complete, thank your mentors and be sure to remain in touch going forward

- What's your major
- When are you graduating
- When does you want to start
- Can you afford to take an unpaid position
- Do you need an internship related to your major
- Are you looking for an internship for class credit (if yes, you will need to speak with a professor or the dean in your major department.
- Are you looking for experience in your field of interest or just something in general
- Are you working now
- What does he hope to accomplish with an internship
- What academic goals and which career objectives does he want to work towards
- What interests does he want to explore
- What skills does he want to use and/or improve