

Quest Alumni Newsletter

February, Junior Year

Interview Tips for Interns

The real key to a good interview is preparation. You'll probably have plenty of other work to do while you're applying for internships, but setting aside time to prepare for your interview makes all the difference. Employers want to hire students who are confident, relaxed, and ready to meet challenges—not floundering because they're unprepared. Follow these simple steps, and you'll put yourself ahead of the competition.

Choose your outfit carefully. First impressions are important; there's nothing worse than candidates who arrive at an interview under-dressed and looking like they just stepped out of the shower. As a general rule, you should dress "business casual"—conservative, but still comfortable. Despite the summer heat, women should avoid clothes that are too tight or revealing, and men should stick to dress shirts and pants.

Prepare responses to frequently asked questions. There's no way to predict every question you'll be asked, but you can prevent "um-ing" and "uh-ing" your way through the interview. The key? Articulating ahead of time why the internship opportunity is important to you. Interviewers don't want to waste their time waiting for you to think up the perfect answer, and the first thing that comes to your mind may not be the best response. Instead, spend time before the interview considering the answers to some common questions. You don't have to memorize a scripted response; the key is to have some focused ideas in your head that will convey your message to the interviewer. You should at least know the answers to these questions:

- ❓ Do you want an internship with this company?
- ❓ What do you think makes you a good candidate?
- ❓ What do you think you will gain from an internship with this company?
- ❓ How does this internship relate to your career goals?

Research the company. We can't emphasize enough how important this one is. No matter how busy you are, if the company has a web site, take the time to surf it. There's nothing that impresses an interviewer more than someone who shows a real interest in the company and its goals. Doing your research proves that you're engaged with what the company has to offer and that you made an informed decision when you applied for the position.

If applicable, bring your work. Employers like to see initiative. They like to have a lot of information about a candidate, a personal quality that stands out, even a memorable anecdote. Particularly if you're applying for an internship in advertising, editorial, or the arts, a sample of your work will give interviewers something solid on which to evaluate you. Don't have anything to show? Don't stress. You're applying for an internship, so employers expect that you might not have a lot of practical experi-


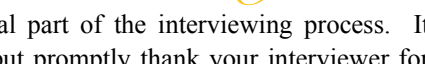
ence. If they want to see what you can do, they'll give you an assignment. If you are asked to prove yourself before you're hired (with a writing or editing test, for example), don't underestimate the importance of such projects—sometimes they can make or break your chances of being hired.

Prepare questions of your own. Wait a minute—aren't they supposed to be the ones asking you the questions? Not necessarily. Having thoughtful questions prepared for an employer will show that you're conscientious about making sure the internship meets your needs as well as the company's. In fact, employers expect questions—they are a sign of an employee with potential. Here are some sample questions you might consider asking:

- ❓ What's the company's philosophy behind hiring interns?
- ❓ How many interns is the company hiring?
- ❓ Who will be my boss? With whom will I be working?
- ❓ What do you like about your job?
- ❓ What is the office environment like?
- ❓ How do you think this internship will benefit me?

Sell yourself. If you aren't convinced you're right for the job, they won't be either. The interviewers we spoke with agree that the number one thing they look for in a candidate is self-confidence. But how do you accomplish confidence without sounding cocky? The best way to talk about yourself is to be honest and sincere at all times. Interviewers will be suspicious if you have all the right answers to their questions, and they'd rather hire interns who are aware of their own faults than those who appear to be hiding something.

Discuss it now. If you have financial concerns, housing issues, or time constraints that could affect your employment, address them at the interview. Not only will the interviewer appreciate your candidness, but you'll save yourself the awkwardness of having to ask for these allowances after you've been hired. Give employers the benefit of the doubt. They understand that you're in school, you need money to live, and that you may need time off to spend with your family. Discussing these issues at the interview will help the employer feel comfortable hiring you, since you were thoughtful enough to deal with these issues up front.

Thank you, thank you.  *Thank You*  Often overlooked, the thank-you note is a crucial part of the interviewing process. It doesn't have to be long, but promptly thank your interviewer for his or her time and consideration. This is also a good opportunity to stress your best qualities, reiterate why you'd like the position, and address some of the concerns you feel the interviewer might have had when speaking with you. As with all correspondence to potential employers, be sure to use correct grammar and avoid informal language.

You Are What You Write

A recent survey of human resource professionals found that over one-third have visited social networking sites to look for information about employment candidates. Personal pages and videos posted on MySpace.com, YouTube.com, Facebook.com and similar sites are now fair game when employers conduct “background checks” on job applicants. With concerns about office security, employee theft, and malicious behavior on the rise, they want to learn as much as they can about the character of a person as well as their capabilities on-the-job.



This assessment, however, is not limited to what can be found on social networking sites. It also encompasses virtually every interaction you have with an organization online. To put it another way, your evaluation now begins with the first e-mail message you send and continues through every subsequent communication you have with the organization. From an employer’s perspective, then, you are what you write.

That view has always been true, of course. Employers have long made judgments about job applicants by evaluating their resume. On the Internet, however, it’s far easier to get trapped into careless and potentially damaging expository mistakes. What follows are three simple rules to help make sure that what you write is you at your best.

Rule #1: Be Business-Like in Employment-Related E-Mail

Always assume that any online correspondence you have with any representative of an employer is of a business nature. E-mail may have developed as a casual medium, but when you’re seeking employment, it’s a serious activity and should be treated as such.

- If you are initiating the correspondence, err on the side of formality and begin your message with a standard business greeting and the recipient’s last name. For example, you might write “Dear Mr. Brown.”
- If you are replying to a message from a recruiter, follow their lead in determining what greeting to use. For example, if they begin their message with an informal “Hi Joseph” or “Hello Joseph,” you may do so as well. If they begin with the more formal “Dear Joseph” or “Dear Mr. Brown,” then you should reply using the more formal greeting.
- You should also follow the recruiter’s lead in determining whether to use their first or last name in your greeting. If they signed off in their message with their first name, then you may use that name in your greeting. If, on the other hand, they signed off in their message with their full name or some variation of their last name (e.g., Mr. Jones, Ms. Kay), then you should use their last name in your greeting.

Rule #2: Watch Your Tone of Voice

The tone of an online communication can be easily misunderstood. In fact, one study found that as many as 50% of all e-mail messages convey an unintended (and potentially harmful) tone. How does that happen?

- A frequent source of misunderstanding is the simple choice of which case you will use in typing your message. Just as it’s impolite to shout in a conversation, it’s impolite to do the same online by over-using the upper case or capital letters in your e-mail.
- Tone is also conveyed, although more subtly, by your word choice and syntax. Make sure you select terms and phrases that can’t be read more than one way and avoid those that could be misunderstood without some familiarity with your mannerisms and way of speaking.
- Stay away from ambiguity. More often than not, clarity declines with the length and complexity of your sentences. So, keep it short and precise.

Rule #3: Represent Yourself Well in Your Writing

Carefully compose every message and then even more carefully proofread what you’ve written.

- Recruiters are most impressed with candidate e-mails that are articulate and to-the-point. Multi-syllable words and complex thoughts don’t influence them as much as the clearly expressed answer to a question or explanation of a point.
- Recruiters are put off by messages that have improper or non-standard punctuation, grammatical errors, and misspellings. They believe that such miscues reflect inattention to detail and a lack of pride in one’s work. If those attributes are evident in something as important as your employment-related communications, they are also likely to occur on-the-job, and that possibility undercuts your credibility as a candidate.

No one believes that a resume fully conveys all of a person’s potential value to an employer. It is, however, the key to the front door. If the resume doesn’t open the door and get you invited in for an interview, you’ll never have a chance to embellish on what you’ve written.

The same is true with your online communications. Even the briefest and seemingly insignificant e-mail between you and a recruiter becomes a part of your record. The messages you write online, however, may have an even greater impact on your evaluation by the recruiter. They are less stylized than your resume—a more candid snapshot of who you are—and thus are often considered a more reliable gauge of how you will act once employed.

Does that make them more important than your resume? Of course not. Your resume tells a recruiter what you can do. Your online messages, however, tell them who you are. And, in today’s world of work, that information can spell the difference between a job offer and a rejection letter.

When You Need Legal Help

In the unfortunate event that you need legal help, where do you go?

First, contact the office of the dean of students: Many universities retain an attorney who visits the campus several hours a week to answer students' legal questions.

If you're living away from your parents and you don't have a lot of money, check out the Legal Services office in your area. If you qualify financially, this federally funded, free service can provide you with civil (but not criminal) legal assistance.

If you want to hire a lawyer and don't know how to find one, consult the telephone directory for the number of your local or state bar association. Someone there can help by matching your particular need with the type of law practiced by one or more attorneys nearby.

Try working within the system. If you need help with an academically related problem—if you've been verbally abused by a teacher, for example, or wrongfully accused of cheating—then find out what your options are. At many institutions, committees (made up of students, faculty, and staff members) are set up to handle academic and other grievances.

At the University of South Carolina, a "nonacademic" grievance committee handles "dissatisfaction occurring when a student thinks that any condition affecting him/her is unjust, inequitable, or creates unnecessary hardship," which may include "mistreatment by any University employee, wrongful assessment and processing of fees, records and registration errors, racial discrimination, sex discrimination, (and) handicapped discrimination."

Such committees are there to handle fairly serious injustices (so don't come to them with your campus parking tickets, no matter how heinous and unfair they may truly be—they won't want to hear it), and there's usually a time limit in which the grievance must be filed.

Another good option: See if your college has an ombudsman. On many larger campuses, the ombudsman conducts impartial investigations into student complaints, and the findings—as professors and administrators can tell you—are listened to with great respect. The ombudsman is usually a senior, tenured member of the faculty who has been asked to serve a year or two in that delicate position. (The term om-

budsman, for you "Jeopardy" hopefuls, is Swedish and was originally used to describe an official who investigates complaints against public officials.)

Working independently of the college administration and all other groups on campus, the ombudsman, like Superman, seeks to combat injustice and resolve conflicts. Students can communicate with their ombudsman in confidence. Though most ombudsmen don't have the power to reverse decisions or to punish people, they do have the ability—and the clout—to raise hell on the students' behalf. Which is often enough.

Janet Farrar Worthington and Ronald Farrar
The Ultimate College Survival Guide

Dealing With Discrimination

If you experience any form of discrimination or harassment, you may feel victimized and isolated. Since the law is on your side, there are specific actions you can take. I suggest the following process:

1. **Give the speaker the benefit of the doubt.** Perhaps you misinterpreted the action or comment. Meet with the professor or fellow student and explain why you consider a specific action or comment sexist (or racist). Give the person a chance to explain the comment.
2. **Work up the food chain.** If the offensive behavior continues, see the campus affirmative action officer. All campuses are mandated by law to have offices that take care of such issues.
3. **Put it in writing.** Document your complaint, backing up your concerns with specific examples. Send copies to the professor, the department chairperson, and the appropriate dean.
4. **File a formal grievance.** As a last resort, take legal action. This is a serious step and should be undertaken only if you've spoken to your parents at length and retained a lawyer.
5. **Be classy.** If you've been hurt, it's tempting to send an article to the school newspaper, give an interview on the campus radio station, and generally run a media circus. Stand tough and shut up. If you damage a person's reputation unfairly, you can be held liable for slander and libel.

Laurie Rozakis, Ph.D.

The Complete Idiot's Guide to College Survival

Getting Great References

It is inevitable that at some point in your job search you will be asked for references, and when you are, you want to be sure you have a great group of advocates who are prepared with answers that will help rather than hinder your chances at landing the position.

Note from Quest:

You need to be prepared to offer references whether you are applying for jobs, internships or graduate schools.

References are something you should think about at the beginning of your interview process and not just at the end when you are under immediate pressure to provide them.

Start by making a list of all the possible people you can use as a reference. Be sure to think about:

- Former employers
- Former clients
- College professors
- Deans
- Family friends who have seen you in a professional setting
- Association leaders

It is fine if a reference no longer works for the company where you were employed together or if they live in another city. It is more important that the individuals you choose know you well enough, have experience working with you, and are willing to vouch for you. In short, you are looking for anyone who can communicate your experience, skills, integrity, professionalism, and can-do attitude to any potential employer.

Once you have a list of approximately five potential references you need to:

1. Ask them for permission. Be sure to keep thorough notes of when you contacted them and what their response was.
2. Ask for their preferred means of contact whether it is by personal or office phone, or if they would rather be contacted via e-mail.
3. Discuss the following likely questions with your potential references, so that you know what they are going to say and there are no surprises. You can tell them what points you are aiming to reinforce with the employers who might contact them and more than likely they will be happy for the input.

- What was your relationship with the candidate?
- What responsibilities did he/she perform in his/her position with the company?
- Why did he/she leave that position?
- What are his/her strengths?
- What are his/her weaknesses?
- What was his/her approximate salary?
- Would you hire or work with this person again?

It is also a good practice to keep a folder of references and commendations for a job well done that you augment throughout your career. Get into the habit of asking for a letter of reference from someone who you have worked with who might be moving on and ask that person if they would be willing to serve as a verbal reference as well. This is certainly something to keep in mind if you are or have worked as an intern where the big payoff is more likely to be in experience gained and contacts made than in money earned.

Tory Johnson, CEO of Women For Hire
www.experience.com

Suggested Reading for College Juniors

The Transition Guide for College Juniors and Seniors: How to Prepare for the Future, by Carol Weinberg

Getting from College to Career, by Lindsey Pollak

Career Wisdom for College Students, by Peter Vogt

10 Things Employers Want You to Learn in College, by Bill Coplin

If you are a pre-law student, check out the recommended reading lists at

<http://www.lsac.org/pdfs/Resources-for-the-Prelaw-Candidate.pdf>
and <http://www.wcas.northwestern.edu/advising/preprof/law/resources.html>.

If you are interested in academia, look up <http://chronicle.com/section/Books/55/>.

A reading list for pre-med students can be found at

<http://www.yale.edu/career/students/gradprof/media/readinglist.pdf>.

Future entrepreneurs, see <http://entrepreneurship.mit.edu/booklist.php>.



You will notice that we have referred you to reading lists from several other colleges. Whatever school you are attending has amazing resources available to you, and you should certainly take advantage of them. But if you are ever unhappy with the advice you've been given or cannot find the information that you want, it is possible that another school can help you—via its online resources. So feel free to check out what pre-med students are reading at Yale, or what resume and interview tips the career services office at Columbia has to offer. The information is out there for you to take advantage of!

We have started a lending library with several of these books. Stop by and check one out!

Planning on Graduate School?

If you are planning to attend graduate school, you should be well into the process of identifying graduate programs that interest you. In addition, this spring you should:

- Begin to acquire letters of reference. Talk to professors that know you well, employers, organizations that you have volunteered for, etc.
- Continue to record your accomplishments and experiences, and collect samples of your work for potential use in admissions essays and interviews.
- Seek national scholarships and financial aid. Check out www.finaid.org. Quest can also help with this—contact Marilyn at 239-403-7174, ext. 326.
- Review the application requirements for the programs you would like to attend.
- Register and prepare for admissions tests if applicable. Many graduate programs will require that you take one of the following graduate admissions tests:
 - The Graduate Record Examination (GRE) is the general graduate admissions test and is required for admission to many university graduate programs. Some programs may also require a GRE Subject test. (www.gre.org)
 - The Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) is required for admission to MBA programs. (www.gmat.org)
 - The Law School Admission Test (LSAT) is required for admission to most law schools. Many require that it be taken by December. (www.lsat.org)
 - The Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) is required for admission to almost all US medical schools. (www.aamc.org/students/mcat/)
 - The Dental Admissions Test is required for most dental schools. (www.ada.org/prof/ed/testing/DAT/)

Graduate School—Helpful Resources on the Web

- <http://www.gradschools.com/>
- <http://www.drew.edu/depts/CareerCenter.aspx?id=22771>
- <http://www.princetonreview.com/grad/>
- <http://www.justcolleges.com/grad/>
- <http://www.gradview.com>
- http://www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/grad/rankings/rankindex_brief.php
- <http://www.graduateguide.com/>
- <http://iiswinprd01.petersons.com/GradChannel/>

Cyber Career Killers

When it comes to applying for a job, the days of stamps and envelopes have passed. The vast majority of resumes and cover letters are submitted electronically, making a person's e-mail address an important piece of contact information. But using a cute, playful or downright inappropriate e-mail address can be a quick way to eliminate your chances of earning a call from interested employers. Consider "surfgod@example.com" or "borntoparty@example.com." While your friends may get a kick out of your sense of humor, those outside your circle won't be in on the joke. The best type of e-mail address to use for professional correspondence is one that includes your name or a combination of your name and some numbers. Here are two examples: "roberthalf@example.com" and "rhalf1948@example.com."

Another technology trap to watch out for is attaching the wrong document to an employment application. More than one professional has had their hopes dashed after inadvertently submitting an outdated resume, incomplete cover letter or even documents completely unrelated to the job search. A good rule of thumb: Once you attach a document to an e-mail, open it before hitting send to ensure it's the correct one.

- Robert Half International, www.jobs.aol.com

Hand-me-down Advice for Juniors

The Columbia University Division of Student Affairs asked seniors to pass along advice that juniors might find useful in planning for senior year. These are some of their suggestions regarding senior year course selection:

- Remember to take FUN classes—classes that are enjoyable and interesting. Although it is necessary to finish major, concentration, and core requirements, it is important to leave room for non-disciplinary electives—college is the last chance to take *any* classes in *any* field, so take advantage of it.
- The Job Search is like another class. The process of writing resumes and cover letters, attending information sessions, going to interviews, etc., takes a lot of time. If you are planning on searching for a job after school, plan your Fall semester as if you are taking another class. I spent more time on the job search than any single class in my Fall semester. (**Note from Quest: The same thing can be said for the process of applying to graduate schools. Keep this in mind when you make your fall course selections.**)

- www.studentaffairs.columbia.edu

STUDY BREAK

www.sudoku-puzzles.net

3	5				9	6		
1			7	3				5
					2	9		
		6		4				9
	3						1	
9				8		7		
		8	5					
2				9	4			6
		4	1				2	7

Medium Difficulty

CONTEST—SCAVENGER HUNT

Are you up for a type of scavenger hunt? As juniors, you have learned the ropes around campus – this is your opportunity to share what you have learned with incoming Quest students. You can do this individually or put together a team of your Quest classmates. For each item below, please send me your responses – along with a visual aid (photo e-mailed from your phone, copy of an article or menu, business card, etc.) I will use this information to put together a guide for any Quest students that will be attending your school. And the individual or team that provides the most thorough responses will receive a prize – a gift certificate from your favorite pizza parlor (or equivalent). To be eligible for the prize, I must have your responses no later than March 26th. So here goes:

1. Does your campus have a copy of *The Experienced Hand*? If so, where did you find it? (Hint: Check the library or career services. If you're doing an internship this summer, take time to read it!)

2. What is the best place on or near campus for coffee? Ice cream? Smoothies? Late night snacks? Sunday brunch? Pizza? Subs? A special occasion dinner with your parents? A big date? Please provide name, address and phone or a business card for each.
3. Who is the best person to talk to if you are having problems with financial aid? or your student account?
4. Where is the best place on campus to study?
5. What are the best bets for inexpensive entertainment (concerts, movies, bowling, etc.)?
6. What is the strangest campus tradition?
7. What is the best place to hang out between classes?
8. What places should be avoided on or near campus?

Did I miss something? - feel free to add it! Send completed entries to me (Marilyn) at Marilyn@questctr.com. I will welcome entries at any time, but to be eligible for the prize, they must be received by March 26th.

Quest 2010 Speaker Series

February 5, 2010 ♦ February 26, 2010 ♦ March 12, 2010

Held at The Ritz-Carlton, Naples, the dinner/lecture series begins promptly at 6:00 p.m. Net proceeds raised from this event are used to fund the administration of the Quest For Kids program and purchase Quest college scholarships. If you are interested in attending one of the events, please contact Quest.

Speakers this year are Daniel Hannan, Mitt Romney, and David M. Walker. To learn more about the series and these speakers, visit the website at:

www.questeducationalfoundation.org

Memo From Marilyn

Remember, this is **your** newsletter, and your input is welcome! Please let us know what features and articles you find most useful. If you'd like to see a particular topic addressed or have a suggestion for a "Study Break" activity, send me an e-mail. Or better yet, submit an article! Do we have any cartoonists out there? I'd love to include a bit of humor—this might be your chance to be published! You can reach me at Marilyn@questctr.com.