



Internship Tips from ZF Students, Alumni & Friends

Internships can serve many purposes. Not only are they a good way to learn and build new skills, make connections, and build career confidence, but you may also earn some extra money. Internships are a great way to try out a new job and learn about on-the-job expectations without as much pressure. Interns are expected to learn from their mistakes, which, in turn, helps you develop your effective adult skills.

We encourage ZF students to look for internships during summers, breaks, and/or, if time allows, during the school year. Here are some internship tips from our current students, alumni, and ZF friends:

Searching for an Internship

- Start early! If you are looking for a fall internship, ideally, begin the prior spring. For a summer internship, ideally begin the prior fall.
- Attend the on-campus career fairs.
- Use college-provided websites to find potential interning partners of the college.
- Colleges may provide offices or counselors to assist in internship placements. Seek out this office on your campus, called the Office of Experiential Learning or Career Office.
- Professors can be very helpful, particularly if you have a niche major. Contact them and ask for recommendations. They often have a lot of insight, and most professors really just want to help their students.
- Reach out and seek advice from your college adviser. Be open to their coaching.
- Use websites such as Usajobs, Idealist, Indeed, and Handshake, etc. Research careers using Instagram and Google. Use Tiktok to hear about a student's past internship and the steps they took to gain internship experience.
- Use alumni, friends, relatives, friends of friends, and coaches to network for internship opportunities or contacts. Ask for recommendations and/or introductions.
- Be proactive, be open, and apply to many!
- Reach out to companies or organizations you're interested in and ask if you would be able to intern there. Some potential internship sites don't post that they are looking for an intern.
- Research who you are connected with. Think about who you could connect with for opportunities. Use LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, etc., to look for followers and contacts.

Often, a contact may have other connections that could be helpful. It is very much who knows who.

Preparing for an Internship Interview

- Have a strong resume and use college office resources to help hone it.
- Create a LinkedIn account early in your college journey and keep it updated. LinkedIn is an invaluable tool for building your professional network, showcasing your skills and experiences, and discovering internship opportunities. Many companies will check you out on LinkedIn before considering interviewing/hiring you. ZF has a LinkedIn tips sheet and is also happy to consult with you on building your LinkedIn profile.
- Use a planner and/or Google Calendar to schedule everything. It is important to be honest with yourself when planning your internship (how many hours and when). If you do your work late at night, consider if you would truly do your work earlier in the day if you have a nighttime internship. You want to ensure you bring your best self to your internship and school work.
- Try and write out what types of questions they may ask of you. In some fields, there are a lot of hypothetical questions about what you would do in a certain situation. It is important to think through those scenarios and how you would respond, what you bring to the table, and areas where you know you have room to grow before being put on the spot.
- Practice interview questions over and over.
- Do a mock interview with a friend, professor, mentor, coach, or career center staff member.
- Know how an internship interview differs from a job interview in that it's ok to not have a lot of experience, yet it's most important to demonstrate a willingness to learn.
- When you interview, get the names of everyone you meet, not just the interviewer and be sure to send each a personal thank you note. Email is typical for the thank you note.

Considering an Internship Offer

- Consider an internship, even outside your field of studies, because you never know what lessons you can take from it. You can frame the experience to make yourself a more versatile candidate for a future role.

During the Internship

- Internships are great for learning professional etiquette and conduct. Don't be afraid to ask questions! (ex. How do I send a follow up email? What do I wear to important meetings?)
- Stick with it! You will surely learn something, even if it is what you don't like!
- Online internships can be tricky, and little supervisor contact can leave you unsatisfied. It's okay to speak up, but to do it in a respectful manner. There will always be factors outside of your control that impact your experience, but it is important to always stay respectful even if you are honest because connections always show up in the most unexpected places. Stay true to yourself, and there is no shame in moving away from an internship once it is over.
- Keep an open mind. You are there to learn, not to be the one running the ship.