

The Intern Group Telephone Interview Guide

>> Introduction

First of all, Congratulations! You have passed The Intern Group's Admissions Process and now you are getting ready for an interview with a company or organization! This interview will be via telephone or Skype and so you need to make sure you prepare effectively. This guide will give you all the information you need to know, read it carefully and good luck!

The Intern Group Telephone Interview Guide is composed of five sections:

1- Interview Preparation

- Research
- Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities
- Questions to Expect
- Questions to Ask

2- Scheduling the Interview

3- The Interview

4- After the Interview

5- Top 10 Tips for Success

>> Things to keep in mind for telephone/Skype interviews

You will likely have less than 30 minutes to convince someone you are the right person for the internship.

Preparing for an interview does not mean memorizing answers. It does mean knowing what the organization does, anticipating potential questions, and thinking about your answers. Interviewers are trying to find out at least five things about you:

- Do you have the knowledge, skills and ability to do the internship?
- Are you motivated to excel in the internship?
- Can you get the job done? Will you know when you need help and how to ask for it?
- Will you fit the culture of the organization? Can you work for their team?
- Will you help the organization more than it takes to train you?



1. INTERVIEW PREPARATION

There are four key steps in preparing for a telephone/Skype interview:

1. Research the organization
2. Know what employers are looking for
3. Anticipate interview questions and prepare your answers
4. Prepare questions you have about the company and internship.

“Fail to Prepare, then Prepare to Fail”

1 Research the Organization

Spend some time finding out about the organization and the skills they are seeking for the internship. This will help you express your interest and enthusiasm to the interviewer and develop relevant questions to ask during the interview.

There are several sources you can use:

- Look at the organization’s website. It is probably the best source of information about the organization, culture, products, services, and geographic locations.
- Check other websites the organization might be mentioned in, don’t just stop on page 1 of Google, go to page 2, 3, 4.....
- Look at other organizations in that industry to get an understanding of the competition and to learn more about the landscape of their sector.

If you do not come to the interview knowing what the organization does, what their products or services are, who their customers are and what their industry is like, then you will almost certainly fail.

2 Know what employers are looking for

It is important to know the knowledge, skills, and abilities that are highly desired in interns. They include:

- Adaptability and flexibility
- Communication skills
- Creative problem solving
- Drive to achieve
- Passion and enthusiasm
- Taking ownership
- Teamwork and collaboration
- Working with diverse groups
- Trustworthiness
- Interest in the organization & industry
- Leadership
- Handling conflict
- Initiative
- Time management skills
- Handling pressure

Many of these skills and abilities come from previous work experience. If you do not have a work history, you can use other experiences and projects during the interview.

Some examples include:

- Class projects and assignments
- Team sports
- Volunteering or community service
- University & school clubs & societies
- Fraternity/sorority organizations
- Religious youth groups
- Student leadership positions
- Residence hall or other college activities
- Tutoring

Any experience that makes you the person you are today can be worth talking about!

Interview Preparation

3 Anticipate interview questions and prepare answers

Two types of interviews are commonly used when screening candidates for employment: traditional and behavioral. Most organizations will follow a traditional style but be prepared for a behavioral style too. Some managers start with questions from the traditional interview and then move on to more behavioral interview questions.

Spend some time anticipating questions that you may encounter and think of ways you might answer them. This process will help you feel more confident and prepared, and it will also help you appear thoughtful and intelligent.

Traditional Interviews

Traditional interviews tend to be broad-based and generic.

You may be asked about your classes, previous jobs, computer skills, personal interests, and your career goals, both long- and short-term.

The following is a list of five questions you might encounter.

- Tell me about yourself.
- What are your strengths?
- What is your greatest weakness? Or, in what area do you need the most improvement?
- Where do you expect to be or what do you expect to be doing in five years?
- Why do you want to intern here?

There are always some questions which you think are difficult - such as - tell me about your greatest weakness? In reality, if you prepare effectively, you'll be able to turn these questions to your advantage. Always remember that people are seeing how well you can cope with difficult situations or questions, if you handle them well, then you are leaving a great impression!

Behavioral Interviews

A behavioral question asks you to give examples of how you responded to different types of scenarios in the past. It helps to give the interviewer an idea of how you would behave in situations which you might find yourself in. Talk clearly and logically so they can follow and understand your story.

- Describe the situation clearly, what you had to do and what were the challenges involved.
- Describe the steps that you took to handle the situation or resolve the problem. Don't generalize. Be specific and concise.
- Explain the results. Demonstrate to the interviewer that you understand the implications of your actions, the resulting outcome, and why it happened this way.
- Don't ignore the failures. An interviewer will want to hear about situations that didn't turn out as hoped. We all have experiences we wish we could "do over." What an interviewer will want to know is how would you do it over?

In the behavioral interview, you need to be specific and concrete. The interviewer may be evaluating your answers against a standard profile of desired behaviors deemed important to success in the organization.

Talking too much

Be careful not to talk 'too much'. Answer the question that was asked concisely, if you talk too much or for too long, you'll seem unstructured and show poor communication skills. This is where taking a pause before you answer a question helps because it allows you to plan what you will say.



Common Traditional and Behavioral Interview Questions

Many of you have already experienced a combination of interview techniques. Some managers start out with traditional questions (tell me about yourself, strengths, weaknesses, favorite classes, etc.) and then move on to situational questions. It is best to be prepared for both types of interview questions.

Traditional Interviews

- Tell me about yourself.
- What personal strengths would you bring to the internship?
- What is your greatest weakness?
- What do you expect to be doing in five years?
- Describe any previous jobs and what have you learned from them.
- What skills and experiences make you a good candidate for this internship?
- How would someone you have worked with or one of your classmates describe you?
- How do you think your education will help you in this assignment?
- Why do you want to work for us? What do you hope to learn from this assignment?
- What is your dream job?
- Why should we hire you over somebody else?
- What has been your biggest professional disappointment?

Behavioral Interviews

Describe to me a time where:

- You were part of a team and someone on the team needed to be encouraged to increase their contribution to the team effort. Briefly describe the situation and your role in helping the person to improve their performance.
- A particularly difficult problem was challenging you. What steps did you take to analyze the problem and to overcome the challenge? What was the outcome?
- You demonstrated taking initiative in a manner that positively served your team or organization. What happened? What role did you play?
- You felt you had the best approach to a project or problem, but others didn't agree. What did you do? How did you go about trying to convince them? What was the outcome?
- You were working on a project or assignment and something equally important came up. What did you do?
- You demonstrated significant creativity.
- You showed your experience as a leader of a group or team.

Interview Preparation

4 Prepare Questions to Ask During the Interview

At some point during the interview, you may be asked if you have any questions. It is important to have your questions ready as this demonstrates a serious interest in working for the organization. Good questions also demonstrate your communication skills.

You may only have the opportunity to ask a few questions. Here are some suggestions:

- What is the organization's top priorities and how do you define 'success'?
- Since an internship is so short, is there any preparation that can be done ahead of time to help me learn and contribute more quickly?
- Have you had an intern in this position before? What made that person successful?

Also - don't forget this interview is also your chance to find out more about the role too!

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Remember: Don't go on the offensive. Don't ask questions that may make the interviewer feel challenged or interrogated.

"The best interviews are ones where the candidate speaks with enthusiasm, knowledge and an eagerness to learn. Candidates should stay calm, speak clearly and take their time to structure their answers. Don't be afraid to take a moment to think before you answer a question - it actually shows us that you are thoughtful and measured... don't take too long though"

Senior Manager, UK Bank

>> Questions NOT to ask

There are also questions you should NOT ask during the telephone/Skype interview. For the most part, these are to be asked until you have been selected and offered the internship. In many cases, the interviewer may not have the answer.

- Will you pay for my lunch / are expenses covered? - Internships are usually unpaid; sometimes companies may offer a stipend but always remember that what you learn is more important than what you earn!
- If I do well, will I be offered a full time job? The interviewer is not interviewing you for a permanent job. This is a legitimate type of question to ask at the end of the internship, after a manager or mentor has observed your performance.
- Can I do this job from home? How long is lunch? Will I work on weekends? - These show a lack of commitment & leave a bad impression.
- When can I vacation? – Don't ask until you are established in the role.

2. SCHEDULING THE INTERVIEW

The request for a telephone/Skype interview can come in many ways: a call or email from a secretary or administrative assistant asking to schedule a time; a call or email directly from the interviewer asking to set up time; a call that asks if you are available now; or it could have been set up by The Intern Group ourselves directly.

Usually an interview is scheduled in advance and it is very rare and will probably not happen, but if you receive an unexpected call directly from the interviewer who asks “can you talk now?” you need to be prepared with a response. Tell them that you’re busy and reschedule a time that suits both of you that also gives you enough time to prepare.

Being mentally prepared for the interview is important. You need to make sure you have your notes, your resume, and the questions you want to ask. Handle this situation with enthusiasm, but buy yourself some time to prepare. It is reasonable to say something like, “I would very much like to talk to you about the intern position. May I call you back in 30 minutes? What number should I call? Or shall we set up a time on Skype to talk?”

Note:

If an employer misses the agreed-upon interview time with you, do not worry. Always remember, organizations are frequently incredibly busy and sometimes emergencies arise and ‘things slip through the net’. In this case, politely & simply rearrange another time with them direct, or inform us and we will rearrange on your behalf.

Some things to remember:

- When scheduling an interview either by phone or email, be as flexible as you can, offer a range of interview times and be aware of the time zone that the organization is in.
- Immediately write down the agreed upon time and date and do not forget it.
- Get a phone number or Skype ID even if the interviewer will call you. You want to be prepared just in case.
- Confirm the time of the call in your time zone. Do not assume the caller knows your time zone and if you are unsure, double check with them.
- Choose a time where you will have privacy and can be comfortable. Don’t do an interview from your car or bicycle or in the middle of the cafeteria. Since cell phones are notorious for dropping calls or being “noisy,” use a land line phone instead or Skype.
- Dress for success. Even though the interview is over the phone/Skype, dressing as if meeting in person will help you to feel more professional. This is really important as you need to be in the right attitude to succeed.
- Make sure you get the name and e-mail address of the interviewer.
- Show enthusiasm. Let the interviewer know that you are excited about the internship and look forward to learning more about the opportunity.
- Don’t be late!



3. THE INTERVIEW

The Telephone/Skype Interview

You have now prepared for the interview. You researched the company, know how to answer the tough questions, and know what you want to ask. Final preparation steps should include having the following on hand for the actual interview:

- Your resume for reference
- Name of the interviewer and your notes and questions
- Pen and paper or another note-taking system to record notes, new information, phone numbers, and names

At the conclusion of the interview, thank the interviewer for the opportunity to learn more about the company and the internship. If you feel good about the company and internship, share this with the interviewer.

You might say, *“This sounds like a really good match for me, and I feel I could make a contribution while learning more about the work your company does.”*

And finally, make sure you have an e-mail address of the interviewer so that you can send a thank you note.

After the Interview

After you hang up, take a few minutes to make some notes – something you may have learned about the company, specific skills or expectations that the interviewer stressed, and something you wish you had clarified.

Write a thank-you letter or e-mail.
(See the sample thank-you note here)

4. AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Sample thank you note

Dear Mr. Smith

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about the summer internship as a marketing intern at Quintessentially. This internship sounds very exciting, and after talking with you I find myself excited about the opportunity of working with you and your team. The projects you mentioned during the interview are a wonderful match with the skills I have gained and what I want to do with my career. I am confident I can make a significant contribution to the team.

If you have any additional questions or need extra information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Again, thank you for your time and your consideration of my application. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

*Sincerely,
Sarah*



5. Our top 10 Tips for Success

These are our top 10 essential tips to a successful interview!

- 1** Dress to impress.
- 2** Learn as much as you can about the organization.
- 3** Have pen & paper to hand.
- 4** Do the interview in a quiet place.
- 5** Think before answering.
- 6** Send a personal thank you note to your interviewer.
- 7** Speak concisely & clearly.
- 8** Do not speak negatively about anyone or past employers.
- 9** Smile & have a positive tone.
- 10** Ask thoughtful, intelligent questions.

Prepare well. Stay calm. Speak clearly. Show your enthusiasm. Ask smart questions.

Your incredible international internship experience is only a few final steps away. Good luck!



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