



PRESENTING YOURSELF AS A PROFESSIONAL

Presenting yourself professionally is essential to securing an internship, and to success once you begin. Some of the points below may seem obvious, but they are key to making a positive impression.

Considerations Prior to Applying for an Internship:

- **Phone Etiquette.** Ensure that your voicemail greetings and phone messages are formal. Avoid the use of slang or musical backgrounds. Articulate clearly, employ proper grammar, use a polite tone, and be straightforward and concise.
- **Email.** For all applications and professional correspondence, use a professional e-mail address, such as your UCSD account.
- **Do your homework.** Before communicating/meeting with an organization, visit the company website. Conduct basic research on its history, mission, goals, and accomplishments.

Responding to Internship Organizations:

- **Be prepared for phone calls or e-mail messages from internship sites to which you have applied.** If you receive a phone call and are not in an appropriate setting for a conversation, allow the contact to leave a message and then follow-up in a timely manner. When possible, reply to professional voice messages and e-mails within 24 hours. Try to call during standard business hours (8AM-5PM).
- **When leaving a message,** give the organization 4-5 business days before following up again. While enthusiasm is appreciated, you do not want to irritate the organization by being overly persistent. If you don't get an immediate response, chances are they are extremely busy. Be patient, and check with your internship counselor if you are concerned about how to proceed.
- **Rehearse** phone conversations in advance or jot down a couple of reminder points that you can easily refer to during the conversation. Draft and proofread e-mail responses in advance.
- **Begin all communication with a greeting.** Introduce yourself and remind them that you are a student from UCSD's Academic Internship Program, applying for (x) position. Explain that you are following up in response to their message regarding (x).
- **Make sure you are clear on the times and locations of any interviews.** Ask for any special instructions.
- **Conclude the e-mail dialogue or phone conversation** by thanking them and expressing that you are looking forward to meeting them. Wait to discuss matters in greater detail during the actual interview.

A Successful Interview:

- **Preparation.** Anticipate obvious questions, research the organization, and practice for the interview.
- **Dress the Part.** Research the organization's website to learn about the company's dress code. For the interview, dress slightly more formally and conservatively than what would be expected for a standard work day at that site. Typically, business casual is appropriate. (examples: belted business slacks and button down shirt; conservative blouse with suit skirt extending below the knees).
- **Personal Hygiene.** Positive personal hygiene conveys self-respect and respect for others. Arrive at the interview showered, well rested, with neat/tidy nails and hair (both men & women), and fresh breath. Avoid powerful colognes, perfumes, and other fragrances to which people might be sensitive.

- **Time is of the essence.** Plan accordingly (factoring in traffic/parking) so that you arrive at the interview 5-15 minutes early. Arriving more than 15 minutes early may inconvenience the organization. Arriving less than 5 minutes early may imply to your potential supervisor that you may be unreliable.
- **What to bring.** Copies of your resume, your class schedule, and a list of quarterly commitments. Also, prepare a couple of questions that you can plan to ask at the end of the interview.
- **Turn off your cell phone,** or, better yet, don't take it into the interview.
- **Body language.** Greet with a firm handshake, make direct eye contact, and smile when appropriate. Avoid crossing your arms and use good posture.
- **Allow the interviewers to set the tone.** Follow their lead, always erring on the conservative side. Be polite and friendly but not too "chummy," and do not make jokes about potentially sensitive topics.
- **Conversation tip:** Do not dominate the conversation or interrupt anyone.
- **Positive while still honest.** Be as positive as possible without being dishonest or misleading.
- **Concluding the interview.** Thank each of your interviewers for taking the time to meet with you and ask what the next step is if that has not already been addressed. Make sure to ask for their business cards.
- **Send a hand-written thank you card** or a formal e-mail message.

Your First Days at the Internship: Starting Off on the Right Foot

- **Be punctual.** One of the most important ways you can convey a professional demeanor is by arriving at your internship assignment on time. In fact, it is best to show up a little early (again, 5-15 minutes early).
- **Communication:** When talking with supervisors or other employees at the internship organization, do not address anyone too casually. It is safest to avoid the use of first names unless given permission. Always say please and thank you.
- **Attire:** If you hope to be seen as a professional, wear the appropriate clothing. Strive to dress similarly to the other professionals at your internship.
- **Confidentiality:** Ask your supervisor about the organization's policies regarding internal data and sensitive information, as some information may be confidential. Be sure you understand and maintain any such policies.
- **Demonstrate commitment and focus.** If you assume responsibility for a task, follow through in completing it. If you get stuck and have exhausted all of your options, ask for help.
- **Be present** in every way. Turn your cell phone off or put it in silent mode. Do not listen to your iPod, work on homework, check personal e-mail messages or Facebook accounts, IM, or surf the internet. Be alert and attentive and convey enthusiasm, even when you are feeling tired.
- **Be respectful** of those around you. Do not disrupt others by chewing gum loudly, speaking loudly on the phone, or wearing heavy cologne or perfume to which others might be sensitive. Make sure to ask first before borrowing any supplies and always pick up after yourself.
- **Respect personal boundaries, but be friendly** and make a polite effort to connect with the people around you. Never speak behind people's backs. It is also not appropriate to attempt to convert co-workers to your beliefs.
- **Be trustworthy and direct** in both speech and action and accept accountability for yourself. It's okay to make mistakes. It's not okay to deny those mistakes or fabricate excuses. An academic internship is a learning experience and you cannot truly learn unless you are honest about your strengths as well as areas where you can improve.
- **Have fun and be confident** in your own potential and abilities. When you are enjoying something and trying your hardest, it shows.