

United States Patent and Trademark Office



Getting to Know Your Extern Supervisor Questions to Ask Your Extern Supervisor on Your First Week

When you begin your externship, you may wonder what you should discuss. Hopefully you will be pleasantly surprised about how easily conversation flows with one another. One way to prepare for this meeting is to think of some icebreaker questions. We encourage you to consider the following list or write your own questions! Note that if you ask these questions you should be prepared to answer them too – this is a great way for you to get to know each other!

Career Exploration: Questions to Ask Your Supervisor

To Explore Career Fit

- How did you decide on this career?
- How does this career fit your interests, values, and skills?
- What are your main duties?
- What skills are most important for success?
- What kind of person does well in this position/agency?
- What was your major and how have you used this in your position(s)?
- What type of experience/coursework would you recommend for students take to prepare for this type of career?
- What skills do you use most in your position?
- What is a 'typical' background for someone in your role?
- What opportunities are there for advancement in this field?
- What is a typical day like for you in your position?
- What are your favorite/least favorite parts of your job?

How to Prepare for a Career in a Specific Industry

- How did your time at inside and outside the classroom prepare you for this field?
- What are some challenges to working in this position?
- What experiences should I engage in to be better prepared for this position?
- How is this field/industry changing?
- Do you need an advanced degree to begin working or are there entry level jobs?
- What are some typical entry level jobs students start with?
- How do you work your way up in this position?
- What trends do you see occurring in this field?
- What are some of the internship and job search strategies you recommend?

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Learning about the Specific Organization

- How would you characterize the work culture/environment in this setting?
- Can you share with me the structure of the department or division and how it fits into the total organization?
- Considering the people in your department, what are characteristics you believe makes them successful?
- Do you provide any sort of professional development or training programs?
- It seems that every organization has its own personality. How would you characterize yours?
- What do you like most/least about working for the federal government/USPTO?

To Learn Internship/Job Search Strategy

- What are methods and resources for getting jobs with the federal government/USPTO?
- What resources would you recommend I use to find job in this field?
- Who else would you recommend I talk with about employment with the federal government/USPTO?