What do I say when I call a potential placement?

The first conversation with a placement can be awkward: you must find the right person to speak with, communicate lots of information about our program, and get a feel for whether it would be a good match for you before you commit yourself.

Here is a partial script you can use/adapt as you wish:

Opener:

“Hi, I’m a ___ year student at the Indiana University Maurer School of Law in Bloomington. I have an opportunity to do an unpaid academic internship this summer, and would like to talk to someone at your office about the possibilities.”

Questions:

I understand from ____________ (how you found out about the placement) that your office does ____________ (type of work). I’m interested in that type of work because ________________. Is this the area where I would be assigned? Are there other areas where I might also be assigned?

What type of tasks does your office usually assign to interns? For example: legal research, intake, initial client interviews, fact investigation, document drafting, or ______? If I were to intern with your office, what would probably be the task I’d be doing the most?

Since I’m a law student, I would need to be supervised by an attorney licensed in the state where your office is. Is there a licensed attorney who could meet with me regularly to help me coordinate my assignments and provide feedback on my work?

Part of the internship experience is learning how different types of law offices work. Is there a regular staff meeting I could attend, or is there another way I could get to know the folks at the office? Would it be possible for me to attend other events with the staff at your office, for example, training sessions, meetings with community groups, etc.? I want to learn as much as I can about being a ______ attorney.

I can do the internship for up to four credits, one credit for every two weeks’ worth of full-time work. I’m interested in doing a ___ credit internship, which would be ____ weeks of full-time work. Would that arrangement work for your office?

The Law School requires that I complete an academic requirement for the internship and I would likely have to keep a journal of my experience or do a research paper relevant to the experience. Is there a place at your office where I could work and have access to a computer and phone?

Has your office had interns in the past? Do you know how many you might have this summer?

[Ask any other questions you wish, then make a decision about where you’d like this to go.]

Closings:
If you definitely are not interested:
“Thanks for your time. I’m looking at a couple of different sites for my internship and need to talk to them before I make a final decision. I’ll keep you posted.” [It is good manners--thus imperative--to send a follow-up letter letting the contact know that you have decided on another placement.]

If you might be interested:
“Thanks for all your help. I am interested pursuing your office as a possible internship. Would you like me to send in a résumé and cover letter?”

If you are definitely interested:
“Thanks so much for taking the time to speak with me today. I am definitely interested in doing an internship with your office. Would you like me to send in a résumé and cover letter?”

Keep in Mind:

It is a lot of work for an office to have an intern. Yes, you are working for free, but the office must give up valuable time to orient and supervise you, valuable space for you to work in, and valuable trust that you will work hard and ethically for its clients.