



Internship Guide

Do I need to do an internship?

- In today's competitive job market, internships or other relevant work experience are very often expected by prospective employers
- An internship gives you the chance to work with professionals in the "real" world
- You will learn new skills, gain professional contacts and clarify your career goals
- Your internship supervisor can be an important professional reference when you begin a job search
- An internship is just one more step in creating a well-rounded portfolio of experiences that will give you a competitive edge in the job search

What should I look for in an internship opportunity?

- The clearer and more detailed the job description, the more likely you will know exactly what you will be doing and what is expected of you. Good internships usually combine real responsibility with routine activities.
- There should be a training component to your internship. You should get some instruction about how to carry out your job. This may consist of an orientation to the organization, a formal on-the-job training program, attendance at staff meetings or working one-on-one with another employee.
- You want to be sure that you will have ongoing supervision. You should be assigned to a particular person who will oversee your work, offer constructive criticism, help out with problems, and write an evaluation of your work when the internship is over.
- A good internship gives you future contacts. You will hopefully have the opportunity to meet and talk with many people in the organization to learn about their jobs and career tracks.

Making the most of your internship

- Be enthusiastic and professional
- Show a sincere interest in the organization.
- Approach it as professionally as you would a "real" job.
- Maintain a positive attitude no matter what your duties - never complain.
- If possible, be there first - if you arrive a week before the others, you may get your pick of assignments, as well as getting more individualized attention.
- Expect to work hard, even though you may not be receiving pay.
- Show that you are a team player, for example, go in early when there is a lot to do.
- Have a clear sense of what you want to get out of this internship

- An ideal internship should include a training/mentoring component and the opportunity to do substantive work, in addition to the necessary administrative tasks.
- You should expect to get transferable skills, professional contacts, and more knowledge about that particular field.
- To avoid disappointment, get as much clarity about the position as possible before you begin - it can be helpful to write down explicit goals with your supervisor and review them regularly.
- Make sure that you accomplish at least a few tasks that will look impressive on your resume.
- Do not be shy to ask for what you want in order to make it a worthwhile experience. They are trying to please you as much as you are trying to please them. In fact, many companies use internship programs to help them identify and recruit top talent before another company does.
- Try to get a job offer, even if you need to turn it down. It looks good if you can say that you were offered a job at the place that you interned.
- Make sure that you will not only be getting something from them, but that you are contributing as well.
- Recognize that this is a great opportunity and learn as much as you can.
- Oftentimes just paying attention and being inquisitive will be your best teacher.
- Keep notes of what you are learning, the skills you are gaining, what you are accomplishing, and any contacts you make.
- If you feel up to the challenge, ask for more responsibility. Express an interest in doing more substantive work and be as specific as possible. Specificity shows thoughtfulness.
- Don't be afraid to admit when you are in over your head and ask for help.
- Don't be limited by the department or supervisor you are working for. Think about what you would most like to do in the organization and get to know the person who does it. Invite them to lunch and tell them you are trying to absorb as much information as you can and that what they do is of particular interest to you.
- Take every opportunity to talk to/impress the senior people without being obnoxious about it. Express your opinion, ask questions, talk about other things besides work. Just don't be so zealous in your schmoozing that you ignore your co-workers or turn them off. (Often supervisors will ask your coworker's opinion about your performance and demeanor.)
- Once your internship is over, stay on the radar screen. Continue your relationship with the employer and stay in touch for future job possibilities, networking or references.
- If all you learn is that you do not like the field you have chosen, that is valuable information

Excerpts taken from Amherst College Internship Guide