



## **What's the goal of your internship?**

You can't make the most of your internship if you, uh, don't know what you want to get out of it. Which of these are you most interested in?

1. A better understanding of what it means to work in this field
2. Professional connections
3. Specific skills (learning a type of software, being able to use a certain lab machine, understanding how to write a press release)
4. Things you can put on your resume: organized X, monitored Y, built Z

You'll get a bit of 'all the above' in every internship. But if one of these really resonates with you, make sure your employer knows that and take initiative in those areas. If you want to leave your internship knowing how to code in C++, volunteer for programming projects and make yourself available to the IT department. If you're hoping to end your internship with three portfolio-worthy design projects, put together mock-ups for eeeeeeeverything and seek feedback from the creative director.

## **When you're interviewing for the internship, ask them what the interns do**

The best way to find out what interns do at the companies where you're interviewing? Literally just ask. When they inevitably end the interview with "And what questions do you have for me?" you can respond with "What sorts of tasks and duties do interns typically take on?" Of course, you'll be expected to do some coffee-fetching and copy-making, but it's also reasonable to expect that you'll get to be part of some projects.

During your interview, remember to highlight what you'd like to learn and contribute. You might say something like "I've been a part of my school's AV club for three years and I'm really interested in expanding my video editing skills." Or "I've been writing for our school newspaper for two years and I'm really interested in how writing skills translate to marketing and PR."

## **Most importantly: Take initiative + volunteer on projects you want to be part of**

Real talk: learning how to take initiative is a skill that will serve you in every area of your life, for the rest of your life. Might as well learn it now. No matter how impressive your resume or how clear you are about your skill set, it's possible that your employer will stick you in a corner and ask you to do data entry. If/when that happens, don't panic. Just keep your eyes open for projects you'd like to be part of and then offer to help and solve problems. That's it.

When your employer sees you thinking critically to solve problems, improving how their organization operates, and are capable of doing more than punching numbers into a database, they'll be more excited to give you bigger challenges to tackle. Show them what you can do! Party planning committee struggling to design a flyer? Offer to mock up a few designs and show off your graphic design skills. Publicity department is overloaded and dropping the ball with the company Instagram account? Offer to reply to DMs and research hashtags. The boutique manager is too busy to swap out the window display? Use your stylish eye to put something nice together.

It's usually a good idea to pitch in when you see a coworker struggling, falling behind, or staying late--even if you're helping with unsexy task like inventory or cleaning up the break room. Employers hire people they like. And we all like people who help out. Rather than saying "Is there any way I can help?" make a specific offer, based on your skill set.

"I saw you working on X. Would it be of help if I did Y?"

Your employer probably didn't memorize your resume, so they've forgotten that you're good at spreadsheets/Facebook marketing/design/insert skill here. So when you see a graphic designer staying late, say "I'm pretty good with Lightroom. Do you need help editing photos?"

You get the idea. Finding a summer internship while you're in high school will take a bit more effort than finding a job lifeguarding, nannying, or flipping burgers. And, yes, it might be unpaid.

But the insights you'll gain, the connections you make, and the skills you learn are so, so worth it.

