

# Experiencing Nutrition

## Tips on finding nutrition experience wherever you are.

I needed 300 hours to apply for my didactic program, and I need 700 more hours to apply to my university's internship. That's 1000 total hours! I didn't see how I could fit it all in; I lived in a small tourist town, and there weren't many opportunities. But over the past two years, I miraculously ended up volunteering and working at several different organizations and companies. I finally reached my 1000 hour goal in August of this year. Here are some of the things I learned that might help you!

- **Don't be afraid to ask.** The worst they can do is say no. Talk face-to-face or call *anyone* that might have something. Look at your phone book /county health directory for organizations (see the list below for ideas).
- **Don't discount volunteering.** There isn't any money, but the experience is still great. And who knows—they might hire you when they see how awesome you are!
- **Some organizations don't have a solid volunteer program.** This can be good (you can decide your role) or bad (you don't really have anything to do). Talk with your contact and get specific details about what you will be doing, and exactly how many hours you will be able to volunteer.
- **Even if it isn't in nutrition, it might still good.** Although physical therapy doesn't have much to do with nutrition, working there might help you develop skills in medical billing or in communicating with patients and other health care professionals. If this is for a program, talk to your director to see what qualifies and what doesn't.
- **Be prepared for disappointment.** I talked to lots of places that turned me away because they didn't have anything for me to do. Keep trying!
- **Ask your professors or program director about opportunities.** They often have lots of ideas and connections.
- **If you just can't find anything, start your own!** One of my friends called several elementary schools in the area, developed a curriculum with several other students, and taught short nutrition classes there for a year.
- **Once you get started, keep a record.** If you have to report this to a program, you will need really good records of exactly what you did, the applicable dates, and how many hours. I find that Excel helps me with this—I have a page for each organization, and I total all the hours on one sheet, so I always know how many more I need.

### Organizations or companies to contact:

- Food banks
  - Your university (food service, TA, or the student dietetic association)
  - College extension offices
  - Virtual companies:  
<http://allaccessinternships.com/experiences.php> (1)
  - Restaurants or cafés
  - Volunteers in Medicine or Red Cross
  - Meals on Wheels
  - ADA opportunities:  
<http://www.eatright.org/Members/contact.aspx?id=2373> (2)
  - Your state dietetic association
  - Area schools (cafeteria, health)
  - Herbal supplement companies
  - Government: Dep of Agriculture,
  - WIC, Head Start, day care
  - American Heart Association
  - Assisted living centers or nursing homes
  - Hospitals (especially the dietetic department or cafeteria)
  - Physical therapy, occupational therapy
  - Dairy Councils, Beef Councils, or other state food orgs
  - Study abroad, field study, or international humanitarian organizations
1. All Access Internships.  
<http://www.allaccessinternships.com>. Accessed Sept. 30, 2011.
  2. Volunteer Opportunities. American Dietetic Association.  
<http://www.eatright.org/Members/contact.aspx?id=2373>. Accessed Sept. 30, 2011.