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The Art of Emailing Professors to Secure a Foreign Internship

December 3, 2014



“ *Email is the most under-rated, under-used tool for grabbing an internship abroad. Read all about how to utilize it effectively!* ”

There are two definitive ways to bag an internship-

1. Apply to various internship programs such as MITACS, DAAD-WISE, etc. Fill up your application form in the fanciest way possible and leave the rest up to fate.

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OR

2. Write an email to a professor as a prospective intern/student.

The latter might sound easier than it reads. Yet most people say this method almost never works. A few days ago, **Mr. Shivpal Yadav**, a Civil Engineering student at IIT (BHU) shared his summer internship experience at Federal University of Rio De Janerio, Brazil with us. What made his story stand-out was that he achieved this funded internship (yes, you read it right) via a simple email correspondence. He is an email application veteran, having sent out mails by the dozen to professors all over the world. Some of the useful tips he provided are worth a read:

1. **Being resilient:** Professors are busy people. Do not lose hope if your first, second or even third email goes unanswered. You have to be resilient while contacting professors.
2. **Timing matters:** The time you send out your mail matters more than you think. Never email a professor during the weekends or Friday night; that might be a convenient time for you to email the professor but it is also the professor's day off and your mail will get buried under the numerous other student's applications. Professors tend to check their mail during their office hours thus increasing chances of a reply if sent out at such a time.
3. **Whom not to contact:** It is advisable not to contact more than one professor from the same department as, if found out, it will dampen your credibility in the eyes of both professors.
4. **Be specific:** I cannot stress on this point enough. In the subject heading of email, be sure to include the specific area you want to intern in. The professor shouldn't have to scour through the email to search for what you want .

If you want to do a research project under him/her, a subject line such as '2015 Prospective Research Intern for xyz subject area' would be ideal.

5. **Funding:** Most professors are reluctant to provide funding and understandably so; you are an unknown candidate with only words to prove your credibility. Typing out a politely worded, technical email will help your chances. Make sure there are no grammatical errors. If you are good at academia with prior work experience pertaining to their field, then getting funded becomes much easier.

The email is all about you being a student that the professor absolutely HAS to offer a position. The real question you should ask yourself is: What can I do to make the professor respond to my mail instead of ten dozen others lying in his/her inbox? Here's what-

- **Start Early:** Consider this. You contact professors in October for an internship that starts in January. Provided one responds, confirmation of a project takes time. There are official procedures to be considered, especially if it's a funded project. Then there might be a matter of VISA which needs a few weeks at the least. In the end, you might find yourself racing against time to get the confirmation.

TIP: If you want an internship offer by January of next year, you should start with your research six months ahead. Keep in mind the vacation timings for the countries you are targeting because most professors will have their automatic vacation responders on during these months. By the time they read their mail, yours will be more than twenty thousand leagues under all other emails.

- **Target the right country:** If you desire an international internship, you have to be smart while choosing universities. Some professors just don't have the funds to admit you. So what's the point in setting up base

camp there?

TIP: At the outset, select countries which are known to provide funding to students. For example, news and statistics show that of late, Canada is an emerging tycoon in the education sector and is allocating massive funds to projects. So it could very well be your next destination.

- **Spam emails:** Most emails from unknown addresses are flagged as spam and don't even reach the inbox. Professors also can't be sure whether you are truly a student or a fake.

TIP: One smart preventive measure would be to use your university email ID which identifies your first and last name and also has something like '@iitg' or some such credible ending. This validates both points at once.

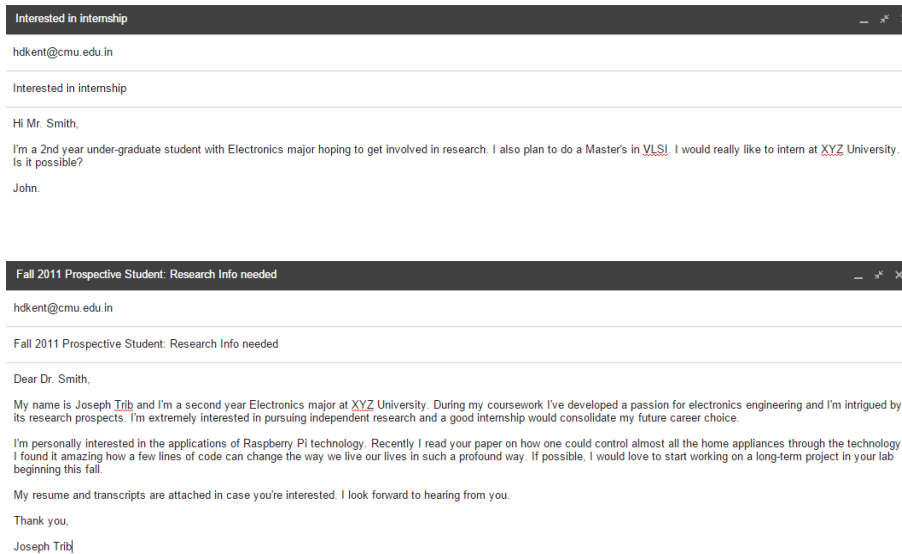
- **Bulk emails:** A lot of students have a huge list of professors and play chance with their emails. Writing a bulk email with a set format to all professors will only result in immediate deletion from inbox.

TIP: Spell the professor's name correctly. Get the honorifics right- Professors are usually 'Dr.'. Salutations such as 'Dear Dr.X' or simply 'Dr.X' should be used. Write about what interests you in their body of work.

- **Do your homework:** Professing interest in someone's work by saying 'I would be really enthused to work under you' has absolutely no bearing unless you give evidence to support it.

TIP: Run through the body of work the professor has done, select one publication or project that overlaps with your interest and READ IT. Come up with some interesting insight or query about it. Don't be vague, use technical words. Try to add your own ideas. Nothing proves your interest more than actually doing your homework.

To elucidate the impact of a well-written email better, let us show you a comparison between two emails, written for the same purpose-



We leave it upon you to decide which of these is more likely to get a response.

Really, writing an email is an art. It can be gruelling but when you get that acceptance, you realize with marvel that you basically got offered a position on the basis of a mere email!

Author's Note: I would like to thank Mr. Shivpal Yadav for sharing with me the valuable tips and knowledge he gained from his experience. For queries and doubts, feel free to contact him on his [LinkedIn account](#). He has a wealth of knowledge that he would be happy to share!

About author : Sohini Bagchi is a 4th Year Biotechnology student at VIT, Vellore.

If you're looking for further tips on how to score a foreign internship, then let us enlighten you through [this article](#).

Image credits : <http://www.g2tv.co.uk>

Find international internship [here](#).

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**Vimal Vinod** · Works at AIESEC in Manipal University

Can anyone suggest me international paid internship in Occupational therapy (Allied Health) ?

Like · Reply · Apr 12, 2016 6:33am

**Heera Lal** · RFC at Government of Uttar Pradesh

My son is seeking some internship In USA. Advise how he can get.

Like · Reply · Jan 12, 2016 10:06am

**Internshala**

Hi,

Please visit here for the internships in USA.

<http://internshala.com/internships/international-internship>

Hope it helps.

Regards,
Team Internshala

Like · Reply · Jan 14, 2016 9:44pm

**Rahul Paul** · Works at Table Tennis

Can anyone suggest me about some international paid internship in marketing and sales ?

Like · Reply · Jan 3, 2016 7:27am

**Internshala**

Hi Rahul,

Please visit here for the International internships.

<http://internshala.com/internships/international-internship>

Hope it helps.

Regards,
Team Internshala

Like · Reply · Jan 14, 2016 9:43pm

**Abhishek Khem**

We are a group of socially conscious youngsters working to understand what helps people things. Our goal is to find out how to increase the quality and quantity of good deeds. Simply to understand what motivates people to go do good deeds. We want to help people do more

While we understand that you may not want to contribute, we urge you to share the survey media with the hashtag #humhaingood in addition to taking it yourself. It only takes '5 min

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/humhaingood>

Like · Reply · Dec 8, 2015 12:25am



Karan Gupta · Bathinda, India

Thank uu Sohini for such a good advice.kuddos.basically I have a question in my mind the student of cse and pursuing my engineering from ptu.I am not a topper but I do have good the subjects and done some of the languages as in php,java,python etc. So I would like to want to do internship in foreign university or in any company so what would be the chance selected and which companies or universities are used to provide internships to Indian students me know as it will really help me.....and what should I do to increase my chances of getting

Like · Reply · Nov 27, 2015 1:33am



Kunal Sharma · Student at Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology

Does japan provide good internship opportunities ?

Like · Reply · Nov 7, 2015 10:11pm



Internshala

Dear Kunal,

You may find this link useful - <http://internshala.com/.../internship-in-japan/sort-rece>

Like · Reply · Nov 18, 2015 11:35pm

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19 Responses to "The Art of Emailing Professors to Secure a Foreign Internship"

vishal mishra says:

December 6, 2014 at 8:44 AM

i am very interested to do this internship.

Reply

Sohini says:

December 6, 2014 at 3:30 PM

If you are talking about the Internship Mr. Shivpal Yadav did at Federal University of Rio De Janerio, Brazil, please find the link to his LinkedIn account in the Author's note. Contact him for further details on this internship!

Reply

FAHIM MUNSHI says:

September 8, 2015 at 11:37 AM

I AM INTERESTED,WANT MORE INFORMATION AND SCHOLARSHIP CRITERIA FOR IT

Reply

kunal sadhukhan says:

December 6, 2014 at 3:29 PM

very good suggestion....it'll help me a lot. Pls send me some statistical data electrical engg internships abroad (or in IITs).

-kunal sadhukhan,2nd year,IIEST Shibpur

Reply

ABHISHEK KUMAR says:

December 8, 2014 at 8:58 AM

Hi Sohini,

Thanks for such useful resource.

I'm a second year,ece student in UPTU, LUCKNOW.

Please provide some tips how to plan and act for a fruitful future just

after 4th semester for students who failed to reach iits but want to achieve more than people expect from a non iitian.

i have more to say,

Will share in next contacts.

Thanks alot.

Reply

Sohini says:

December 8, 2014 at 1:21 PM

Hi Abhishek,

It's great that you are taking such an interest at this stage, keep this spirit up! The university conferring your degree to you does matter, but what is given way more importance is the quality of work experience you have had during these years. Since you are already in your fourth semester, you have gained quite a bit of theoretical knowledge on subjects in your field. You must have preferences to certain subjects in your field. Read up on those subjects- read recent publications, ongoing research etc. Then approach a faculty who specializes in that field and ask to do a project under them. OR propose a project idea yourself, team up with a few colleagues and commence working on a project. Let your teachers know you are a dedicated and eager student, this always helps later on with applications. Try not to meander in the subject area you want to specialize in, be specific. If you are a mediocre student, the number of projects you have done, the number of publications and your all-roundedness helps build your resume. Get some worthwhile industry exposure during your summer and winter breaks. Keep yourself updated on internship programs and positions (Internshala is a ready medium for such info) and after your 6th semester, when you have bulked up your CV enough, Apply to them. For now work on some good projects, life at university is about the project and work experience you gain, not so much about the theoretical knowledge attained.

Thanks for asking, hope this helps!

Reply

Gaurav Lagad says:

December 8, 2014 at 10:30 PM

Thanks Sohini Di!!! The article is very nice as usual!! Keep writing more such articles :)

Reply

Sohini Bagchi says:

December 9, 2014 at 12:09 PM

Hey Gaurav, thanks so much for the appreciation :) and I hope to keep writing too!

Reply

Dhruv says:

December 15, 2014 at 9:19 PM

Great stuff. So insightful. If only I had access to this last year.

Reply

Sohini Bagchi says:

December 16, 2014 at 9:34 AM

Thanks Dhruv :P

Reply

Maadhav Anand Kumar says:

February 21, 2015 at 9:13 PM

Thanks a lot, this is a very insightful, sensible and helpful article.

I'm a 2nd year student of economic at kmc. I'm looking for a summer internship in France along with a friend with a friend doing Physics. There's a third party scholarship for the same but we have to be accepted by a university for an internship first. How do you think we should find out which universities are likely to offer internships in the first place? Or is going to individual websites of universities randomly and mailing the professors our best bet? Please help.

ps: hope to see you continue writing, and become a student advisor of sorts.

Reply

Vipin kumar gautam says:

March 31, 2015 at 6:58 PM

my branch is mechanical engineering pls give some for a bright future

Reply

Awanendra Priyadarshi says:

May 13, 2015 at 8:05 PM

Sr I m students of civil engg from Svce under VTU In bangalore. I want to take internship from best University. Plz suggest me

Reply

Sanjula says:

August 8, 2015 at 3:42 PM

Hey thanks a lot for this insightful article!
I myself am studying B.Tech in Biotechnology from MIT, Manipal. I am in my 7th sem and have worked in only one project so far. I understand that having undertaken several projects increases your chances to be accepted, but what suggestions would you have in such a case. Also could you shed some light on the Statement of Purpose?

Reply

Meetali sagane says:

September 19, 2015 at 8:48 PM

Hi there,

This is meetali. I am a b.arch 4th year student and i am looking forward to the architecture and design firms for my final year internship. I am interested in product designing and material research particularly. Please suggest me the list of renowned architectural firms in India or d way i could find them.

Reply

Internshala says:

September 21, 2015 at 11:45 AM

Hi Meetali,

For internships in the field of architecture, you may check this link.

<http://internshala.com/internships/architecture-internship>

Hope this helps.

Reply

vivek says:

September 29, 2015 at 8:34 AM

I am from state university. Will it affect my internship in any way. Or will it bound it in any way.

M from Rajasthan technical university,kota

Reply

Anubhav says:

January 19, 2016 at 11:26 AM

It must will helpful to me

Reply

Anubhav says:

February 1, 2016 at 11:48 AM

thanks

Reply

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