Make the most of your internship

Across the country, thousands of college students are preparing to start summer internships, which are a crucial way to get experience and launch your career. We’ve rounded up top advice on how to make the most of your internship, with perspectives both from former interns and from those who manage interns. Whether you’re searching for an internship, in the midst of one or about to conclude, you’ll find nuggets of wisdom here to help you stand out from the rest.

**Here are ten tips for getting the most out of your internship:**

1. **Be a sponge**

Ask thoughtful questions and soak up information. Actively listen and take notes when receiving instruction. Show initiative by researching questions first through company resources and then ask.

1. **Have a positive attitude**

Be enthusiastic. Be willing to take on any task assigned no matter how small. In certain positions, excelling at the basics can lead to getting more responsibilities.

1. **Network**

This is your chance to build relationships with people at all levels. Get to know the other interns and they will grow with you in your career. Get out from behind your desk and get to know the people in your office.

1. **Find a mentor, be a mentor**

Find someone you look up to and want to emulate at your office. Get to know them and learn more about their career path and choices they have made. You also have the opportunity to be a mentor to others when you are back on campus. Share your internship experience with underclassmen and help others with their career choices.

1. **Be receptive to feedback**

Every so often, ask your manager how you’re doing. What could you do differently? What could you do better? Are you meeting the goals of the organization? Make it easy for them to give you input that will help you grow. Once you have that feedback, use it.

1. **Quality over quantity**

Make sure you do a self review of your work. Don’t rush onto the next task to show how much you can do. Take the time to do a good job. Show that you pay attention to detail by following instructions and care about quality. Do a great job even when you're handed tasks that don’t excite you.

1. **Stay focused**

Don’t use social networking sites (unless it’s part of your job) or text with friends throughout the workday. You may be confident that it doesn’t affect your work, but experienced managers may feel otherwise. Especially this early on, your manager's opinion matters most.

1. **Be professional**

Remember that an internship is just an extended job interview. Don’t take it for granted. Even if you work in a casual setting, you need to be cognizant of the impression that you’re making. Even if your co-workers make regular conversation about life outside the office, certain things (like the raging party you went to last weekend or the fight you’re having with your friend) should stay out of the office.

1. **Understand the office norms and culture**

Observe how others in the office act, and mirror that. If employees modulate their voices when others are on the phone, modulate yours. If they’re on time for meetings, you should always be on time, too. Is there a specific way of doing your assignments (say a preferred font or format)? Figure the norms out and follow them. These details may sound trivial, but they’ll help you stand out from other interns.

1. **Stay connected**

Continue the relationships you’ve built after the internship ends. The truth is that sometimes getting an interview or job is about who you know or about what your former managers say about you. So keep in touch. Connect on LinkedIn or e-mail. Continue to stay connected to the company once you are back on campus.