

# **Internship Intelligence**

## Finding the Right Opportunity





## Defining a Great Internship for You

### 1. Start by Asking A Few Questions

Before you start applying for opportunities, there are a handful of practical steps you can take to make the process easier.

**Shift the paradigm.** Instead of pondering what you want to do with the rest of your life, ask a few questions grounded in what you already know. What subjects do you enjoy most? What classes have you excelled in? What skills are you most excited to utilize? What kind of environments do you thrive in? What are you good at? When are you most engaged in life? Take the time to write down and reflect on your responses.

**Wishlist.** Identify skills you want to develop and address gaps between where you are where you want to be at graduation. One way to help the process is by looking at listings for full-time jobs that interest you and keeping track of what interests you and what skills you need to develop. [Micro-internships](#) are also a great way to explore what you are curious about.

**Survey your family and friends.** There is great value in asking a handful of trusted advisors how they see you. Consider asking family members, friends, coaches, teachers, or clergy to identify your greatest skills and most interesting attributes. When have they seen you thrive? Look for commonalities between what you and they observe. Patterns will appear that will make your internship search more productive.

**Take stock.** Consider your obligations and think about how much time and energy you have to devote to an internship. How much time can you work each week? Do you need to be compensated monetarily or in school credit? Honestly assess your circumstances so time isn't wasted looking for programs that are not a fit.

**Evaluate expectations.** Start thinking about what is more appealing: being a generalist at an established company or having a more defined role at a smaller, lesser-known entity? While a big name might seem like the obvious resume builder, being able to sell your experience to your entry-level employer is the ultimate goal of an internship.

### 2. What Does A Great Internship Look Like?

The point of an internship is not to make copies and fetch coffee. While some less-compelling tasks are part of the deal, the goal is to get a chance to apply the knowledge and skills you have learned in college. By starting the process early you can be more selective about which internships to pursue.

You'll want to emerge from an internship with the following:

- Real-life experience working within a professional organization
- Better understanding what makes an organization run and how corporate structures operate
- Stronger professional skills such as time and project management that can be added to a resume
- A handful of meaningful professional connections that can help with a future job search



- References for a future employer

### 3. Get Ahead Of The Pack

Planning ahead is essential when it comes to securing an exciting internship.

**Get organized.** Landing an internship is a competitive endeavor. In order to put yourself ahead of the competition, you'll need to have your resume template ready to tailor to each job application.

**Put it on the calendar.** Set time aside to initiate a search. Some internships are posted and filled on company-specific recruiting schedules and many have early deadlines. The sooner you start, the better the results.

**Identify keywords.** After you have evaluated your skills, strengths, and interests, create a list of keywords associated with those attributes. These keywords will help you find the right opportunities versus blindly clicking through internship posting.

# Finding a Great Internship for You

The best internships come with exposure to multiple projects and departments and provide an opportunity to show off your talents and value. Ideally, they are also led by experienced supervisors who have a stake in the success of their interns. From the perspective of a future employer, securing a new hire who has already has work experience in the real world is an appealing proposition. The benefits of an internship are crystal clear. Knowing where to find one is less transparent.

## 1. Where To Look

Here are a few strategies to help you find that gem.

**Start at the beginning.** The first stop on any internship journey begins at your career services center. An advisor will be able to provide you with access to internships established by your institution. They might also know of opportunities available through alumni associations or other resources not found online.

**Tap into your network.** You might not think you have a network, but you do. Tapping into it simply means letting everyone know you are looking for an internship and asking them for potential leads. They can also help to spread the word. This includes professors, academic advisors, teaching assistants, neighbors, family friends, friends' parents, and past and current employers.

**Widen your circle.** Look beyond the career services center at your university to online and in-person career fairs. Even though the purpose of most career fairs is to solicit for full-time employment, representatives might be able to put you in touch with colleagues who are looking for interns.

**Look online.** There are a number of online [resources](#) that list internships across industries, including government, non-profit, international, and environmental sectors, among others.

### Internship Search Resources:

- [CareerShift](#)
- [Parker Dewey](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)
- [Glassdoor](#)
- [Indeed](#)
- [Idealist.org](#)
- [Internshipfinder.com](#)
- [GlobalExperiences.com](#)
- [Monster](#)

## 2. A Word About Networking

Most college students don't network, because it can feel uncomfortable to promote yourself. People, particularly students, forget how enjoyable it can be to find common experiences and interests with others. Think of it this way: [networking](#) is simply an extension of introducing yourself and shaking hands with people you don't know.

Here are a few pointers to make it less daunting.



- **Go first.** Make it a habit to introduce yourself at social gatherings, school events, and career-related fairs and gatherings.
- **Elevator pitch.** Prepare an introduction that includes your name, where you go to school, and a sentence or two about your broad career interests.
- **Follow up.** When a positive connection is made, be proactive about asking to exchange contact information and actually stay in touch.
- **Think digitally.** Utilize social media channels to spread the word that you are looking for an internship and ask for introductions in your areas of interest. Make sure to include channels that you might not utilize in your personal life.
- **Maintain decorum.** Consider it a given that employers check social media profiles to assess candidates. All public posts should be appropriate.
- **Be proactive.** Building a network is all about taking the lead and not waiting for something to happen. It is also the beginning of a lifelong endeavor. Connections you make today may very well serve you years from now.
- **Be helpful.** Offer to connect your peers and new contacts to your resources. Networking is a mutually beneficial experience.

### 3. Prospecting: Hidden Opportunities

There are a lot of college students clamoring for the best internships. The exceptions are the ones you find on your own through prospecting. This is the practice of reaching out to companies to inquire about opportunities that may not yet exist or have not been advertised.

Here are a few ways to make prospecting as effective as possible:

- Identify a list of companies and local businesses in your area that you would love to work for.
- Call or visit them in person and share your elevator pitch.
- Use LinkedIn to reach out to employees, introduce yourself, and start a conversation about the company and your interest.
- Ask to speak with someone in the department closest to your areas of interest and experience.
- Inquire about summer job opportunities (that could potentially lead to a more formal internship).
- Request an informational interview and follow-up.