

# Internships

Internships are a great way to get firsthand experience in an industry before you decide on making it a career. An internship helps you learn about the day-to-day reality of an industry and can help you determine what you want from your career before committing to 40 hours a week. Unlike a regular position, internships last for a limited period of time, often a summer or a school semester. Internships can be a full-time position or just a few hours a day. They can be paid, unpaid or may count as class credit. No matter the compensation, the main focus is on learning and gaining experience.

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## Why Do an Internship?

Why not? You wouldn't want to jump into a career without knowing if it's for you or not? Internships give you experience in an industry, and they can also help you decide what you want and don't want from a job. Taking on an internship will give you a look inside the professional world and better prepare you for it.

Likewise, many companies use internships to meet and recruit new talent, essentially giving them a trial run before making a permanent hire. They can be a great opportunity to network and meet people within an industry.

## Finding the Right Internship

Internships are not difficult to find. The hardest part is often determining what you want from the program. First, you need to figure out what industry you're most interested in. Once you have an idea of what you would like to try, use that information to help frame your search.

If you have a guidance counselor or class dean at your school, ask him or her for advice. If you don't have an academic advisor, check your school's message boards, job placement center, academic websites and alumni connections.

Once you've tapped into those outlets, another good resource is the Internet. There are many websites devoted specifically to finding an internship. Check out some of the listings below to start your search. These are some basic sites that will help you narrow down your options. It's always a good idea to ask the people around you if they know of any opportunities or have advice for where to find an internship.

- [www.internships.com](http://www.internships.com)
- [www.internqueen.com](http://www.internqueen.com)
- [college.monster.com/education](http://college.monster.com/education)

- [www.vault.com](http://www.vault.com)

## What to Look For in an Internship

It's important to do some research before starting an internship. Once you find a program that fits the criteria you're looking for, it's important to look at the structure of the program. Here are some important questions to ask:

- Who would manage me?
  - How many hours a week will I be expected or able to work?
  - How flexible is this position? Will the schedule work around school?
  - For what would I be responsible?
  - What will I receive in return?
  - Is there financial compensation or is this an unpaid internship?
  - Will I be involved in actual projects?
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- Are there exercises geared toward interns?

It can be useful to talk to other people who have been through the same program. If there's an internship coordinator, ask him or her if there is a past participant willing to discuss the experience. He or she can give you candid insight into the opportunity.

You should also do an online search for information about the company offering the internship. This could help you gauge what working there might be like and alert you to any problems in the company's organization. You want to find a program that fits your time schedule, personality and career goals. There are a lot of options for you to choose from, so do your research carefully, and you're sure to find the one that will be rewarding.