

Impress the Boss and Kickoff Your Career With These Internships Dos and Don'ts

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You've landed the [internship](#) of your dreams, or the one you need to complete the degree you've financed through student loans. This is the last opportunity for real-world work experience before entering the real world of work.

The internship, paid or unpaid, can catapult you into a rewarding career or torpedo one before it starts.

Think of it as an audition, as a chance to show off skills you learned in the classroom and represent your college or university to the company that has graciously offered to house you for a brief period of time. There are a lot of opportunities to succeed, and just as many to fail, during your internship.

Follow these dos and don'ts for internship success:

1. Do (over)dress the part

You don't have to show up in a tuxedo or ball gown, but it doesn't hurt to go **a little** above and beyond the dress code. For men, if the office environment is a button-up and slacks, add a tie to your wardrobe. For women, add a blazer to go with that blouse.

It's fine to fit in, but when seeking to make an impression, it's OK to subtly stand out. ([Click here](#) to tweet this thought.) You may be an intern, but you want your new coworkers to see you as one of them.

2. Don't get on social media

When in Rome, *don't* do as the Romans. No matter what your coworkers are doing, as an intern, you lack the social capital necessary to be caught on Facebook or Twitter and still leave a good impression in the minds of your supervisors.

Unless your internship involves social media, keep your updates, status checks and selfies to non-work hours.

3. Do share your goals

An internship is a mutually beneficial partnership. **Your supervisors need to know what you want out of the internship and your future plans.** You should also know what your supervisor expects of you. Request a meeting with your supervisor within the first two weeks to discuss expectations and get to know each other.

4. Don't get stuck doing grunt work

Every day isn't going to be a rock star day, but every hour of every day shouldn't be spent filing papers or fetching coffee. Ask about the duties upfront and ask for meaningful work if you don't feel challenged. There are [a few ways to do this tactfully](#).

5. Do keep a portfolio of your work

Walking away empty-handed does nothing for your career. Keep a record of your accomplishments and the projects you work on. If a picture is worth a thousand words, allow your portfolio to do the talking for you.

6. Don't gossip

This should be self-explanatory, but if you've successfully followed the steps above, your coworkers now see you as part of the team. You may be within earshot of who doesn't like who in the office.

No matter how comfortable you feel, don't engage. That includes co-signing the coworker trashing or chuckling at a mean-spirited joke. Stay above the fray at all costs.

7. Do ask lots of questions

People love to talk — about themselves and their work. Asking questions helps you learn about the company culture or your coworkers and can set the stage for a mentor/mentee relationship long after your internship has ended.

8. Don't be shy

Going to work and going home isn't the way to be memorable. If you have something to contribute to a discussion, chime in during a meeting. **You're not expected to know everything, but you have something of value to offer the company.**

You made it this far, didn't you? If you can brand yourself as a contributor and [a problem-solver](#), you'll become a go-to member of the team.

9. Do keep in touch

So your internship didn't end in a job offer. That's OK. Stay in touch with everyone you developed a good relationship with. Send them an email periodically; meet for lunch when time permits. Keep them updated on your progress and career progression.

Just because there's no job today doesn't mean one won't be available tomorrow. People hire people they know. If they can't hire you, they may know someone who can.

AJ Springer is a communications professional and freelance journalist. He blogs about communications and careers at the aptly titled [Communications and Careers](#).