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Ten Internship TIPS

A key learning experience, an internship can also lead to job and networking opportunities. How do you make the most out of your internship experience? Here are ten tips for doing so, which were condensed from five years' worth of supervisor evaluations of students enrolled in George Washington University's (GWU's) internship program.

#1. Be prepared for Writing and Research Most internships for GWU students involve heavy writing and research components. This includes a wide range of projects that summarize, share, and/or communicate information. Interning students have given presentations, written policy, legal, and research briefs, crafted a new podcast proposal, and developed advocacy documents.

The next most common internship activity is researching: over 33% of all internship supervisors asked interns to complete research tasks. This may involve compiling literature reviews, collecting data, or analyzing data sets. Time to brush up on your writing and research skill set!

#2. Communicate, Communicate, Communicate When asked about how their interns could improve, over 20% of internship supervisors commented on the need for better communication. Strong communication skills include the following;

- Listening closely when your internship supervisor is talking.
- Making eye contact when engaging in discussions.
- Sharing the progress of your work with your internship supervisor and colleagues frequently.
- Asking questions! Internships are a learning experience.
- Responding to emails promptly (within 24 hours).

#3. Show Initiative Taking initiative refers to acting and engaging with the work independently. How do you show initiative at your internship?

- When attending meetings, take notes and look engaged.
- Stay in the present moment while working site.
- Take advantage of opportunities to meet with and learn from staff members.
- Ask for more work when you finish a project.
- Show up on time for your internship.
- Don't be afraid to make suggestions and take ownership of tasks.

#4. Pay Attention to Small Details Before sending that email, memo, or research paper, proofread your work.

#5. Project Calm Confidence You were selected for the internship for a reason and can bring something new to the organization. Try to enter the workplace with some confidence!

- Try a 30-second “power pose” before entering your worksite.
- Create a playlist of music to boost your confidence and listen to it on the way to your internship.
- Visualize what a successful internship experience looks like for you.
- Celebrate your wins! Did you write a great memo? Did your supervisor compliment your data analysis? Pat yourself on the back and accept the praise.

#6. Be on time Plan your commute to show up to your internship on time, every time. This may seem insignificant, but this is a signal that you are interested in the internship process, and ready to engage.

#7. Take advantage of informal networking opportunities Internships are a valuable opportunity to put your most personable step forward. Be kind to those you meet, and use this opportunity to build connections and make relationships.

#8. Stay Organized Interning as a student can be a lot to juggle. Work to keep yourself organized and learn to self-manage your time.

- Find a planner and use it!
- If you find yourself getting distracted online, use website blockers to stay on track
- Put your cell phone away to remain focused on a current task
- Start each day with a “to-do” list of goals
- Plan ahead (i.e. if you know finals are coming up, study a few weeks in advance so you are not overwhelmed during busy weeks)

#9. Remember your boundaries Remember, you are a student first, intern second. It can be difficult to balance an internship and college classes. If you feel overwhelmed with the amount of work you have on your plate, talk with your site internship supervisor or university contact.

#10... and Have Fun! An internship delivers unique opportunities to apply class concepts in a real-world environment. It can be both rewarding and memorable. Enjoy your internship learning experience!