

SUMMER INTERNSHIP DEADLINES: WHEN SHOULD YOU APPLY TO INTERNSHIPS?



Summary: *When is the right time to apply to summer internships? Learn the important dates so you can make sure to find the best summer internships for your career.*

After a grueling nine months of academics, many students see the summer as a time to travel, make money and have fun. As appealing as that sounds, summer also needs to be viewed as a time to learn from experiences outside of the classroom.

Most employers consider their internship program to be one of their most effective recruiting tools. If you have a sincere interest in working for a specific employer after graduation, it can be advantageous to intern with that employer in the summer before your senior year. Employers also appreciate the value of internships performed at other organizations because of the transferable skills acquired. Communications skills, ability to work as part of a team, and problem-solving and critical-thinking skills are cited as important by recruiters. An internship can make the difference between your resume being placed in the interview pile or the recycling bin.

Think of an internship as an opportunity to test a career, risk-free. No book or Internet site can provide the hands-on experience of an internship. After two or three months in an actual work setting, you will have a much better idea if a certain career is still worth your consideration. As with anything, the more research and preparation you do ahead of time, the more likely you are to succeed.

The knowledge you gain from your internship depends on the industry, challenges of the work, availability of a supervisor or mentor and the effort *you* put into the experience. Although there are no guarantees that the internship will be "as advertised," you can exert greater control over the quality of your experience by starting your internship search early and researching internship programs thoroughly. The following timeline will help you with your planning and search process:

September-October

- Define your goals and determine the focus for your internship search. A member of your college career-services office can assist you in this process.
- Develop your resume and cover letters.
- Research and network for internship prospects by using books, periodicals, employer literature and internet sites.
- Talk to friends, family and faculty and consult all of your "connections."

November-January

- Determine at least 25 internship options and perform additional research on those employers.
- Develop a time frame for application and follow-up. The internship search takes more time than you think and many employers have deadlines as early as December 1st.
- Line up your references and make sure you have their correct contact information. If letters of reference are needed, give the individual plenty of notice.

February-March

- Follow up on each resume you send with a phone call. Explain to the employer that you are checking on the status of your resume and are still very interested in the internship.
- Work with your campus career-services office to improve your interview skills; participate in a mock interview.
- Within 24 to 48 hours after an interview, send a sincere, personalized thank-you note to the employer.

April-May

- Receive and evaluate internship offers; finalize details with employer.
- Make housing arrangements, if needed.
- Make sure you have a wardrobe suitable for the internship environment.
- Do more research about the organization so you are well-prepared.

June-August

- Keep a journal of your internship experience and collect business cards from everyone you meet along the way.
- Add the internship to your resume as soon as you complete the experience.

If you plan it right, an internship can be just one of many valuable experiences you have during the summer. You can still sneak in a vacation and a visit to Grandma. In fact, you may find that she is a willing audience for the tales of your internship.