

## Working For Free: The Benefits of Internships

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College academics are just one part of preparing for a future career. New grads need to offer something extra to prospective employers. That's where an internship comes in.

An internship is an employment situation in which a student works (often for free) in order to gain hands-on experience. Internships offer valuable work experience, help you develop marketable skills and beef up your resume. Best of all, they can help you land a job after college. But internships can also help you throughout your college career. Here are a number of things internships help you do:

### Get Your Foot in the Door

For the most competitive careers, like journalism or theater, internships are essential. In a crowded job market, an internship provides:

- **Experience.** Studying a major is one thing; applying that knowledge to "real world" situations is entirely another. In an internship, you learn to back up your smarts with action.
- **Contacts.** Working with professionals, you tap into a network that can offer references, advice and information about new job opportunities.
- **A future job.** Many companies use their internship programs to bolster their recruitment efforts. Working with interns gives them the chance to try out motivated, ambitious students *before* employing them. If the intern makes the grade, the company may make a permanent job offer.

### Develop New Skills

Internships can also help you diversify your background and experience. While it's good to have an area of strength - a focus for your career - more diverse skills in a variety of fields can make you more marketable to a potential employer.

This type of internship is especially important for liberal arts majors. Adding some practical job skills to your academic expertise makes you a much better candidate for any job.

### Do Some Comparison Shopping

Use an internship to sample various fields *before* choosing your major. You may not need specialized skills to do this sort of internship; many organizations rely on interns for projects that require only general skills and a good work ethic.

This sort of internship gives you important insights into the typical workday in this company or field. Exploring careers in this way can help you choose a major - and a future career.

So you see, there are different kinds of internships for different phases of your college career.

Not merely resume builders, internships can play a crucial role in every stage of career planning.

The time to think about applying for an internship is now. Plan early, and use these experimental careers" as a means to pave the way to a bright future.

- Information from [www.FastWeb.com](http://www.FastWeb.com)