

What to Expect from Your First Internship **and How to Make It Count**



If you're in your first or second year of university, you've probably heard people talk about internships. An internship is a short-term placement (usually 3 - 6 months) where you get to experience what working life is really like as a student and gain valuable exposure to how things actually operate in your chosen industry.

Internships aren't just about acquiring work experience, they're also a good opportunity to ask questions, make mistakes, learn about yourself, explore your interests, and build connections that might help your career down the line!

If you're about to start your internship—or thinking about applying for one—here are a few things you can expect on your first day (and beyond).

1. Taking Initiative Matters

Your first few days (or even weeks) may not be packed with work. You might sit in on meetings or help with small tasks. That's completely normal as many supervisors prefer to ease interns in.

But here's the secret: **don't wait to be told what to do**. Take initiative! Offer to help, volunteer for small projects, or ask to shadow someone from a department you're curious about. When you show genuine interest, people notice and they'll trust you with more responsibilities.

The more tasks you take on, the more you'll learn. Even simple assignments can teach you about how teams communicate, how deadlines work, and how to manage expectations.



What you can ask your superiors:

- *"Hi [Name], is there anything I can help with today?"*
- *"I have some experience with [skill/tool]. Would it be useful for this project?"*
- *"I had an idea about [project]. Could I share it with you?"*

2. Socialising Is Also Networking

Work is an important part of your internship but don't underestimate the power of casual conversations. Every *"Hi, how was your weekend?"* in the pantry or quick chat after a meeting is part of networking. These small interactions help you build rapport and make you more approachable to your colleagues.

Networking isn't limited to office hours. Many companies organise team-building activities, potluck lunches, festive celebrations, and casual weekend sports like futsal, badminton or even pickleball! These events are golden opportunities to connect with your team members outside of the usual work setting. Conversations in these environments often go beyond deadlines and projects, giving you the chance to learn about people's interests, career journeys, and personalities.

By showing up and participating, you demonstrate that you're not just there to "clock in and out," but that you're genuinely interested in being part of the team. These connections can make your internship more enjoyable and may even open doors for future opportunities.





Why it matters?

The people you meet during your internship could one day become your mentors, collaborators, or even the ones recommending you for your first full-time job. Building authentic relationships now can pay off in ways you don't expect later.

3. The Chance To Make Mistakes

One of the best things about being an intern is that you're not expected to know everything. Mistakes are part of the learning process. Your supervisors understand that you're still discovering how the professional world works and will guide you when you don't understand something.

Use this time to test your ideas, explore new skills, and figure out what kind of work excites you. Maybe you'll discover that you love event coordination or that data analysis isn't really your thing after all.

What matters most is that you **learn**, **reflect**, and **grow** from the experience.



Tip:

Many companies provide training courses or events for interns and fresh graduates. Sign up for any that interest you. It's a free way to upskill and add value to your CV!

4. Learning The Culture, Jargons, and Social Rules

Every workplace has its own language, culture, and rhythm. You'll notice people using certain terms ("let's take this offline", "loop in", "deliverables") or following unwritten rules like replying to emails promptly or addressing senior staff formally.

The key is to observe first before deciding how to present yourself. Think of it like entering a new community: you wouldn't immediately impose your own style without first understanding how things work. Some workplaces are very formal and structured, while others are relaxed and playful. Neither is "better"—but adapting to the environment shows respect and professionalism.



Culture fit isn't about losing your identity, it's about learning how to navigate different environments. The ability to adapt is a skill that will serve you well in any career.



For Example:

- In a **corporate office**, punctuality, formal attire, and polite email etiquette may be highly valued.
- In a **creative agency**, you might find casual dress codes, brainstorming sessions filled with slang or industry jargon, and a culture that encourages bold ideas.
- In a **start-up**, flexibility and speed may matter more than formality, with colleagues addressing each other casually regardless of seniority.

Starting an internship can feel intimidating, but remember that **this is a learning experience, not a test**. You're not expected to have all the answers, only to show curiosity, effort, and a willingness to learn.

So take initiative, connect with people, experiment boldly, and soak up as much as you can. Who knows? This might just be the first step toward your future career.

➡ To prepare yourself even further, explore our guide on [creating a job search profile](#) and don't miss our article on [simple tips to nail your first job interview](#). Together, these resources will help you move confidently from internship to your first full-time role.

