

# Internship FAQ

## **What is an internship?**

An internship is short-term work experience related to your career goals and/or personal interests. The primary purpose of an internship is to **gain practical experience** in an area of interest while still in school.

## **What is the difference between a summer job and an internship?**

In contrast, a summer job is primarily pursued to **earn money**. It may, however, be related to your career interests; a “summer job” for one student could very well be an “internship” for another. Both a summer job and an internship can help you develop a new set of skills that can serve as building blocks for future internship, college, or career opportunities.

## **Why should I consider an internship?**

An internship experience allows you to “test drive” a career while gaining valuable work experience to make you more competitive in the post-graduation job market. Through these experiences you can clarify your career interests, develop professional skills, and establish valuable references and contacts in your chosen career field. Likewise, many organizations use internships to “test drive” potential employees. Perform well during your internship and you could later receive a job offer or a referral.

## **What are the benefits of having an internship?**

- Learn more about a specific industry/field to see if it’s right for you
- Gain practical experience while applying theoretical knowledge
- Become more familiar with specific work functions and terminology and learn career-related skills
- Experience working with other personalities and observe how decisions are made
- Generate a relationship with a mentor and cultivate a network of contacts in your desired field
- Develop a realistic view of the work world
- Increase your marketability
- Perform a positive service in the community
- Acquire experience in job-seeking skills, interviewing, resume and cover letter preparation
- Discover more about yourself, your ambitions, and your limitations

## **Where do internships take place?**

Internship opportunities exist in both the public and private sectors, including many non-profit organizations. Internships are available practically anywhere in the world, in virtually all areas of interest. Students willing to take the initiative can even create their own internship program if they cannot find what they are seeking.

## **When are internships available?**

Internships are available year round, but due to the rigorous compulsory curriculum at St. John’s College, undergraduates are encouraged to seek only summer internships. Internship application deadlines vary; many of the high-profile internships will have deadlines as early as October for summer placement, others remain open until filled.

## **How long does an internship last?**

Internships are temporary positions, although in many instances you may repeat an internship the following summer. Internships may be either part time or full time. A full time summer internship is generally 30-40 hours per week for 8-12 weeks. Many organizations are willing to work with a student to adjust the internship schedule as needed.

## **Who is eligible for an internship?**

Each internship opportunity has its own eligibility requirements, so it is important for you to identify the stipulations of each internship before applying.

## **What materials are required when applying for an internship?**

Some internship employers require only a resume and a cover letter, while others will request a list of references, letters of recommendation, a transcript, a test, and/or writing samples. It is up to you to make sure each of your applications is accurate and complete.

## **Internship FAQ - continued**

### **What is a research internship?**

Undergraduate research opportunities, often referred to as SURFs (Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship), REUs (Research Experience for Undergraduates), and other acronyms, invite undergraduates from various institutions to work on research projects at a host organization. Many of them provide both housing and a stipend.

### **When is the best time in my college career to have an internship?**

In today's tough job market, employers and graduate schools are more likely to consider you if you have had one or more internships, especially if the internship was in a related field. Also, you are more likely to know if your chosen career or graduate school path is right for you by experiencing that type of work environment firsthand. Therefore, the best time for an internship is as soon as possible during your college career.

### **How can I get the most out of my internship?**

To be a successful intern, keep in mind that an internship is not just *like* a job; an internship *is* a job. Consider your internship as a stepping stone toward your ultimate goal. Use it to begin to build a reputation as a dependable, responsible person. Don't be afraid to ask for help or clarification; employers know that you are there to learn.

### **Are internships paid?**

Internships may be paid, unpaid, or in some instances, fee-based. Travel and housing are usually the responsibility of the intern. The majority of internships in government, media, and non-profit organizations are unpaid, but that does not diminish their ability to provide you with invaluable experience. A paid internship may also be referred to as co-op (cooperative education). Fee-based internships (where *you* pay) often guarantee placement in high-profile organizations, such as key government offices, professional sports franchises, and prominent advertising and entertainment entities.

### **What about academic credit?**

The set curriculum at St. John's College does not allow for academic credit from other colleges or from internships. However, the practical work experience you received from your internship should be included on your resume.

### **What if I don't know what kind of internship I want?**

If you are unsure of the kind of internship you want, think about your favorite courses, the kind of work environment you'd like and the kind of tasks in which you excel. A host of Internet sources, such as monstertrak.com and internjobs.com, offer valuable information to help you with the internship process. You can also check out the websites of career services offices at other colleges (e.g., princeton.edu/career) for advice and listings. In addition, there are reference materials, including publications from The Princeton Review, in the Career Services Library. Lastly, don't dismiss the observations and advice of family and friends... they know you best!

### **Where do I look for internships?**

Once you've narrowed your interests, you should start researching what's available to you. There are many useful web sites with links to internships in targeted areas. Always use a string of specific keywords to optimize search engine results. The Career Services Office is also available to help you locate specific internship opportunities.

### **Who is in charge of my internship?**

The Career Services Office is available to assist you, but you are ultimately responsible for securing your own internship by following the application procedures, meeting all deadlines, and following up as necessary.

### **What if I need a paid internship but can't find one?**

Consider applying to the St. John's College Ariel Internship Program for a summer internship stipend. The Ariel program is competitive, so you may want to consider seeking alternate revenue sources as well. Many professional societies offer scholarships (student membership fees are usually nominal). Consult local and national community, religious, nonprofit, and business organizations for scholarship opportunities. There are also ways to minimize the costs of pursuing an internship, such as finding an internship in your hometown so lodging is not an issue, interning part time while working part time, or asking the employer if an internship of shorter duration (e.g. winter break) could be arranged. Remember that your education should come first and if your financial needs are significant, there is nothing wrong with seeking a good-paying summer job over an unpaid internship.