



EMPOWERLY

Empowerly's Guide to



HIGH SCHOOL INTERNSHIPS

Contact Us to Learn More or Schedule a Free Consultation!

www.empowerly.com

Email us: enrollment@empowerly.edu

Call Us: +1-(800)-491-6920



EMPOWERLY

Table of Contents

Introduction

Internships: What They Are, and Why You
Should Start Now
Internships vs. Externships

Getting Started

Traditional Internships
Research Internships

Prepare for Success

Before You Start
During and After Your Tenure

Conclusion



Introduction

Internships: What They Are, and Why You Should Start Now

As you well know by now, competition in high school is everywhere. Whether it be grades, sports, extracurriculars, college applications/essays, or test scores, there's always something to improve. Unfortunately, this type of competition doesn't loosen up after college. It may even get harder.

Let's put this into perspective. In high school, what's at stake for success in most endeavors is acceptance to a university. As a result, many students seem to think that once college admissions are over, then they can relax and let go of their various activities. But the point of college is to establish the necessary skills and knowledge to go on to succeed in a career! So it's better to think about everything as a distance marathon. There's no better example than the realm of student internships.





What are internships?

Internships are temporary jobs taken by college students or recent graduates (and a few lucky high school students). In other words, a valuable, real-world learning experience. However, these positions tend to be very “real.” In other words, you’ll be doing real-world work for several hours a day, and in some cases, you’ll even be getting paid. You may even discover high school research opportunities. Internships are incredibly useful for students—they can provide some money and give insight into your potential future.

What’s more, you can gain experience that shows future employers that you are committed and prepared for your industry of choice. If you are especially successful, some interns are asked to come back to their company as permanent employees after graduation from college. But even without a full-time offer, those who participate tend to find their intern experience to be valuable in finding a career elsewhere.

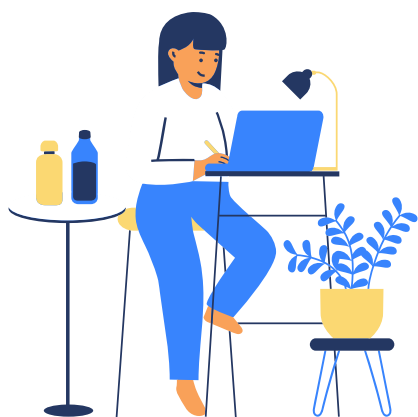
In fact, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) found that roughly 52% of interns were able to get full-time offers at their company—and that’s not even including interns who got full-time offers at other companies for their experience!

The point, then, is that interning can be a huge boost in job-searching in your college and post-college days, and as such, should be sought heavily.

Why should I care about high school internships now?

A lot like college applications, internship hiring tends to be competitive. For those top-tier companies like Morgan Stanley and Google, it's steeper than the Ivy Leagues: they only take in about 1% of all intern applicants. However, high school students can land incredibly useful positions at smaller firms or companies to prepare. The good news is that the keys to landing high school internships are a lot like what you did in high school to get into a good college!

To start, you can demonstrate your strengths through sports, grades, academics, clubs, and independent projects. This is why it's a good idea to maintain your best activities through senior year and even after college, and don't let your academic work ethic decay. Consistency and perseverance will certainly be rewarded when you decide to apply as an intern. If we can offer a piece of preemptive advice, it would be to avoid making the mistake of slacking off once you feel ready for college, only to realize you should have been working twice as hard the whole time.



Most college students intern after their sophomore year, but if you're prepared earlier and know exactly what you want to do, you have the potential to be an intern right away. For high school students, the scope of positions you can apply to is more limited, but if you have the right skills, you can start before you even get to campus.

Do I really have to keep doing everything I'm already doing... forever?

The key distinction between college applications and internships is the scope of your activities. When you apply to college, the recommended goal is to become a well-rounded individual with a strong work ethic and an ability to maintain performance across many mediums. For example, having good grades in science classes even if you're a math person shows that you can push yourself outside your comfort zone.

That's the part that changes for internships—the goal here is to narrow in on your skills and show off only what's relevant to the internship (which requires you to have a good idea of the industry/occupation you want to end up in after college).

For example, a student looking to intern in finance may decide to take a few additional math classes, join a business club, and perhaps quit the swim team (yes, sacrifices can be necessary). What does this mean for high schoolers? Start thinking about your career aspirations, and adjust your activities to accommodate for that. If you're someone all over the place with extracurriculars, slim down the number of activities and focus on enhancing the quality of your activities (pursue a leadership position, take fewer but harder classes, etc), especially for those that relate directly to your goals.

A quick note: that doesn't mean drop anything that isn't related to your desired internship. Hiring managers still like to see individuals who can focus on various types of things because it gives a sense of adaptability (being able to do more than you're told or being able to shift focus when needed). Not only that but being well-rounded in general is a good quality to have. In short, don't go crazy adding and dropping activities just because of an internship. Take a relaxed and gentle approach that isn't too abrupt for you to handle but also helps you narrow your focus.



Also, note that these high school internships' applications vary wildly in expectations. Here are some examples.

- Computer-related internships tend to care about coursework and projects that showcase an ability to code over things such as grades and volunteer experience.
- Business internships may want to look for a sense of leadership and excellence in activities as opposed to hard industry experience.
- And so on!



For all fields, do some research on the general area you are pursuing, and look into what kinds of things hiring managers favor in interviews (yes, you'll be doing interviews for internships). This will help provide an early advantage. As a bonus, hiring managers love students that start working on quality experiences years before their peers!

Yet another thing to keep in mind is your resume. Always think about how your various activities/awards can serve your profile on paper. This will come in handy when it's time to make your first resume and your memory of your various experiences is less than ideal.

In summary

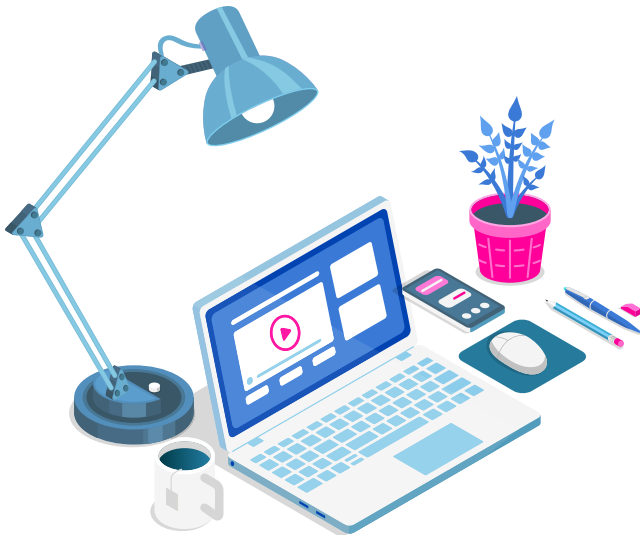
In short, then, current high school students need to remember that their current endeavors don't become pointless once in college. High school internships are valuable temporary positions that are arguably harder to get into than even the best colleges. Landing a great internship requires individuals to maintain a type of competitiveness similar to that of college applications. What's important to remember is that activities and academics need to start narrowing down on a certain type of discipline so you can sell yourself as the perfect candidate when internship interviews come around.

Shaping your various sports/jobs/classes/activities to make them more relevant to future careers pays off. The earlier you know about internships and start working towards them, the more likely you are to come out on top!

Internships vs. Externships

With the current state of things, finding summer activities are hard. Luckily, a lot of student internships and externships have switched over to being remote, allowing students to continue to explore possible career paths without putting themselves at risk of exposure. But what are externships and what makes them different from internships?

- An **internship** is a great opportunity to get some experience under your belt and learn from those more senior to you. This is great if you already have an idea of what sort of career you want to pursue.
- Not sure exactly what you'd like to do when you finish your education, but keen to test the options in the industry before making a decision? Then perhaps you should consider an **externship**.



The Difference Between Externships and Internships

Externships differ from internships in several ways: the work you do, the time you do it for, the compensation, and the age requirement.

A. What you do

The activities you do in student internships often differ from the work you do in an externship. As you well know, many students look for opportunities to apply their skills and knowledge in the workforce as they approach their final years of study. Internships offer just that – the opportunity to apply knowledge as well as learn new skills through on-the-job learning. Often internships act as a stepping stone to permanent work.

Externships on the other hand are targeted at someone who wants to explore a career path. Participants gain insight through job shadowing and learning through observation, rather than learning by doing. Externships can help you identify career interests and prepare you for the workforce, giving you a taste of what you might expect.

B. How long you do it for

Externships tend to be much shorter than internships, as short as a week. Some run for longer, up to a month or two. Internships on the other hand usually last for at least a couple of months at minimum and can be up to a year or more.

C. How much you get paid

You don't get paid to do an externship, and in some cases, where they are organized by an external provider, you may even have to pay a fee to participate. Internships on the other hand may include a wage or small stipend. If you are a college student you may also be eligible to receive college credit.



D. How old you have to be

Many internships are targeted at college students, and in the case that high school students can apply they are often required to be 16 years or older for insurance/liability reasons. Externships may also be targeted at college students but in case they are informally offered, they may not have an age requirement.

Should I seek an internship or an externship?

If you are an underclassman in high school, unsure about what you want to pursue as a career, and keen to explore your options, then an externship might be worthwhile considering. But if you have a pretty clear idea of what you plan on doing when you graduate and you are ready to apply what you already know, then student internships may be the better choice. Both provide you with the opportunity to boost your network and learn new skills.



How can I find an internship/externship as a high school student?

Like applying for any job, it can be competitive to get either but with determination and persistence, it can be done. Remember a rejection letter shouldn't stop you from continuing to try. It can be a numbers game, the more quality applications (and quality is important!) the better your chances of landing one.

- Externships tend to be more informal and not always advertised online, you're more likely to hear about them through word of mouth. If you are interested in an externship, discuss your interests with your parents or their friends and colleagues. They are often the best leads. Alternatively, your school counselor may be able to provide you with some options.
- Internships advertised online are often targeted at the college-level student although it's not impossible to find an internship in high school. For younger programs, take a look at high school internships with companies and nonprofits.

Keep in mind that when businesses are currently closed, there will be fewer opportunities available and it will, thus, be much harder to land a position. Empowerly has created a database of remote internships that you can access through our Empowerly portal. [Contact us to see how to access it!](#) Bear in mind that the competition is fierce, applicants often need to meet GPA and/or standardized test requirements and respond to essay questions. If you can demonstrate previous research experience you'll be ahead of your competitors.

It's important to cast your net wide when applying for student internships and apply for several positions as early as possible. In many cases the early bird does catch the worm, with applicants accepted on a rolling basis until the positions are filled, so apply early to improve your chances! For those positions that you haven't heard back from, but are particularly excited about, follow up with the contact person/HR department. And don't wait too long to apply for more if you haven't received any offers. You want to make sure you have fallback options.

Empowerly also offers an internship program (now completely remote), matching applicants with local startups. Applicants get hands-on, real-world experience interning in the fields of software engineering, business development, marketing, research, and more. You'll also get to work directly with the founders and learn about their experiences.



Getting Started

Role of the Resume

Whether it is applying through the standard process or networking, one important thing to getting any summer student internships is to make sure that your resume is up-to-date. Doing so not only maximizes the chances of getting a summer internship but also develops a habit that will be very beneficial in the future when applicants are in college and the workforce. A college admissions counseling service like Empowerly can also help you understand your resume and application process.

The one item that any employer will want to see is a resume. As a high school student, programs and employers won't expect multiple huge achievements for their applicants. What they do look for, though, is a commitment to whatever extracurriculars the student is invested in and leadership potential in those extracurricular activities.

Case Study: How I Got an Internship as a High Schooler

The key to striking gold with great student internships in high school is very similar to how one would try and get a job in the real world. In addition to all of the usual resources, utilize all of your available resources to look for an internship opportunity. Let's talk about what that might look like for you!

"I found out about the San Diego Supercomputer Center opportunity by talking to my college career counselor at school in late January of my junior year. She told me about the Supercomputer Center but told me the application wouldn't open up until late February and applications weren't even due till late April. This was fine to me though, which leads me to this point: it's always better to be ahead of the application process, as it gives a potential applicant time to complete the application around your school schedule and any other extracurriculars.



In addition, it gives you a little more time to boost your resume to stand out more in the applicant pool.

These were the requirements for my internship application:

- *One 1000-word essay citing why I thought I was a good fit for the role. Looking back, I realized that my summer internship essay was very similar to the college essays I'd write several months later. As with college apps, this application required one to try and advertise him or herself to the supervisors.*
- *A cover letter and resume outlining the specific qualifications I had for the intern position.*
- *Two letters of recommendation: I submitted one from a teacher, and one from my volunteer work at Feeding America.*

After a few weeks with no word, I was sent an email notification that I was invited to an in-person interview with my future supervisor.

This is the most important part of the application process, the interview. Not only is this the first non-written exposure my supervisor would get of me, but it would also be my first time actually looking at potential projects. The interview lets you look at what you will be working on firsthand and lets you decide for yourself if the internship is what you hoped it would be. In the same way that the Supercomputer Center was deciding whether I'd be a good fit, I had to decide whether I was going to get something out of this internship!



Remember that in the end, an internship is something that is supposed to enrich one's education and potential career decision. This is what makes the interview so important—because you and the other party can finally decide if you will be compatible with each other. That said, planning ahead of time and being vigilant will present the most opportunities, as is what happened with me and the Supercomputer Center.

Moral of the story: It's never too early to start looking."



So remember...

There is no right or wrong way to get summer internships. Both applying to them or finding them through a mutual connection require unique skills that students will eventually learn anyway as they pursue a career. In all honesty, mastering both is the best way toward success heading into the summer and beyond.

In addition, the resume is the key ingredient that ultimately will help the student land an internship, making it essential for students to make sure their respective resume is the ideal representation of them as candidates. It may just be one summer, but the process of getting summer internships is a skill set that will aid any student in the future.

Research Internships

For many STEM students, getting involved with an existing lab is a primary goal. However, these labs are not always extraordinarily receptive to high school students, as students in this age category often lack the critical “prior experience” to immediately demonstrate their usefulness to the lab. We have a few tips on how to succeed in finding high school research opportunities.

Once you find a lab doing research you’re interested in, you will want to email them to demonstrate your interest. Attach a PDF version of your resume, as well as any additional materials you may have. If you have a sample of prior research, attach that; alternatively (or additionally), if you have a website or LinkedIn, you may want to provide a link to those sources of information.

Note: Unlike traditional corporate internships, there is no formal process to obtain a summer research opportunity in a professor’s laboratory. Most of the time, these unique high school research opportunities are gained through personal connections and family and friends. If your mom’s friend works in a lab, this is your chance to use that personal connection to possibly score a great summer research opportunity in high school. However, if you don’t know anyone, it is still possible.

There are 2 methods to getting a research internship. The first method (the better one) is to get an introduction to a college professor from a family friend, high school teacher, or outside counsel. If you do not know anyone who can refer you, the second method is to email professors yourself in a targeted fashion.

What to do:

- Make sure to state your intention to conduct research in this field in the summer and be direct. Busy people want directness and they want to work with motivated students who have done their research before reaching out.
- Offer to work unpaid. Professors are very unlikely to pay a high school student with little to no lab experience. You’re asking if they are willing to provide high school research opportunities to you, at the expense of their time!



What not to do:

- Do not tell them about alternative plans you have or that you are considering other schools.
- Do not mass-email professors and make it obvious that the email is not personalized.

Prepare for Success Before You Start

So you got the internship you had your sights on! Congratulations, it's a great accomplishment and you can breathe a sigh of relief that you have a great plan sorted out. But there are some things you can do to prepare yourself between now and your start date, to make sure you get the most out of your internship.

You most likely can attribute your success in landing the job to the preparation you did for your interview. In the same way, preparing for your start date means you can be more successful in your role including making a smooth adjustment, working more effectively, and impressing the socks off your new colleagues!

1. Do your research

This doesn't just apply to high school research opportunities. Before you start, use your time to find out as much as possible about the company or organization. You will have most likely found information on their website to prepare for your interview, but don't be complacent. Look for more information now that you have a better idea of the position and what you might be doing in your new role. Scour the internet for information on the work your team is doing, look for external sources on the work you will do including what your competitors are doing, and look at the previous work of individuals who are in your new team. If they have published, then read up on their research. The more you know, the easier it will be to slide into your new role.



2. Prepare questions to ask your colleagues

Think about what your new role might entail and prepare some questions to ask in your first few days. Follow your curiosity and jot down questions that come to mind. By doing this, you will show your colleagues that you are eager and have given thought to your new role. Being prepared with the right questions will have you off the ground and running sooner.

From my own experience working with interns, I always found that those who were thinking ahead, had read up as much as possible about the job, and were proactive; were also given the most responsibility and achieved more.

3. Have realistic expectations

While it's hard not to start to imagine yourself doing great things in your new role such as taking leadership of a new project or publishing research in a top-notch academic journal, try to not let your imagination run away. You want to avoid setting yourself up for failure and disappointment. Be realistic about what you can expect to accomplish during your internship. Expect that you might find it more challenging to work with some colleagues, compared to others. Be prepared for a bit of disorganization, especially if you are working with a smaller less-resourced company. And be open to doing ad hoc tasks as they arise.

4. Meet up with your supervisor

If you can, meet up with your supervisor before starting. This will greatly reduce the nerves before commencing and will provide an opportunity for you to pick your supervisor's brain. It will also allow your supervisor to get to know you better, including your interests, aspirations, and skills.



5. Do a trial commute to your new office

If you are going to be working in a physical location... then last but not least, do a trial run to work. You want to make sure you know how long it takes to get to work every day so that you avoid arriving at the office late on your first day! For virtual offices, test your technology and make sure you have a quiet, professional workspace.

During and After Your Tenure

Whether your position is paid or unpaid, you'll want to ensure that your internship gives you the most metaphorical bang for your buck! We previously discussed ways you can prepare yourself for your high school internships, but here, we want to elaborate on what you can do during your internships on the job.

So what should I, as a high schooler, know about my new responsibilities at an internship?

Have a can-do attitude.

Being enthusiastic and ready to learn makes a great first impression. But you'll want to continue this energy throughout your internship. When faced with an obstacle, start thinking of solutions. If work gets especially busy and someone asks for your help, consider it a compliment that they trust you to help out. Showing dedication to your high school internships will take you far.

Show up on time.

One of the easiest ways to demonstrate respect in the workplace is punctuality. It's worth setting your alarm 15 minutes early or bribing yourself with a treat for breakfast if that's what it takes to make it in the door (or logged in at your desk) one or two minutes early. You can even ask a parent to help keep you accountable. Trust me, people notice.





What's next, after I get there?

Raise your hand whenever you can to help out.

First and foremost, make sure you're finishing the tasks that you've been directly assigned. From there, don't worry if you aren't given any "real" work or are not trusted enough to help on large-scale projects. It may not be glamorous work at first, especially if your coworkers are a little overwhelmed. But constantly exploring how YOU can help the team. That will put you first in line for those prime, fun projects you've been dreaming about when they do roll around.

Take notes during the first week to help you remember.

During the first few days, you'll face a steep learning curve as your colleagues take you through your work. Take the time to learn everything you can well, the first time around. It shows you appreciate the guidance and won't need to ask the same question four weeks into your time at that job.

How else can I make my internship in high school really valuable?

Make connections with people.

You're interning for a reason: to learn what it's like to work there. The best way to gain that insight is to talk to people who are actually doing it. You can ask them how they got where they are, how they feel about the work, and about their personal life and work-life balance. Meaningful connections are more likely to last. Here are some more tips to help out!

Collaborate.

Get outside your comfort zone. Consider consulting coworkers or supervisors with slightly different job titles to see how they might handle a problem. Not only does this show that you respect their opinion and want to learn from them, but it may also turn you on to an area of the job you had never considered before! And most of all, make sure you follow through on the advice you receive and the projects you've been assigned.



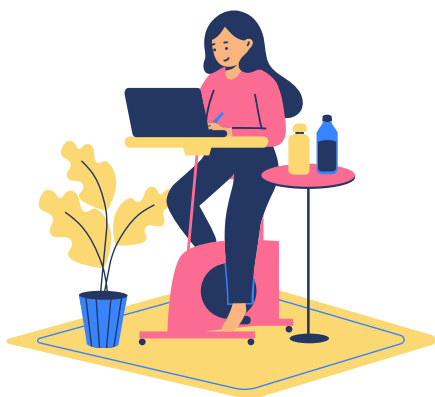
Once I've done those things at my internship and it's almost over, what can I do?

Ask for a letter of recommendation when you leave.

Right at the end of your internship is when everyone will remember you best. If you're not sure why you want a letter of recommendation, just schedule 15 minutes to sit down with your boss and discuss what you accomplished, learned, and assisted with during your tenure there. Having concrete details and feedback on your growth is always helpful, and doing so in person will make asking for a letter even a few weeks down the line much more organic.

Reflect on what you learned.

What's the use of showing up every day for a semester (or a year!) unless you are gaining something to help you in the future? Consider what you liked, what you didn't like, where you grew up, where you struggled, and how you changed your approach to the workplace. Take a few minutes to reflect, say thank you where appropriate, and consider your next steps. This will cement the value of your high school internships for life.



Conclusion

Even if you don't land an internship right away, keeping an open mind and remaining dedicated to your goals will help you in life. Remember, you can do all you put your mind to, and we believe in you. You got this!