

How to make the most of a virtual internship

A virtual or remote internship is a unique opportunity for you to work without visiting a physical office. Virtual internships require increased planning and consideration by both the intern and supervisor, but they can still be a great way to gain skills and make connections.

Set goals and learn the expectations

Before the internship begins, speak with your supervisor about what you hope to gain from this experience and what their expectations are for you as the intern. Be proactive - contact your supervisor before the internship to discuss your projects and goals.

It is important to understand your supervisor's working style and goals as you consider your own. Don't be afraid to ask if they don't tell you. Getting set up at an internship (also known as on-boarding) can be a challenging experience when you're working virtually, so discuss the plan with your supervisor and think about what you need to help you be successful. Work with your supervisor to schedule check-ins throughout the internship to ensure you are making progress toward the goals you discussed.

Keep a record of your achievements throughout your internship so you can refer back to them. These will be valuable when you look to update your resume and LinkedIn profile to prepare for your next internship or job.

Learn the office culture

Before your internship starts, learn as much as you can about the organization's mission to the work styles in the office. This will prepare you to handle work tasks and navigate dynamics with others on the team. Ask questions about how people communicate with one another, how decisions get made and what the office goals are as you learn what is important.

It's easy to feel alienated if you're separated from the team so participate in office activities as best you can, including team chats and connecting individually with colleagues. It's common for interns to invite colleagues out for coffee in a traditional office setting, so do your best to accomplish this task remotely through video chats or other methods. This is a great opportunity to learn more about different career paths, get advice and tap into other people's networks.

Maintain and emphasize communication with your supervisor and colleagues

Communication is different when you're working remotely. Most will happen through chats, email and comments in project management systems, so you can't rely on in-person connections to clarify something.

Ask your supervisor how they prefer to communicate. If face-to-face is best, schedule video chats. If they prefer email, consider sending weekly email recaps of your progress. If a supervisor prefers phone calls, schedule regular phone calls with them in addition to other communication methods.

Always have an agenda ready with a list of items you would like to discuss during the meeting. Sending your agenda ahead of time is also a good way to help your supervisor come prepared with the answers you need ahead of the call. Prioritize topics that are time sensitive or urgent to ensure you address those first.

Ask for on-going feedback - and don't be afraid to ask for help

An internship is an opportunity to learn. Your supervisor does not expect you to already know all the answers. Ask your supervisor how they prefer to receive questions (e.g., by email, phone or chat). Encourage your supervisor to provide feedback after a presentation or an assignment so they know you're interested in growing. If they don't offer it directly, ask for it.

Ask them to schedule a mid-summer evaluation — even if it's informal — to learn how you can close out the second half of your internship. Ask your colleagues to provide feedback, too. And remember to be patient - your manager or colleagues may not always respond to you right away or be available to answer your questions as soon as you ask them.

Meet deadlines and manage your time effectively

When you are working from home, you won't necessarily have someone checking in with you every day. Keep track of important dates and assignments and be sure to submit work in a timely fashion. Complete assignments on time and let your supervisor know if you have time to take on more projects.

Limit distractions and treat your working time seriously. Set aside a dedicated time to get work done and do what you can to limit distractions. Many interns find it helpful to build a work plan with intermediate project milestones to track their progress and adjust course if needed between meetings with supervisors.

Create your own professional environment

Even if you are not in a traditional office, making an effort to dress professionally will help you stay motivated and get into a work mindset. Set up a workspace in your home that will serve as an office. It is especially important to maintain a professional setting when you're video chatting with colleagues or clients. Consider your background during a video chat and limit any unnecessary noise.

Don't take on more than you can do

It can often seem like there is no end to the work day when you are working remotely. However, that doesn't mean the expectation is that you work more hours than if you were working in an office. It is your responsibility to strike the right balance and communicate with your supervisor if you're feeling overwhelmed and have too much work to do. Ask for feedback from your supervisor, a mentor or other colleagues on how you can be more efficient.

Helpful Resources for Students

[10 Remote Workers Weigh in On What Makes Them Successful](#)

[6 Ways to Make the Most of a Remote Internship](#)

[Dos and Don'ts to Ace Your Virtual Internship](#)

[Top 4 Tips for Acing a Virtual Internship](#)
[Job and Internship Advice, Companies to Work for and More](#)

[Virtual Internships are Helping Students get Experience Anywhere from the Comfort of their Dorm Room](#)

[23 Essential Tips for Working Remotely](#)

And finally, cut yourself some slack

Working remotely can be a big adjustment if you've never done it before, so don't worry if you need to take some time to get used to it. You can ask for support from your manager or mentor, or [make an appointment with an adviser](#) from the Center for Career Development to discuss any challenges you're having or how to make the most out of your summer.

Intern Checklist:

- Set goals before the internship and communicate them with your supervisor
- Learn the expectations for the internship
- Set up on-going meetings with your supervisor
- Ask for feedback from your supervisor and colleagues
- Make time to meet with other colleagues to make connections and learn the culture
- Find a way that works for you to manage your to-do list and keep track of deadlines
- Act like you're going to an office - set up a workspace in your home
- Communicate if you have too much — or not enough — on your plate
- Set up time to meet with an adviser from the Center for Career Development if you need support at any time before, during or after your internship

