

An Open Letter to a Student about to Start an Internship

This is a guest post by Kristeena Patsche

Dear student:

It's that time of year again. Can you believe it? You are either just starting your finals or almost finished. Either way, your summer internship is quickly approaching and there are a few things I want you to know before you begin.

Whether this is your first internship or not, the anxiousness and nervousness are completely normal. What is going to be expected of me? Is my supervisor going to like me? What if I don't know what they're asking me to do? What if I don't like it? If you're anything like me, these questions have crossed your mind once or twice.

My first advice is this - relax. You have not signed your life away, nor are you forced to do this job your entire life. It is three months of learning and new experiences, much of which won't ever be taught in a classroom.

Think of an internship as a test drive. You go to college and pick a major based on what you think you'd like to do after graduation. It's not until you get behind the wheel and "test it out" that you realize what you do and do not like. This is an opportunity to test out different career paths before having to "buy" into one.

So how do you get the most out of your test drive?

Take initiative

Be willing and eager to learn. Take the initiative and don't use being an "intern" as an excuse. You are a part of the company or organization and need to pull your weight while taking advantage of every opportunity given. If you need more to do – ask. If you want to learn more – ask.

Listen

This is a hard one. It's a balance. You are a part of the team and it's important to offer your insights, but also use internships as a place to learn from others. Live by the statement – listen twice as much as you talk.

Be sure to take notes! Details are important when it comes to projects assigned. You don't want to be the one who doesn't and forgets responsibilities. It is surprising how much sticks with you when you write it down.

Ask questions

This is huge and I cannot stress this enough! The more questions you ask, the more you learn. I was always told – It is better to ask a stupid question than to make a stupid mistake.

Communicate openly

Don't expect your boss to know how you're feeling. If you want to learn more about something - ask. If you have an issue that is hindering your ability to do your job - talk. Be respectful but be open. Don't be afraid to ask for regular check-ins so you feel like you have a chance to do so.

If you realize this type of job isn't for you, that's okay! It's a test drive! That doesn't mean you can do less of a job, but at least you know now before applying for full-time jobs. Being open with yourself is just as important.

Take advice

I wish I would have done this during my internships. At the end of your time, or whenever you feel the time is appropriate, be sure to ask for advice. "What advice do you have for me in my future job or what advice do you have to be successful in your career?" It's amazing what you will learn doing so.

My last advice to you is this. *Enjoy it.* You were given this opportunity and it is only just the start to doing great things in your career. You'll learn what you're truly passionate about, which will ultimately steer you in the right direction.

Congratulations on the internship and good luck!

Sincerely,

A former intern