

Making the Most of an Internship!

Intro

Congrats on getting your internship! You worked so hard to get here--**you deserve it!** The company you'll be interning at is paying you to learn, grow, and develop. **They see potential in you, and you should too!** So, now that you've actually gotten the internship, how do you **thrive** and **make a good impression** while simultaneously **having fun**? Read on to find out!

About This Guide

This guide will be structured as follows: I'll split the internship into three phases. You'll notice that these phases have a rough time frame attached to them. The keyword here is *rough*. **You don't have to follow this timeframe exactly!** Just use it as a rough guideline for your experience, and try to **experience each of the phases in your own time**.

The Phases

Phase One: Onboarding

Weeks 1 - 5

The first phase of the internship experience is the onboarding phase. This may include things like **intern/new-employee orientations** or **introductory mixers**. This phase is bound to include reading...and more reading...and a little more reading...did I mention reading? You'll be reading everything from **comments in the team's code** to **docs explaining the technology your team uses** to **tutorials that'll show you the ropes of the new technologies you'll be using** throughout your internship. You may be wondering, "where am I supposed to find all of these docs and tutorials?" Well, someone on your team, most likely your manager or tech lead, will let you know! And if for some reason they don't, you can ask! **Ask for resources that your team recommends** and/or for **tutorials that they used** when they first joined the team.

Personally, during the first few weeks of my internship, I established an **hourly log** to track my progress. It wasn't anything fancy, just a google doc full of bulleted lists. I would come in, open up the doc, and write down the date in large font, then subsequently write out what I was doing from hour to hour. I would include things like **links to the tutorial I was doing**, **questions that I had** (and their answers if I eventually found them...if I wasn't able to find the answer within two hours, I'd ask a team member), and any **accomplishments I made**.

Some call it micromanaging, but I call it a **Developer Diary**, and it worked for me! Here's an example of a developer diary entry I created while at a hackathon:

Saturday, April 6th

- 2 PM - 3 PM
 - created brainstorm doc
 - started researching the tech stack
- 3 PM - 4 PM
 - installing npm
 - installing nw, bash isn't recognizing the command!!
 - finally solved it by downloading nw directly from their site, not through `npm`
 - found [clippy reincarnated](#), gonna look through the source code
 - getting [bitmoji's](#) alone (not with the sticker keyboard) might be hard!
 - <https://api.bitmoji.com/content/templates>
 - <https://api.bitmoji.com/avatar-builder-v3/assets>
- 4 PM - 5 PM
 - understanding and implementing the structure of the clippy reincarnated
 - found [this!](#) it describes the bitmoji api!
 - found a [bitmoji generator](#)
 - maybe modify it to generate specific [bitmoji's](#) and generate the user's actual bitmoji
 - *In order to create a random Bitmoji, I had to understand how the API works. So here's what I figured out. You must provide a unique user-id. You can either use your own, or use someone else's since you are directly overriding the values associated with it.*
- 5 PM - 6 PM
 - trying to figure out the bitmoji api
 - how can i render a bitmoji?
 - came across a bitmoji that actually renders! it uses the bitstrips renderer
 - https://render.bitstrips.com/v2/cpanel/10213083-318665966_4-s4-v1.png
 - the non-working one seems to be out of date :
`https://render.bitstrips.com//render/10221787/316830037_16_s4-v1.png`
 - <https://render.bitstrips.com/v2/cpanel/> used to let the server know that we're trying to render a bitmoji
 - [10213083-318665966_4-s4-v1](#) the unique comic id and the unique user id, separated by a dash
 - the unique comic id *is what determines what pose the Bitmoji will be in when rendered. Although all background clipart associated with the comic will not show, this still allows for thousands of possible poses.*

Give it a try and see how it works for you. Feel free to tweak things or go on a completely different route.

Key Takeaways: This codebase has existed years and years before you arrived--this means no one expects you to know everything from the jump, or even at the end of your internship! Internships are a learning experience.

- **Do's:**
 - tutorials

- read docs
- ask questions
- keep a developer diary
- attend intern mixers/events
- **Don'ts:**
 - stay stuck on the same problem for more than two hours
 - make assumptions
 - Clear up any questions or requirements before you embark on a task, that way you won't have to start over if you find out you've been doing the wrong task.
 - be a workaholic
 - Be sure to take breaks! Go to lunch with your team or with other interns, attend lunch n' learns and tech talks, and take advantage of any of the amenities your company has to offer!

Phase Two: Getting to Work

Weeks 5 - 10

By this point of the internship, you should be more familiar with your team--both the people and the codebase. This is a great time to learn how to strike that **work-life balance** everyone's always talking about. During this time, you'll be making progress on your main project for the internship. Your developer diary should now include **more progress updates and accomplishments** in addition to **useful links and questions (along with their eventual answers!)**. As an intern, the company you're working at most likely has intern events scheduled for the summer. Interns may also meet up independently and hang out outside of company events. Take the time to **enjoy the unique experiences** the company has in store for you and **explore the city** you're in with your fellow interns!

It's also a good idea to **network with other people** in the company! Being an intern means you have the luxury of being able to get lost in the company (in both a literal sense and a metaphorical sense)! Take a look at the different teams or departments that surround you. As an intern, you can introduce yourself to almost anyone in any faction of the company to pick their brain! You can **ask about their story, their journey to the company, and what they do**--people love to talk about themselves! As you listen to their story, you can **make connections** to your own life and share them with the person.

Key Takeaways: While grinding away on your project, don't forget to take the time to get lost in the company. Meet new people, maintain budding relationships, and make the most of this amazing experience! Establish and maintain that work-life balance.

- **Do's:**
 - make significant progress on your project
 - keep asking questions
 - continue to update your developer diary

- continue to attend intern mixers/events
- **Don'ts:**
 - be a workaholic
 - Keep taking those breaks! Continue to go to lunch with your team or with other interns, attend lunch n' learns and tech talks, and take advantage of any of the amenities your company has to offer!
 - slack off
 - With that being said, make sure you're not slacking off. Don't become complacent and completely give up on your work when you can't figure something out--work towards a solution and make sure that you have something to show for at the end of the day.
 - become distant
 - Make sure you're keeping a steady stream of communication with your manager/tech lead/team. Set up some time to meet with each of them individually and hear their stories if you haven't already!

Phase Three: Wrapping Things Up

Weeks 11 - 12

By now, your internship is winding down and things are coming to an end. Whether or not you were able to finish your project, I recommend writing up a **handoff doc**. This doc will share what the **main goal** of your project was, **what you were able to accomplish**, **what work still needs to be done**, and any other **info that you think may be useful** for anyone who will be interacting with your project after you finish your internship.

Your team or the company may have **intern presentations** scheduled for this time. This is where your developer diary, your work-life balance, and your networking comes in hand. You can use your developer diary to take your audience on a journey by **explaining your project**, **highlighting any key decisions** you made and sharing any hardships you **endured and overcame**, especially the ones you overcame with a team member. Be sure to include a demo of your project if you can! You can also highlight any **company-hosted intern events** you attended--this is a great way to show that you made an effort to be involved in the company and get a feel for the company culture. If you can, it'd be a great idea to **invite any new people you met** while networking during phase two to attend your presentation!

If no formal presentation has been set up, still take the time to **prepare a small presentation with your team** if you can. By preparing your presentation, you'll have a summary of your experience fresh on your mind should there be an **exit interview** with your manager or tech lead. It will also come in handy later, as explained in the next phase.

Key Takeaways: Create a presentation sharing both the work and the life you balanced over the summer. Show off the work you did with some help from your developer diary and a demo (if possible) and share the life you experienced by highlighting any intern events you attended.

- **Do's:**
 - create a handoff doc for your project
 - put together an internship presentation
 - say thank you
 - Be sure to send thank you emails to your team, the university recruiting team, and anyone else you met while interning. Share your email and/or LinkedIn and let them know that you appreciated them taking the time to help make your experience unforgettable.
- **Don'ts:**
 - miss any important deadlines
 - Emails may begin to flood in towards the end of your internship. Be sure to check your email to see if you need to return any equipment or complete any exit procedures.

Bonus Phase: Post-Internship

Once your internship is over, should anyone ask about your internship, whether that be fellow students and professors or recruiters and technical interviewers, a **summary of your intern presentation** from phase three will be the perfect way to **share your accomplishments** and **experience with the company culture**.

Also, **keep in touch** with your team and anyone else you networked with during your internship. Keep them posted on **what you're learning in school** and share if you're working on any **personal projects** or **following up** on anything you were introduced to during your internship.