

## HEARN CONSULTING

- Landing Your First Real Opportunity
- A comprehensive guide to securing internships and early career positions — from self-assessment to turning opportunities into offers.
- CAREER GUIDE
- Bryan Hearn, Ed.D. · [www.hearn.consulting](http://www.hearn.consulting)

## WHAT'S INSIDE

- Why Internships Matter — ROI, career capital, and network building
- Self-Assessment: What You Bring — Skills inventory and interests mapping
- Finding Opportunities — Where to look and the hidden job market
- The Application Package — Résumé, cover letter, and portfolio
- Networking Strategies — For both introverts and extroverts
- Interview Preparation — Behavioral questions, STAR method, virtual tips
- Making the Most of Your Internship — First week to lasting relationships
- Turning an Internship Into a Job — Performance, mentorship, and the ask
- When It Doesn't Work Out — Bad fit and learning from difficulty
- Building Your Professional Story — From internship to career narrative
- Application Tracker — Stay organized and follow up effectively

### 01

- Why Internships Matter

An internship is far more than a line on your résumé. It's the place where education meets reality, where you discover what work actually feels like, and where you build the network that will shape your early career. The stakes and the opportunity are both real.

## THE REAL ROI

<b>Career Clarity</b>	Most students graduate without truly knowing what field they want to enter. An internship answers that question. Sometimes the answer is 'not this,' and that's equally valuable.
<b>Network Effect</b>	Your internship supervisor, colleagues, and mentor become your professional network. These relationships often lead to full-time offers, references, and introductions years later.
<b>Skill Development</b>	You'll learn technical skills specific to your field, but more importantly, you'll learn how organizations actually work: how to communicate up, manage up, and collaborate across teams.
<b>Competitive Advantage</b>	When you graduate, having real work experience — even if unpaid — gives you credibility that job applications can't. You can speak to what you've actually done.
<b>Full-Time Conversion</b>	Internships are the #1 pathway to entry-level jobs. Many companies extend offers to strong interns. Your internship is essentially an extended job interview.

## THE REALISTIC TIMELINE

Different types of opportunities have different timelines. Knowing this helps you plan:

Opportunity Type	When to Start	Timeline	Best Year(s)
Summer internships (large companies)	September for summer	6–8 months lead time	Sophomore through junior
Summer internships (startups/smaller firms)	January–April	3–4 months lead time	Any year
Research positions (academic)	Ongoing; reach out 1–2 months before start	Variable	Freshman through junior
Fall/Spring internships	Start looking 3 months ahead	Flexible	Any semester
Freshman opportunities	Start immediately	Spring semester to summer	Freshman year

**THE PSYCHOLOGICAL HURDLE**  
 The biggest barrier to landing opportunities isn't competition. It's the voice in your head saying you're not ready. Everyone feels that. The students who win are the ones who apply anyway.

**02**

- Self-Assessment: What You Bring

Before you start applying everywhere, get clear on who you are and what you're looking for. This isn't naval-gazing — it's strategic. Knowing your own value proposition helps you target opportunities and explain yourself in applications.

**YOUR SKILLS INVENTORY**

List everything you can do. This includes skills from classes, clubs, jobs, projects, and hobbies. You likely have far more than you think:

Technical skills: programming languages, software, design tools, lab techniques, statistical methods, etc.

Analytical skills: research, data interpretation, problem-solving, strategy, critical thinking

Communication skills: writing, presenting, facilitation, negotiation, interviewing, storytelling

Project management: planning, organizing, coordinating, tracking, follow-through

Leadership: mentoring, delegating, making decisions, inspiring others

Interpersonal: collaboration, conflict resolution, empathy, active listening, relationship building

## YOUR INTERESTS MAP

Get specific about what actually appeals to you. Don't say 'business' — say 'how organizations make decisions' or 'turning an idea into a product.' Specificity helps you recognize opportunities.

<b>Industries/Fields</b>	<b>What types of organizations attract you? Tech, nonprofit, government, education, etc.</b>
<b>Functions</b>	What kind of work appeals to you? Research, strategy, operations, marketing, client-facing, behind-the-scenes?
<b>Problems You Want to Solve</b>	What issues do you care about? Climate, education, health, equity, innovation? Be specific.
<b>Work Environment</b>	Do you want fast-paced or thoughtful? Collaborative or independent? Structured or autonomous?
<b>Dealbreakers</b>	What would make you miserable? Long hours? Repetitive tasks? Ethically questionable practices? Know these.

## VALUES CLARITY

Knowing your values prevents you from chasing opportunities that look good on paper but don't align with who you are. Your first internship sets a precedent for what kind of work environment you'll tolerate going forward.

**What are your top 3 skills? Give a concrete example of each.**


**Describe your ideal internship in 3–4 sentences. What would make you excited to show up each day?**


**What are your dealbreakers? What would make an otherwise good opportunity not worth it?**


**03**

- Finding Opportunities

The jobs that seem most competitive on the big job boards (LinkedIn, Indeed, etc.) are usually not where you'll find your best fit. The hidden job market — positions that aren't posted, filled through networks, or only advertised internally — is where the real opportunities live.

**WHERE TO LOOK**

<b>Large company portals</b>	<b>Google Careers, Microsoft Careers, etc. These are competitive but have many openings. Apply to positions you meet 70%+ of requirements.</b>
<b>Industry job boards</b>	Depending on your field, there are specialized boards (Idealist for nonprofits, GitHub for tech, etc.). These have less competition.
<b>Your school's career office</b>	Many companies post directly with your school before posting anywhere public. This is an advantage of being a student — use it.
<b>LinkedIn (the right way)</b>	Search companies you're interested in and use 'Students' filter. Follow employees, engage with posts, get on their radar before you apply.
<b>Company websites directly</b>	Go to 'Careers' page. Many post positions there first. Set up email notifications. Apply early — you'll have less competition.
<b>Professional associations</b>	Your field likely has professional organizations with job boards. PRSA for PR, IEEE for engineering, AAAM for museum studies, etc.
<b>Cold reaching out</b>	Find the department or team you're interested in. Get the manager's name from LinkedIn. Email them directly about internship opportunities.

**THE HIDDEN JOB MARKET**

Most internships and entry-level jobs are filled before they're posted. Here's how to access them:

Reach out to alumni working at companies you admire. Alumni networks are gold — they remember what it's like to be where you are.

Attend industry events, conferences, and webinars. These are recruitment pipelines. You might meet someone who's hiring.

Connect with professors who have industry experience or relationships. They know people. Ask if they know anyone who might be hiring.

Join relevant student organizations or professional groups. People in these spaces often hear about opportunities first.

Informational interviews lead to opportunities. Sometimes the person you talk to doesn't have a spot, but they know someone who does.

## THE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

An informational interview is a 15–20 minute conversation with someone in a field or company you're interested in. You're not asking for a job — you're asking for advice. But these conversations often lead to opportunities. Here's how:

<b>Email approach</b>	<b>Find someone (via LinkedIn, company website, mutual connections). Email: 'I'm interested in [their field]. Could I grab 15 minutes to ask your advice?' Be specific about what you want to learn.</b>
<b>During the call</b>	Ask about their path, what surprised them about the field, what skills matter, what they look for in strong interns. Actually listen. Take notes. Be curious.
<b>The ask</b>	At the end: 'Are there any opportunities at [company] or others you know of that might be good fits?' Many will think of something.
<b>Follow-up</b>	Send a thank-you email. Reference something specific from your conversation. If they suggested leads, follow up with them and mention who recommended them.

**List 10 organizations you'd be excited to intern at. For each, identify one person on LinkedIn who works there.**


**Identify 5 people for informational interviews. Who would you ask? How do you know them (or how would you connect)?**


- The Application Package

Your application is three things: a résumé, a cover letter, and possibly a portfolio or examples of work. Each serves a different purpose. Each must be excellent.

## RÉSUMÉ FOR INTERNSHIPS

Your internship résumé doesn't look like a professional's. You don't have years of experience. What you have is relevance, skills, and proof that you can deliver.

<b>Contact/ Header</b>	<b>Name, email, phone, location (city/state is enough), LinkedIn URL if strong. That's it.</b>
<b>Education</b>	School, major(s)/minor(s), graduation date. Add GPA only if 3.5+. Add relevant coursework if it strengthens your case.
<b>Experience</b>	Every job, internship, volunteer role, or project. Include campus jobs — they count. Use bullet points with action verbs and, when possible, quantify impact.
<b>Skills</b>	Languages, software (be honest), technical abilities, certifications. Group by category.
<b>Activities</b>	Leadership roles in clubs, boards, competitions, relevant community involvement. Show you have outside interests.

## ACTION VERB BANK

Replace passive language with strong verbs:

<b>Leadership / Initiative</b>	<b>Analysis / Learning</b>	<b>Communication / Collaboration</b>	<b>Operations / Execution</b>
Led	Analyzed	Presented	Coordinated
Initiated	Evaluated	Authored	Implemented
Directed	Investigated	Advocated	Streamlined
Founded	Synthesized	Negotiated	Organized
Mentored	Assessed	Facilitated	Managed

**THE COVER LETTER**

A cover letter gives you space to tell a story. Your résumé is facts. Your cover letter is why. It should be 3–4 short paragraphs, personalized, and specific to the role.

<b>Para 1</b>	<b>What position you're applying for and why. One sentence about fit. Be direct: 'I'm applying for the summer marketing internship because I'm interested in [specific thing about their org].'</b>
<b>Para 2</b>	Your most relevant experience. Be specific: what you did, the impact, and what you learned. Show you've done the work before.
<b>Para 3</b>	Why this specific organization. Reference something specific about their work, mission, or product. Show you've done your homework.
<b>Para 4</b>	Close with enthusiasm and availability. One sentence: 'I'd love to talk more. I'm available [timeframe].'

<p>THE COVER LETTER TEST</p> <p>Can you change the company name and use the same letter for another company? If yes, it's not specific enough. Rewrite. Every cover letter should be personal.</p>
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**PORTFOLIO / WORK SAMPLES**

Depending on your field, you might need to share examples of work. Designers need portfolios. Writers need clips. Engineers might share projects. Tech roles sometimes ask for GitHub. Create a simple portfolio site or folder that showcases your best work.

<p><b>PORTFOLIO BASICS</b></p> <p>Keep it simple. A clean, one-page website or PDF with 5–8 best examples is better than 50 mediocre ones. Provide context. Don't just show the work — explain what the project was, what your role was, and what the outcome was. For group projects, be clear about your specific contribution. Reviewers want to know what YOU did. Quality over quantity. One strong project beats five weak ones. You're building a case for your ability.</p>
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<p><b>Describe your top 3 professional experiences. For each, what impact did you have? Use numbers if possible.</b></p>

<p><b>Draft a cover letter opening for an organization you want to work with:</b></p>

<p><b>If you need a portfolio, list 3–5 projects or pieces of work you're proud of and could showcase:</b></p>

Networking is relationship-building, not transactional. It's about genuine curiosity, showing interest in others, and staying in touch. It's not sleazy. It's how work actually happens.

### FOR INTROVERTS

You don't need to 'work the room' at a networking event to be effective. Introverts often excel at networking because they listen, ask thoughtful questions, and build deeper relationships with fewer people.

<b>One-on-one conversations</b>	<b>Email someone for coffee or a 15-minute call. This is actually easier than group events, and you'll have a better conversation.</b>
<b>Online networking</b>	Engage meaningfully on LinkedIn. Comment on posts from people you admire. Share articles with thoughtful takes. This counts.
<b>Show up to smaller events</b>	Skip the huge job fair. Go to panel discussions, department seminars, club meetings. Fewer people, better conversations.
<b>Follow up deeply</b>	After a conversation, send a thoughtful email. Reference something specific you talked about. Stay in touch quarterly.
<b>Use your strengths</b>	You likely write well, think deeply, and listen carefully. Use these. Email is your friend. Follow-up emails are your strength.

### FOR EXTROVERTS

You love meeting people. That's a strength. The challenge is depth. After you meet someone, actually follow up.

<b>Go to everything</b>	<b>Job fairs, networking events, industry conferences, mixers. Show up with a goal: meet 5–10 people and have one deeper conversation.</b>
<b>But then follow up</b>	Exchange contact info. Send an email within 48 hours. This is where most extroverts fall short. Follow-up is where relationships develop.
<b>Build on connections</b>	Ask people for introductions. 'Hey, I talked to Sarah about [topic]. She mentioned you're working on [project]. Could I pick your brain for 20 minutes?'
<b>Show genuine interest</b>	Your natural warmth is an asset. Use it. But listen as much as you talk. Remember details from conversations.

**COLD EMAIL TEMPLATE**

Whether you're introverted or extroverted, you'll need to reach out to people you don't know. Here's how to do it:

	<p><b>STRUCTURE</b></p> <p>Subject line: '[School] Student + [Specific Reference]' (e.g., 'UC Berkeley Student + Your Work on Housing Policy')</p> <p>Greeting: Use their name. Find it on their company bio, LinkedIn, university directory.</p> <p>Who you are: One sentence. Name, school, major or field of interest.</p> <p>Why you're reaching out: One sentence. Reference something specific about them or their work. Not 'I admire your company' — 'I read your article on [topic] and was struck by [specific point].'</p> <p>What you're asking: One small ask. 'Could I grab 15 minutes to ask you about [specific topic]?' Not 'Can you mentor me?' or 'Do you have internships?'</p> <p>Your availability: 'I'm flexible with timing and happy to work around your schedule. Are you free for a quick call this month?'</p> <p>Close: 'Thanks for considering. Here's my contact info: [email, phone number].'</p>
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### EMAIL EXPECTATIONS

Most busy professionals delete emails longer than one paragraph. Keep it short. Make it easy for them to say yes by asking for something specific and small. And follow up once — just once — if they don't respond. Then move on.

**List 10 people you'd like to have informational interviews with. For each, write one specific reason you want to talk to them.**


**Draft a cold email to someone in a field you're interested in:**


06

- Interview Preparation

Interviews follow patterns. Even though they can feel unpredictable, you can prepare for almost everything you'll be asked. Confidence comes from preparation.

### THE STAR METHOD

Behavioral questions ask 'Tell me about a time when...'. You answer using the STAR framework: Situation, Task, Action, Result. This structure keeps your answer concise and memorable.

<b>Situation (30 sec)</b>	<b>Set the scene. What was the context? When was this? What was the challenge or goal?</b>
<b>Task (15 sec)</b>	What was your specific role or responsibility? What needed to be done?
<b>Action (60 sec)</b>	What did YOU do? Be specific. This is the most important part. Use 'I,' not 'we.'
<b>Result (30 sec)</b>	What happened as a result of your action? Quantify if possible. What did you learn?

## STORIES TO PREPARE

You don't need to memorize speeches. But you should have stories in your head that you can adapt to different questions. Prepare 3–4 core stories:

<b>Challenge &amp; Problem-Solving</b>	<b>A time you faced a real obstacle. What was it? How did you work through it? What was the outcome?</b>
<b>Collaboration &amp; Teamwork</b>	A time you worked with people different from you or navigated a difficult team dynamic. What happened? What did you learn?
<b>Initiative &amp; Leadership</b>	A time you started something, took charge, or influenced others. Why did you do it? What was the impact?
<b>Failure &amp; Learning</b>	A time you failed, made a mistake, or something didn't go as planned. How did you respond? What would you do differently?

## COMMON QUESTIONS

<b>Tell me about yourself (60 sec)</b>	<b>Name, school, major, one relevant experience, why you're interested in this field. Then stop. Don't tell your entire life story.</b>
<b>Why this role / organization?</b>	Show research. Reference their mission, a recent project, a person you met there, something about their culture. Be specific.
<b>What are your strengths?</b>	Pick one real strength. Give a specific example that proves it. Bonus: mention how it's relevant to the role.
<b>What's an area you're working on?</b>	Not a 'weakness' disguised as a strength. Real growth area. But show how you're actually working on it.
<b>Questions for us?</b>	Always ask questions. Good questions show you think strategically. Ask about: the team, the biggest challenges in the role, what success looks like after 3 months, culture.

**VIRTUAL INTERVIEW TIPS**

- Many internship interviews are Zoom calls now. Different environment, different dynamics.
- Test technology beforehand. Zoom, internet, camera, microphone, lighting. No surprises on interview day.
- Dress professionally for video. What you wear above the waist matters. Avoid patterns that strobe on camera.
- Sit at a real desk or table, not on your bed. Position camera at eye level. Minimize distractions behind you.
- Make eye contact with the camera, not the screen. This feels more like you're looking at them.
- Have water nearby. Have notes nearby too — you're allowed to have notes during a Zoom call (not during in-person).
- Arrive 5 minutes early. Join the Zoom early. Check that everything works. This buys you calm.

	<p><b>THE DAY BEFORE</b></p> <p>Do a final run-through of company info. Re-read the job description. Prepare your three best stories. Get decent sleep. You're ready.</p>
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**Prepare a 60-second 'tell me about yourself' response:**


**Describe a real challenge you faced and how you handled it (using STAR):**


**Write 3 thoughtful questions you'll ask in an interview:**


07

- Making the Most of Your Internship

You got the job. Congratulations. Now comes the part most people don't think about: how to make your internship actually valuable, how to build real relationships, and how to position yourself for what comes next.

## **YOUR FIRST WEEK**

Your first week sets the tone. You're being evaluated immediately on reliability, attitude, and ability to take direction.

<b>Listen more than you talk</b>	<b>Your first week is for absorbing. Ask clarifying questions. Understand how things work. Don't offer solutions yet.</b>
<b>Show up on time, every time</b>	Early is on time. On time is late. This is non-negotiable. This is how people form first impressions.
<b>Say yes to projects, even the unglamorous ones</b>	Data entry, organizing files, scheduling meetings. This is how you build trust and learn how things work.
<b>Meet everyone</b>	Walk around. Introduce yourself. Attend any team meetings or social events. People are your assets here.
<b>Ask for one person to mentor you</b>	Ask your supervisor or someone experienced: 'Would you be open to being a resource as I ramp up?' Most people say yes.

**BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS**

The people you work with are more valuable than the projects you complete. Invest in relationships: Have lunch with colleagues. Ask them about their path, their role, what they like about the company. Volunteer for projects with different teams. You'll meet more people and see how the organization works.

Be genuinely curious about people's work. Ask thoughtful questions about what they're working on.

Offer help. See someone struggling? Volunteer. Build reciprocity and goodwill.

Keep in touch after you leave. Get people's email addresses. Send a thank-you note. Check in quarterly, even if it's brief.

**ASKING FOR FEEDBACK**

Don't wait until the end of your internship to find out how you're doing. Feedback is fuel.

<b>Mid-internship check-in (4 weeks in)</b>	<b>'How am I doing so far? Is there anything I should focus on going forward?'</b>
<b>Specific feedback</b>	Not 'How am I doing?' but 'Did I handle that project well? What would you have done differently?'
<b>Written feedback</b>	Don't just have conversations. Send an email: 'I learned a lot from [project]. I'd like your written feedback to take with me.'
<b>360 feedback</b>	If possible, ask for feedback from multiple people — your supervisor, a peer, someone from another team. You get a fuller picture.

**DOCUMENTATION & DELIVERABLES**

As your internship ends, make sure you've documented your work. This helps you and helps the organization:

Create a summary of what you've done. Projects, initiatives, problems you solved, data or processes you've created.

Document processes you've learned. If you're leaving, make it easy for someone else to continue your work.

Prepare a final presentation or memo for your team. Show impact. What did you accomplish?

Ask if they'd like any written documentation from you. Go beyond what's asked.

<b>Identify one senior person at your internship who you want as a mentor. What will you ask them?</b>

**What are the 3 biggest things you've learned in your first month? How are you applying them?**

08

- Turning an Internship Into a Job

Many internships lead directly to full-time offers. This doesn't happen automatically. It happens because you've positioned yourself well, performed excellently, and explicitly explored the possibility.

### **PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS**

If full-time conversion is a possibility you care about, you need to be excellent. Here's what 'excellent' looks like:

<b>Reliability</b>	<b>You do what you say you'll do. On time, every time. No surprises.</b>
<b>Autonomy</b>	You need minimal supervision. You identify what needs to happen and make it happen.
<b>Initiative</b>	You don't just complete assigned tasks. You see problems and propose solutions.
<b>Collaboration</b>	You work well with others. People enjoy working with you. You make their jobs easier.
<b>Communication</b>	You keep people informed. You ask questions when you're stuck. You provide updates without being asked.
<b>Growth</b>	You learn quickly. You get feedback and act on it. You're better at the end than at the beginning.

## BUILDING A CASE FOR CONVERSION

Halfway through your internship, it's time to explore whether conversion is possible. This doesn't mean pushy. It means intentional.

<b>Have the conversation</b>	<b>With your supervisor: 'I've really enjoyed working here. If there were a full-time opportunity after graduation, would that be something you'd consider?' Listen to the answer.</b>
<b>Show impact</b>	Document what you've contributed. Quantify when possible. Projects you've completed, problems you've solved, efficiency gains you've created.
<b>Understand the constraints</b>	Is budget limited? Is hiring frozen? Is the timeline uncertain? Know the realities you're working with.
<b>Stay patient</b>	Hiring decisions take time. You might hear 'let's wait until Q3' or 'we'd love to but budget is uncertain.' That's not a no. It's a 'maybe with conditions.'

## THE EXPLICIT ASK

If conversion seems possible, make it explicit. Don't wait for them to offer. About 3–4 weeks before your internship ends:

<b>The conversation</b>	<b>Ideally in person or video call. 'I've loved working here. I'm interested in joining the team full-time. Are there opportunities we should discuss?'</b>
<b>If they're interested</b>	You'll move to hiring/HR processes. Be professional. This is no longer an internship — it's a job negotiation.
<b>If they're not ready</b>	Ask what would need to happen for it to be possible. Timing? Budget? Additional experience? Get specifics. Stay in touch.
<b>If the answer is no</b>	It's not about you. Thank them. Ask if they know of other opportunities. Stay in touch anyway.

### THE OFFER STAGE

If you get an offer, it's a real negotiation now, not an internship conversation. You can discuss salary, start date, title, benefits. Don't accept the first number. Negotiate respectfully. This is normal and expected.

**What concrete impact have you had in your internship? List 3–5 things you've accomplished with measurable results.**


**Has your supervisor hinted at whether full-time conversion is possible? What's your understanding of the likelihood?**


### 09

- When It Doesn't Work Out

Not every internship is great. Sometimes it's a bad fit. Sometimes the job isn't what you expected. Sometimes the environment is toxic. Sometimes you realize halfway through that this isn't the path you want. What you do about it matters more than what happened.

### RECOGNIZING A BAD FIT

There's a difference between 'hard work' and 'a bad environment.' Be honest about which you're experiencing:

<b>Learning vs. Stagnation</b>	<b>Hard work that teaches you something is painful but valuable. Repetitive work that teaches you nothing is just painful. Which is it?</b>
<b>Challenge vs. Frustration</b>	Being stretched is growth. Being unsupported despite trying is demoralizing. Are you growing?
<b>Culture Concerns</b>	Is it just a tough team or is something actually unethical? Is it just not your style or is it hostile?
<b>Support</b>	Do you have a mentor, a supervisor who cares, someone to turn to? Or are you totally on your own?

**WHAT TO DO**

If it's a true bad fit — unethical practices, toxicity, genuine misalignment:

Talk to your school's internship coordinator or career office. They've dealt with this before. They can advocate for you.

Document what's happening. Dates, incidents, who was involved. This matters if you need to escalate.

Know your options. Can you leave early? What's the process? What happens to your school credit?

Plan your exit message. You don't need to burn bridges, but you also don't need to pretend everything is fine.

Have a brief exit conversation with your supervisor if it's safe to do so: 'This hasn't been the right fit for me. I'm planning to wrap up by [date].'

**IF IT'S JUST HARD**

If it's actually good but hard, stick it out. Learning often feels uncomfortable. Talk to your mentor or supervisor about how you're feeling. They might adjust your projects or support. Most importantly, give yourself credit for the difficulty. Doing hard things is how you grow.

**THE FRAME AFTERWARD**

Whether you left early or finished, how you tell the story matters. You need a narrative that's honest but doesn't torpedo your credibility:

<b>What NOT to say</b>	<b>'It was a toxic disaster' or 'Everyone there was terrible.' This reflects poorly on you, not them.</b>
<b>What to say instead</b>	'I realized [organization type / industry / role] wasn't the right fit for me.' Or 'I learned that I value [thing the job lacked] in a work environment.'
<b>How to use it</b>	Use the learning to course-correct. You've learned something real about yourself. That's valuable.
<b>Moving forward</b>	Get a reference from someone there, anyone — even if it's a peer. You need some documentation that you did the work.

**If you're in a difficult internship situation, what specifically is challenging? Is it a growth opportunity or a genuine bad fit?**

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**If you left an internship early, what did you learn about what you want in a work environment?**

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**10**

- Building Your Professional Story

Your internship is the beginning of a story that will define your early career. The story isn't just what happened — it's how you frame it, how you connect it to where you're going, and how you use it to build the next opportunity.

**FROM INTERNSHIP TO NARRATIVE**

As your internship ends, you need a coherent story that connects what you did to who you want to become:

<b>Where you started</b>	<b>What were you interested in when you began? What did you think the role would be?</b>
<b>What you discovered</b>	What surprised you? What did you learn about yourself or the field?
<b>How it shaped you</b>	Did this confirm your interest or change your direction? What skills did you build?
<b>Where you're headed</b>	Based on this experience, what's your next step? How does it position you for your goal?

### **THE INTERNSHIP AS PROOF**

Your internship demonstrates something more valuable than a job title. It shows:

You can actually do the work. You're not just talking about the field — you've experienced it.

You can handle professional environments. You know how organizations work, how to take feedback, how to collaborate.

You're serious about your direction. You put in effort to get experience. You're intentional.

You have judgment. You chose this opportunity, learned from it, and can articulate what it meant.

### **HOW TO TALK ABOUT IT**

In cover letters, interviews, and conversations, you should be able to tell your internship story in 2–3 minutes. Practice this:

	<p><b>THE PITCH STRUCTURE</b></p> <p>What you did: 'I interned at [organization] where I [primary responsibility].'</p> <p>What you accomplished: 'I [specific project/impact].'</p> <p>What you learned: 'That experience taught me [skill, insight, or about yourself].'</p> <p>Why it matters: 'That's why I'm interested in [next opportunity/field].' Connect it to where you're going.</p>
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**BUILDING FOR THE NEXT OPPORTUNITY**

Your internship is a stepping stone, not a destination. Use it to:

<b>Network intentionally</b>	<b>The people you met are your network. Stay in touch. They're leads for next opportunities, references, and mentorship.</b>
<b>Keep skills sharp</b>	If you learned software, programming, research methods, etc., keep practicing. Show proficiency in your next role.
<b>Pursue higher responsibility</b>	Your next internship or job should stretch you more. Each opportunity should be a step up.
<b>Seek mentorship</b>	You now have people who know your work and can advocate for you. Ask them to be references. Ask them to introduce you to others.
<b>Stay curious</b>	What questions did this internship raise? What do you want to learn next? Let that guide your next opportunity.

	<p><b>FIVE YEARS FROM NOW</b></p> <p>You won't remember most of the tasks you did at your internship. You will remember the people, the relationships, and how it changed what you wanted. Invest in the relationships. They're the thing that matters.</p>
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**Tell your internship story in 2–3 paragraphs: What did you do? What did you learn? How does it connect to where you're headed?**


**Who are the 3 people from your internship you want to stay in touch with? How will you maintain those relationships?**


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- Application Tracker

Organization is non-negotiable when you're applying to multiple opportunities. This tracker helps you stay on top of deadlines, keep customized applications organized, and follow up strategically.

