

## Internships

Many companies sponsor internships. In some vocations these internships are unpaid and provide students with opportunities to learn on the job skills. These positions are primarily a chance for employers to get some free work done. In general, engineering internships serve a very different purpose.

Engineering internships are paid. While that may lead you to believe the primary purpose of these internships is to get useful work done, this is rarely the case. The reality of the situation is that most rising junior and senior students do not have the skills to allow them to be assigned any meaningful (mission critical) engineering work. Typical opportunities involve testing components or code, documenting designs, running predefined simulations and general engineering grunt-work.

The primary purpose of engineering internships is two-fold. First, it gives the company a chance to see if you can be successful in their work environment. Do you communicate well? Can you take direction? Do you know what you should know given your current education level? Can you act professionally? The second purpose is to allow the company a chance to convince you to join them after graduation. In some cases, companies may make full time offers to students more than a year before graduation.

The best way to get an internship is through a career fair. In addition, most companies post their internships on the company website, LinkedIn, and/or Indeed. Its also possible to use friends or family to make connections. Positions are filling earlier and earlier during the year so start looking as soon as school starts – checking weekly for new postings.

Once you have your internship, remember it's basically a 10-12 week continuous interview. Always act professionally (even when those around you are not – you never know who is watching). Its OK to ask how you are doing after a couple of weeks. That way you can correct any issues early and have a more successful experience.

Unless your first internship happens to be THE PLACE you want to be, use them as opportunities to try out a couple of different environments to get a sense of what fits you best. Big/small, local/far away, industrial/office.