

How to spot a good internship

Could an internship kick start your career? Internships are short term work placements that can give you valuable experience and sometimes a foot in the door with a good employer.

We asked SEEK's Twitter community whether they thought undertaking an internship would help them secure a job in their preferred industry. We found that 57% said "yes." But a staggering 43% of respondents don't see the value in internships!

So we'd like to change your mind and tell you just how valuable they can be, and how to spot one that will [get your career off to a flying start](#).

An internship helps you prove your worth and shine in front of a potential employer. It allows you to demonstrate skills on your [resume](#) such as creativity, innovation and collaboration when you have little or no previous work experience. It also helps you gain new skills.

Many young people have only worked in transitory casual roles, says Steve Shepherd, Director of Social and Public Affairs (Asia Pacific) at job search and recruitment agency Randstad. Many young Australians who have completed internships have found they provided another pathway into paid work, he continued.

Our experience is that good internships have these characteristics:

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- **A rounded programme:** A good internship will provide you with training and experience, as well as detailed direction on the activities you're assigned to.

- **Meaningful tasks:** Real work will help you learn about the business as well as pick up specific skills needed to function in that industry or profession.
- **Varied work:** Exposure to a wide range of tasks, and access to experienced people who will help broaden your skills.
- **A pathway to full time employment:** An internship can be the gateway to full time employment, improving your resume and skills, and expanding your network. These are attractive qualities to all employers, not matter what industry. Seek out past interns of the company and see how they progressed!
- **An appealing environment:** Ask for a tour when you go for your interview. Is this an environment you'd want to work in? Do your potential workmates appear welcoming?
- **A go-ahead company:** Look for successful, future-focussed organisations that are respected in their fields. An internship there may leapfrog you over other candidates in the job market.
- **Mentoring:** It's worth asking if you'll have access to a mentor who can help and guide you during your internship. This person may also be willing to continue to mentor you in the future.
- **They're paid:** The Fair Work Ombudsman has [rules](#) about payment, and meaningful work (rather than observation) should be paid the minimum wage. If you're not going to be paid, consider doing [volunteer work](#). It helps others at the same time as you gain skills and improve your resume, says Shepherd.
- **Effective evaluation:** How will you be evaluated at the end? Evaluation can help you grow. The more you know [your strengths and weaknesses](#), the better you can improve on them.

Most internships are provided by employers who want to support young people in their journey to secure a job, by giving them genuine pathways to employment that result in real job outcomes, concludes Shepherd.