

How to make the most of an intern

The Bookseller and The Publishers Association have worked on these guidelines for employers on how to treat interns fairly, and with the best chance of success for them to learn and be part of the team.

If a publisher is serious about improving diversity, making getting into publishing easier and fairer and also hiring people in a professional and transparent manner, then following these guidelines should be easy and worthwhile.

As an industry, we should show potential jobseekers that the industry is fair, inclusive and evolving away from the idea that working for free is 'character building' and 'what people should do'.

Interning is a fantastic way for those who are looking to get into publishing to gain experience and a great way for employers to encourage others to join the industry. However, a bad internship not only fails to give the intern relevant experience, it is also a waste of time for the employer. Being an intern can be daunting, particularly if you don't come from a background which has given you confidence around professional adults, and a badly-organised internship can put them off publishing as a career.

Top tips from interns

We asked @jobsinbooks followers what one thing could improve an internship. Here's a selection of the responses:

- Wish I'd actually been introduced to the various people working there. I know that as an intern I wasn't important. still.
- Working on live projects, and referred to by name!
- Actual growth opportunities & project work that can help you move on from interning
- Apart from money, the opportunity to extend yourself and learn something useful - a project to own is good for this.
- Clear projects/tasks to work on, so you're not sitting around spare.
- People taking the time to teach you enough to be useful even when they are busy!
- having a designated seat/desk/space that is yours for the duration rather than having to ask every morning where to sit
- we get that staff are busy with their own thing, but being invited to lunch makes a huge difference
- Maybe an actual schedule that structures what needs to be done? So you don't feel like a dead weight but part of the team.

Ten top tips for employers

- 1. Advertise any internships** available and make public the process for applying for work experience. Application and interview experience is invaluable for those starting out in publishing, and gives you a chance to check that they will get on with the team
- 2. Communication is important.** Send the applicant an e-mail the week before they start with:
 - Address of the office, and directions from public transport
 - Description of the company
 - Their start and finish times for the week, including lunch hours
 - Who to ask for when they get to reception
 - Who their line manager will be
 - What their main duties will be during the placement
- 3.** On the day they start, **introduce them to other members of staff**, either in an e-mail copying them in, or taking them round the office in person.
- 4.** Take the time to sit down with your intern – **take them out for lunch** or to a meeting and get the chance to speak face-to-face about how they're enjoying themselves, what their interests are, what kind of publishing they want to go into.
- 5.** Make sure they have a **mentor**, or someone they can ask if they have an issue. Similarly, providing a desk of their own, with log-ins and a phone number helps make them feel part of the team
- 6.** Consider giving interns **feedback at the end of their placement**; also consider asking interns for feedback on the internship programme
- 7.** One of the most uncomfortable moments of being an intern can be sitting around with nothing to do. It can therefore be useful to have an **ongoing project** for interns to complete which they can turn to when they have finished their project, but which isn't time-sensitive so it can run in the background.
- 8.** Provide **intern etiquette guidelines**
- 9.** For short term placements, put work experience people in touch with the [Spare Room Project](#) to offer them a place to stay for the week
- 10.** Remember: this may be someone's first time in an office – **basic office training** on how to answer phones or work the photo is appreciated!

Definitions

Student placements- These are part of a course (Usually an MA) and there is a compulsory amount of placement time that needs to be completed (2-3 working weeks). This should be expenses paid and some tasks structured but also about wider learning in the organisation and shadowing.

Work Experience- This is when a person comes to learn about working in a publisher- they are given short tasks to perform under guidance and for no longer than one week. Paid expenses are the minimum requirement, and people on work experience placements should not be expected to work independently.

Internships - This is when any person of any age takes a temporary role at a publisher that will provide a significant company benefit and requires them to work alone, along with a more general introduction to publishing as an industry, or your company in particular. These should be paid at London Living Wage (or minimum wage) and should not replace a member of staff.

Temporary staff – A temporary member of staff should be under contract, for a set amount of time and money (again, London Living Wage preferred). Temps will usually be brought in to complete a specific task.