

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR INTERN

Interning is a fantastic way for publishing hopefuls to gain experience and for employers to attract fresh talent. But being an intern can be daunting and a bad internship—one that fails to give them relevant experience and is a waste of time for the employer—can put them off publishing for life.

The Bookseller and The Publishers Association have developed these internship guidelines for publishers serious about improving diversity, making the industry more accessible and hiring talent in a professional and transparent manner.

As an industry, we should show potential jobseekers that the publishing is fair and inclusive. These guidelines cover how to give interns the best chance of success through fair treatment, inclusion and mentoring.



TOP TIPS FROM INTERNS

We asked [@jobsinbooks](#) followers what one thing could improve an internship. Here's what they said:

“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”

“Clear projects/tasks to work on, so you're not sitting around spare.”

“Apart from money, the opportunity to extend yourself and learn something useful - a project to own is good for this.”

“having a designated seat/desk/space that is yours for the duration rather than having to ask every morning where to sit”

“People taking the time to teach you enough to be useful even when they are busy!”

“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.”

DEFINITIONS

INTERNSHIPS

A temporary role at a publisher for a person of any age 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.

WORK EXPERIENCE

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.

STUDENT PLACEMENTS

As part of a course (usually an MA), 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.

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.

CHECKLIST FOR EMPLOYERS

1. RECRUIT THE RIGHT WAY

Publicising the process of applying for an internship or work experience provides those starting out in publishing with invaluable application and interview experience and gives you a chance to see how they get on with the team!

Publicly advertise the role

2. PREPARE YOUR INTERN FOR DAY ONE

Communication is important. Send the applicant an email a week before they start with:

Address of the office and directions from public transport

Description of the company

Start and finish times (including lunch hours)

Who to ask for when they get to reception

The name and title of their line manager

Their main duties during placement

(For short term placements) put them in touch with the [Spare Room Project](#)

3. WELCOME THEM TO THE OFFICE—AND THE TEAM!

It is important to set your intern up for success by making them feel like they are part of the team and ensuring they have everything they need to work efficiently.

Introduce them to members of staff (by email or in person)

Arrange a face-to-face meeting to discuss their interests and career aspirations

Connect them with a mentor who can support them if they have an issue

Provide a dedicated workspace with log-ins and a phone number

Provide intern etiquette guidelines

4. MAKE SURE THEY'RE ALWAYS LEARNING

One of the most uncomfortable moments of being an intern can be sitting around with nothing to do. Make sure they have something that isn't time-sensitive to work on between tasks. Remember: this might be their first time in an office—take the time to teach them how to answer phones and work the printer.

Give them an ongoing project

Provide them with basic office training

5. REVIEW THE EXPERIENCE

Provide feedback (orally or in writing) on their placement

Ask them to provide their own feedback on the programme