

Program  
Guide *(Beta)*:  
For Interns  
v.0.0.1

Better  
Internships  
for Creatives

**Never  
Not  
Creative**

[nevernotcreative.org](http://nevernotcreative.org)

**NNNO  
NEVER  
NOT  
BETTER  
INTERN-  
SHIPS  
NNNO**

**We've heard stories of great internships all over the world. Unfortunately, we've also heard stories of terrible ones as well.**

**That's why we've put together this guide (or program template if you like) for you. No costs, no fees, we just want to see better internships.**

**If you're an intern looking for an opportunity, use this guide to say:**

**“Hey, I'd love to intern with you – and guess what I've got this program that we can both follow to make it easier on you and better for me!”**

If you're an employer looking to hire an intern, you're in luck we've made a version of this document especially for you. You can find it here

**This guide has been developed by our collaborative team of educators, designers, leaders, lawyers and students.**

**Their multiple perspectives have helped to shape a guide / program template that delivers on a fair, transparent and ethical internship program.**

**There are lots of great reasons to take on an intern or run an internship program:**

Financial

**Contrary to many beliefs, an internship does not have to be a financial burden.**

Altruistic

**To help graduates get a foothold in the industry, to give back and to share knowledge.**

Finishing School  
**To bridge the gap  
between uni and work.**

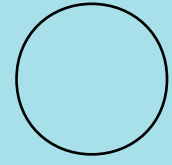
Sustainability  
**To improve the  
sustainability of  
the design industry  
by extending the  
pathways for  
emerging talent.**

# Experience

**To trial emerging designers without the commitment of offering them a job.**

# A Great Start

**For 'young studios it's the chance to experience being an employer without a long-term commitment.**



# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE



**Please feel free to follow the guide for your own internship program and use and / or adapt the resources to suit your needs. The forms should be completed by both the intern and the employee.**

**Within each form is a field to add the email address of your employer / intern. Be sure to include this information so that feedback around expectations and performance can be shared transparently.**

1

# WHAT TO EXPECT AS AN INTERN

**Psst, hey you, over here.**  
Want to know what tips we give to employers in this step? Checkout our [Program Guide: For Employers](#) to get a feel for what it's like in their shoes.

**Congratulations. Participating in an internship is the perfect way to get real-world experience and a great opportunity.**

**For all intents and purposes, you will be treated as an employee – it will make it a better, more real experience for both sides. That means you need to show up, mentally and physically, and turn that good first impression into a lasting great one.**

**Here are four ways you can make the best of the opportunity:**

# Breathe deeply and lean into the stress

Let's be honest, this is going to be intimidating. Just like turning up for any new contract, you'll be entering a new workplace, meeting new people, understanding a new culture, working on new briefs. It's all-new. Knowing it's going to be intimidating actually makes it easier. Remember, most senior staff have gone through exactly the same thing in their careers, so it's okay to feel like a 'fish out of water'. Expect the first few days to feel intimidating and carry on.

# Be realistic and plan for the bigger picture

Don't expect to be working on the biggest and best briefs. You'll most likely be given the lowest of the low jobs, at least at the start. Data entry, note-taking, filing, basic layout, research, presentation templates — it probably won't be the exciting stuff. Remember, your employer is working out your strengths and getting to know your capacity. Do well on the menial stuff and you'll soon be invited to bigger projects.

# Be respectful and act professionally

Remember above all, you have been invited into a commercial workplace. Sure, there may be ping pong tables and bar fridges but at the end of the day, it is a commercial enterprise designed to make money. Be respectful and act professionally. That means remembering names when you meet people, lots of people. You'll need a way to remember all of their names so develop a system of mentally filing who they are and what they do. "I'm terrible with names" is not going to cut it, if you want to be remembered yourself you need to do this.

# Treat your 'buddy' like gold

You will most likely have a 'buddy' — someone who has been tasked to help out and keep an eye on you. Treat them like gold. Our industry is all about networks. Your coworkers should become your contacts and you never know where you or they will end up in the future. Aim to make yourself invaluable so when there is a graduate job available you're next in line. Watch and listen so you can preempt your buddy's next move. Never look like you haven't anything to do – there is always something to do in a busy studio. If you can't think of anything make it one of your questions at the next catchup.

# **‘Hometime’ might shift sometimes but just be sure to check-in before leaving**

Don't expect 9-5. We'd all like it to be, unfortunately, the nature of the industry demands a little more here or there. That doesn't mean we should be working 24/7 either but expect that 'home time' is always going to be a slightly awkward period of the day. You might get an internship where the doors are locked at 5 pm and everyone is sent home — that's great — most places will expect you to finish the job you're working on before leaving. Check-in with your handler, let them know where you got up to and wish them a nice night.



# A few ideas to make yourself memorable

When in doubt, bake. No studio has ever turned down freshly baked muffins (maybe except the gluten/dairy/vegan ones...)

Offer to do the coffee run to take the pressure off those with a deadline.

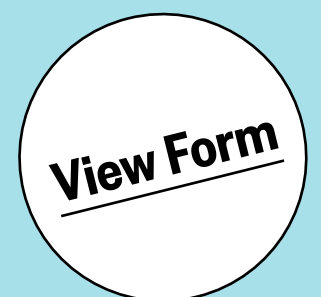
Make your internship as easy as possible for your employer: be positive, be cheerful and be thankful for the opportunity.

2

PREP-  
ERATION  
FORM  
FOR  
INTERNS

**To get the most out of your internship, it's a good idea to be prepared.**

**One of the best ways to achieve this is to share your expectations for the internship with your employer. Share what you'd like to be exposed to, what you'd like to learn and how you'd like the internship to go. We can't promise you'll get everything you ask for, but if you don't ask, you don't get!**



# 3 ONBOARDING: YOUR FIRST DAY / WEEK AS AN INTERN

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**Hey new kid. It's here. You're in. This is the creative industry and this is your first step on a ladder of ups and downs, highs and lows, and into a community of people who are using creativity to solve problems, right wrongs and generally make the world a better (less boring) place.**

# Let's talk about first impressions

You're in reception, the foyer, the coffee shop next door and you're meeting your employer – or whoever is your main point of contact for the duration of your internship. Like any first meeting, balance confidence with a respectful ear and listen for important nuggets of information. It doesn't hurt to start taking notes right from the beginning. Show that you're interested and that you're taking this opportunity seriously.

One of the keys to success in this program is to try and get you and your employer in sync from day 1. If your employer has sent you their pre-program expectations form, make sure to read their responses. If they didn't send the form through don't worry, by listening actively and asking questions you'll be able to find out their expectations. Find out what they're hoping to achieve out of this. Write down and plan to work on 2 or 3 things that you think are going to help your employer meet their objectives for the program. Help them to see that you're in this together.

In your first few days, you want to make yourself known. For the right reasons of course. Be sure to say hello to people in the morning and goodbye in the evening. 101? Absolutely. But sometimes when we're in new situations it's easier to hide away than to get noticed. While you might feel a little uncomfortable, remember that saying hello and goodbye and introducing yourself to colleagues is just normal acceptable behaviour.

# Get personal

In the next couple of weeks, depending on the size of the company, you might meet a lot of people. Which means remembering a lot of names and a lot of roles. You could take notes again, or if you're conscious of being Notebook Nelly, memorise as much as you can and then go back to your desk and draw a mini-seat plan of the office with the names and roles of the people you met. This is also pretty handy for remembering people's names in meetings.

At the end of your first 2 weeks, you should start to form a picture of who's who in the office, the types of roles that people have, and what's expected of them. It's a great time to take stock. It may have felt like a whirlwind with lots to take in, so now it's worth checking in with yourself.



# Check in with yourself

How are you feeling about the experience so far? Is it what you expected? Have you uncovered things that you didn't realise happened or existed? Do you want to know more about them? Who would you like to spend more time with? What would you like to work on? Which projects have you learned about that most excite you? Who can tell you more about them?

Asking yourself these questions is the perfect way to move into the next phase of your program and make sure that you keep some control over what you want. Work out a plan to get these questions answered and don't be afraid to share them with your employer.

If things aren't going to plan, reach out to a friend, mentor, or the Never Not Creative community. At the end of the day, this experience has to work for you. Not every program is perfect and so there's no shame in speaking up and walking away if something unfair or unreasonable is happening.

Enjoy the next few months and make the most of it!

# 4

# MID- PROGRAM ADVICE FOR INTERNS

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**Starting to feel like part of the furniture yet?**

**Hopefully, at this point in your internship you've started to get a feel for the place and are growing more comfortable with the way the agency and the people work.**

**It's important to keep an eye on your progress and refer to your Onboarding Prompt Sheet.**

**Don't worry if your goals have shifted since you were onboarded, that's all part of the process but now is the time to evaluate what you've done so far and how you might develop for the rest of the internship.**

**How are you feeling at this point in time?**

Has your mindset changed since you were first onboarded? **What have you uncovered that you didn't realise existed?** Have you spent time with the people you wanted to get to know? **Who else could you reach out to?** Have you learned more about the projects that excited you? **Have you been developing the skills you were interested in working on?**

**Use your responses to these questions to identify where there's room for improvement and how you can progress.**

**There is still plenty of time to hone your skills and try new things.**

**It's important at this stage that you're keeping an eye on some of the things that you set out to do, learn and experience.**

**Those things that you should have outlined in your Expectations Form. Now's the time to be evaluating what you've done so far and how you might develop for the rest of the internship.**

**Here are some recommendations while you're 'In the Flow':**

# Communicate

Keep talking to your mentor/buddy. Keep asking them questions. Keep getting feedback on the things you're doing and of course keep talking to them if something feels wrong.

Don't leave things too late if you're unsure about a task, brief or a simple rule. Just ask and make sure you have a clear understanding of what you need to do.



# Get in some meetings

If you haven't already, try and get into a client or internal creative meeting. It's a great way to see how the teams deal with their business and their clients.

The most important thing is to establish a good understanding of what the meeting is and what you're supposed to be doing in there. If you're in there to observe it's probably not a good idea to start swinging opinions around. If you've been invited to contribute, try to make sure that you try to do so.

Client meetings are usually the most formal of occasions in an agency, so remember that you're representing the company being in it. Follow the lead of the other team members, but be polite and respectful, and try to make any comments you want to make relevant and considered.

# Presenting work

Hopefully, you've managed to get to work on something creative and hopefully at some point you'll get the chance to present the work that you've done to the rest of the team or your mentors.

Every designer, creative director, agency etc has their own way of presenting and talking through work. It's a practice that all designers have to adjust to with each new agency.

It's a good idea to ask how your team or mentor would like you to go through your work to give you a starting point and more of an idea of what to do.

Most of the time this will be as simple as talking through the ideas or work one piece at a time, but even with this, it's important to be clear and explain your thought process and what you have done carefully.

Be mindful of people in the room who may not have seen the brief, or know what you were asked to do and try to include them in the conversation as best as you can.

It can be nerve-racking taking a larger group of people through your work, especially if you've never done it before. Try to remember practice makes perfect and that everyone has been in the same boat.

Ask your mentor/buddy or other team members to give you feedback after you've presented, so you can try to develop your skills over the period of your internship.

# Accepting feedback

The same rule applies to feedback and most people have their own way of delivering it. Try to get comfortable with the way that you are being given feedback and always try to come away with a clear understanding of what it means and how you might tackle it.

Ask questions if you don't understand and request suggestions on how you might apply the feedback if you are unsure.

Make notes! Remember to be considerate of people's time and making notes of what you need to do will stop you forgetting anything or needing to ask for the feedback again.

Most importantly, remember to not take feedback to heart. Take everything on as learnings and use it to develop your skills over time. You will not be expected to know everything straight away so prepare to get it very wrong, be told you got it very wrong but then be given advice on how to make it right.

If you do feel like you're being treated unfairly or spoken to in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable you should definitely go and discuss this with another member of the team.

# Working as part of a team

Depending on the size of the agency you are interning at, you will more than likely be asked to work as part of a team. In fact, if at some point you aren't working as part of a team then things probably aren't going exactly to plan.

This may be a shift for you, especially coming from education, where a lot of projects require you to work independently.

The most important part of working in teams is communication. Making sure you know what you are supposed to be doing and knowing how best to support your fellow teammates. Regular check-ins to make sure that you're on track are helpful and making sure that you're all working to the same timeframe.

Sharing your thoughts and having an opinion is also part of working in a team, as with the meeting etiquette though it's important to make sure it's relevant and considered.

Offering to help someone else out if you're not busy too is always a help when working in a team.

# Downtime

Often there is a bit of downtime, especially as an intern, This tends to get less and less the more integrated into a team you make yourself.

It's important to keep your enthusiasm and engagement with the team and your workup, even when there's technically nothing for you to do.

Ask people if they need any help, and not just your immediate team. Ask other members of the studio if they need anything you can help with.

Ask to shadow and watch how someone is tackling their workload or a specific project.

Ask anyone if they're free to talk, ask them about how the studio works, advice on portfolios etc. You have access to a wealth of information, try to tap into it.

Tackle a personal project, or see if there's an agency pro-bono project you could be working on in your downtime. This can be a great way of getting a piece of work for your portfolio out of your internship.

Stay focussed on your job, it's understandable if you've got downtime but try and use it wisely. It can frustrate people if they see you browsing Facebook or completely disengaged from what's going on.



# If things aren't great

Not everything always goes to plan and sometimes you could get pretty down on your internship. It's important to keep communicating with your team members if something is bothering you, remember that they are on board with your internship program and have already shown a desire to help.

Ask advice and explain what you think the problem is and see if they can help. It's definitely better to raise it than let it go unnoticed. People are busy and it can be hard to know if someone is having a bit of a rough time.

There will most likely be a range of people within the agency who you can talk to, and hopefully, there's a director or HR if the problem is more serious. Understanding that whilst you are an intern, you are a member of the team and most companies will go above and beyond to help if they can.

If you're not feeling comfortable chatting to your team, reach out to friends, ex or current tutors or members of NNC, AGDA or Youngbloods, who are all well placed to offer impartial advice and suggestions about how to get your internship back on track.

# General tips

Keep busy, even if it's on something self-initiated

Don't take feedback personally

Ask questions

Keep referring to your internship plan to make sure you're ticking off the important things you want to get out of the process

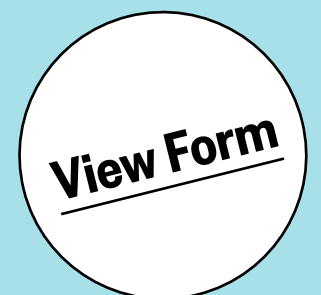
5

MID-  
PROGRAM  
INTERN  
FEEDBACK  
FORM

**Remember those expectations you shared before you started? Well how's your experience living up to them?**

**This is your chance to give feedback on your experience and to speak up about what you'd still like to experience with your employer.**

**Fill out the form and be sure to put your manager's email in so that they can see your answers. Be sure to ask them for a meeting to discuss the feedback.**



# 6

# THE FINISH LINE ADVICE FOR INTERNS

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**Hey there. So how's it been going? You're getting to the end of your program. Before we get into the final stretch, here are some questions for you:**

**Has the program matched your expectations? What have you learnt? What's surprised you? What's been disappointing? What have you achieved? And most importantly... would you want to do this for longer? Is this the career for you?**

**Hopefully you can answer some of these questions easily. But as you move into your last couple of weeks what is there left to do?**

# Continue to build your network

One of the main benefits of the program is making connections with the people who you've met. Make sure that you've recorded these somewhere. Even better, jump on LinkedIn and request to connect with them. You never know when you might need their help in future.

With a couple of weeks left, is there anything that you'd wished you asked but haven't yet? Anyone you'd like to grab some more time with? A brief in the business that you'd like to contribute to? It's an oldie, but a goodie...but, "If you don't ask, you don't get!" This is your last chance to make sure you got the most out of the opportunity.



# Prepare a presentation

As part of the program, you may have been asked to prepare something to present to your team or even the whole company in your final week. Even if not, why not ask to do so? It's a great opportunity to get your thoughts in order, practise your presentation skills (you'll do hundreds, perhaps thousands over the years) and make a final impression on people in the business. If there's the possibility of a full-time position then this might also be your final interview.

Like any good presentation, think about the story that your audience would be interested in hearing. What did you learn? How have your opinions changed? What specifically helped you to draw these conclusions? What would you like to do if you had more time? This is your final audition for being seen as part of their team. Maybe not for a final role, but the impression your making will last years and in such a small knit community, referrals and recommendations go a long way.

**Well done,  
you've  
completed the  
program!  
Reflect on  
the experience  
with your  
employer**

Finally... enjoy. Hopefully, you've had a great experience, made some good friends and future contacts and your passion for our industry is bigger than ever. Make sure your employer knows that. You could present them with a card, a book or something to remember the experience by.

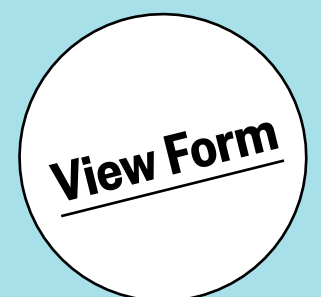
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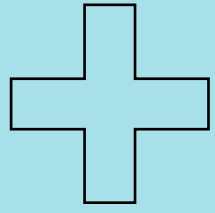
POST-  
PROGRAM  
INTERN  
FEEDBACK  
FORM

**Whoomp! There it is!**

**Your internship is over. Hopefully it's been a valuable and rewarding experience and your expectations were met, and how knows, perhaps exceeded.**

**Now's the time to reflect. Take stock of what you've learned and share feedback with your employer that might help future interns following in your footsteps.**





# MORE RESOURCES

**Download our Example Internship NDA\* and adapt it to your business.**

**Download our Example Internship Contract\* and get it signed before starting.**

\*Examples only. Please seek professional advice for your own purposes.

**Looking for more support, guidance or just want to find out a little more about NNC? Get in touch, we'd love to chat!**

**nevernotcreative.org**

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A massive thank you to everyone involved in putting this program together. This guide has been developed by our collaborative team of educators, designers, leaders, lawyers and students. Their multiple perspectives have helped to shape a guide / program template that delivers on a fair, transparent and ethical internship program. You can find out more about the team over on [our website](#).