



MAXIMIZE YOUR SUMMER INTERNSHIP

Top 10 Tips from CCI's Outreach and Engagement Fellow, Joaquin Chica '27

1

Go in with a few clear goals 🎯

Before your first week gets busy, take a few minutes to ask yourself what you want from the summer. Maybe you want to improve your writing, become more confident speaking in meetings, learn how a certain industry works, or simply leave with stronger professional relationships. Having goals helps you stay intentional instead of drifting through the experience.

Your goals do not need to be overly formal. They just need to be specific enough that, by August, you can look back and say whether you grew.

2

Treat curiosity like a strength 🔍

I have seen a lot of students worrying about asking questions that will make them seem unprepared. Usually, the opposite is true. Asking thoughtful questions shows that you care, that you are paying attention, and that you want to understand the bigger picture.

That said, there is a difference between asking a question you could have answered yourself in two seconds and asking one that shows real engagement. Try to do a little thinking first, then ask in a way that moves your work forward.

3

Do the small things really well ✅

Not every internship project will feel exciting. Sometimes making a strong impression comes from doing ordinary things with consistency: showing up on time, meeting deadlines, replying professionally, taking notes, and following through. Those habits build trust. And once people trust you, they are more likely to give you more meaningful work.

This is especially important early on. You do not need to impress everyone immediately with brilliant ideas. Reliability is often what makes someone memorable.

4

Take initiative, but do not pretend to know everything 🚀

One of the best things you can do as an intern is look for ways to be helpful. If you finish a task, ask what else you can support. If you notice a more efficient way to organize something, suggest it respectfully. If there is a meeting, event, or project you can sit in on, express interest.

At the same time, initiative is not the same as acting like you have it all figured out. I have seen that the strongest interns are usually the ones who are proactive and humble at the same time.

5

Build relationships, not just a resume 🤝

I think that one of the most valuable parts of an internship is the people you meet. You do not need to “network” in a stiff, awkward way. Just be genuinely interested in people. Ask how they got to where they are. Ask what they like about their job. Ask what skills matter most in their field.

Those conversations can help you understand careers more clearly, and they can also become future references, mentors, or professional connections.

6

Seek Feedback with Direct Communication 💬

Do not wait until the final week to find out how you are doing, because by then there is little time left to make meaningful adjustments. Instead, ask for feedback partway through the internship while there is still enough time to apply it.

A simple question works: “Is there anything I could be doing more effectively?” That shows maturity, openness, and a real interest in improving.

7

Keep track of what you do 📝

This is one of the most underrated tips. Keep a running note on your phone or laptop with projects, accomplishments, skills used, and positive feedback you receive. By the end of the summer, you will be glad you did. It makes updating your resume, writing cover letters, or talking about your experience in interviews much easier.

It also helps you see your own growth more clearly. Students often forget how much they actually did.

8

For remote or hybrid internships, be even more intentional 🖥️

When you are not physically in the office, visibility does not happen automatically. Create structure for yourself. Respond promptly. Keep your supervisor or boss updated. Make time for informal connection, not just task completion.

The same advice that applies to in-person internships applies here too, but in remote settings it matters even more to communicate clearly and build relationships on purpose.

9

Remember that learning is the point 🌱

Your internship does not have to answer every career question. Sometimes a successful internship teaches you what you like. Sometimes it teaches you what you do not want. Both are useful. If you leave the summer with stronger skills, more confidence, and a clearer sense of what kind of work environment fits you, I believe that is how real progress looks.

10

Give yourself permission to be new ☀️

No one starts an internship already knowing how to navigate every workplace norm, meeting, or assignment. Part of the experience is learning how to be a professional by actually practicing it. Be prepared, be respectful, be curious, and be willing to grow. That matters more than trying to seem perfect.

And yes, enjoy your summer too. A good internship should challenge you and push you to grow professionally, but it should also give you space to enjoy the place where you are living, explore the city or area around you, spend time with friends, and create memories outside of work.

BONUS: Make the Summer Count Beyond the Internship 🤝

Your internship may be the main part of your summer, but it does not have to be the only part. Some of the most valuable things you gain over the summer can come from outside of work too: new routines, new friendships, greater independence, and a better sense of what everyday life looks like in a new place. Try to be intentional about the full experience, not just the internship itself. Keep in touch with people you care about, reflect on what you are learning, and notice what this summer is teaching you about the kind of life and career you want. Sometimes the biggest takeaway is not just what you did at work, but who you became while doing it.

Questions to Ask Yourself Mid-Summer 💬

- What have I learned so far?
- What skills am I improving?
- What do I want to do more of before the internship ends?

No internship will be perfect, but every internship can teach you something valuable and worthwhile. The key is to stay curious, intentional, and open to growth throughout the entire experience.



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