

## Internships: How to Make Yours Stand Out

Does the following sound familiar?

- Performed research and gathered information
- Assisted supervisor with presentations
- Wrote client correspondence
- Helped manager prepare quarterly reports
- Observed and summarized meeting minutes
- Worked with manager to prepare drawings and specifications

The duties and responsibilities associated with internships tend to be very similar. The industry-specific tasks you were exposed to and the people you assisted with might have been different, but for the most part, pre-graduate jobs consist of a lot of research, writing, compiling of information, and observing. As a new graduate, how do you set yourself apart?

Here are some questions and examples to get you thinking outside the “assisted with everything” box.

### **Was your position competitive?**

There’s a difference between working for your mom’s friend’s office because no one else would hire you and being chosen as only one of 300 applicants for a coveted internship. If your particular position was difficult to obtain, let it be known.

### **What did you do specifically?**

The more details you can give about what you’ve done, the more real your experience becomes to employers. When you give generalized statements such as “assisted with proposals,” you don’t impress anyone. How did you assist? Did you bring coffee to the employees who stayed up late toiling over the materials, or did you find a key solution that helped them create a dynamic proposal that secured the account?

Also, the work you did had a purpose. You weren’t simply organizing or researching things for your health. What was your work used for? What impact did it have on your company/boss/coworkers/client? What was the result?

In addition, if you worked in a specific industry that you want to continue working in, the more buzzwords you can include, the better.

It’s also a good idea to quantify your achievements. There’s a big difference between drafting two memoranda and 22.

### **What did you accomplish? How did your work contribute to the overall success of the case/resolution of the issue?**

An accomplishment doesn’t need to be major to be worth mentioning. No one expects an intern to save the company \$4 million or land the biggest account to date. Ask yourself these key questions:

- What did you do that made the company/firm better for having hired you?
- What did you do in your position that others in the same position might not have?

### **What did you learn?**

Maybe you've wracked your brain and still don't feel like you accomplished anything at all. At the very least, you had to have learned something during those 12-hour days. Describe what it was!

In addition to playing up accomplishments, you want to downplay the administrative aspects of your work, unless you are looking for a clerical position, that is. Clerical duties performed during your internship-including mail sorting, telephone answering, errand running, coffee making, and supply ordering-should NOT be listed on your resume. Why? Because they make you look like a clerical worker, rather than the type of worker you want to be in that industry.

If you want to be taken seriously and given real responsibilities, you will need to convey a certain level of prestige through your resume, even if your jobs weren't very prestigious. Most people would say that the functions of their jobs are divided between those things that they enjoy doing (which reflect ability, responsibility, and intelligence) and those things that constitute "grunt work" and are not particularly interesting or challenging. If this grunt work is something that you hope to never do again, highlighting it on your resume is not a good idea.