

Internship Etiquette

1. Handle hellos, good byes and basic courtesies of speech. Actions can win friends or turn people off. For example, don't sit down in someone's office until you are invited to do so. Keep your feet off the furniture. Take your hat off inside! Don't chew gum.
2. In the dining hall, you can get away with reaching across someone for the salt, or pushing your plate out of the way when you are through. In the work world, pushing in front of others makes you lose points.
3. Attendance and promptness are expected. Because you are a student, some faculty may not penalize you if you fly into class five minutes late, or if you miss class. In the work world, that just won't cut it. Tardiness and absenteeism signal disrespect for others' time, a lack of interest in the work.
4. Promptness signals eagerness, responsibility, and respect for others. At the beginning of the day and at all your meetings, be on time or five minutes early. Serious illness or family emergencies are the only justified reasons for absence. It is important to call immediately and speak directly with your site supervisor if you have a problem that will keep you from your internship.
5. Learn to make a positive first impression. Practice until you acquire a firm handshake. Learn how to make introductions and how to introduce yourself to those you don't know. Be friendly, smile and extend yourself. These are all parts of the important first impression that can really earn you points. Picture this: the Executive Director of your organization is coming down the hall toward you. You are alone. She is a valuable person to know. Are you ready to introduce yourself?
6. Dress the part. Yes, this is important! When you walk in the door of your internship site, even if it is on campus, you are no longer a student. We repeat: you are no longer a student. Appropriate attire is different for every organization. Look around you. What are others wearing? What about their hairstyles? What kind of accessories is the norm, including earrings for men? Model your dress and grooming after that of your supervisor and other professional staff, and you cannot go wrong.
7. Lose the lingo. "Hey, cool," might be a natural expression of affirmation on campus. In your internship, it will tell people that you are not yet professional material. Listen to the language of those around you, listen to your own language, and speak professionally. Be a good ambassador, and be cognizant that you reflect the institution. How you perform and behave in your internship will affect the future of other UCI interns.
8. Think about the long-term benefits of good internship etiquette. Many of you will ask your site supervisors for job recommendations or contacts. Some of you will apply for full-time or summer jobs at your internship site. Have you proven that you can make it in that type of environment? Have you earned a positive recommendation? What you do today can stick with you for a long time. Make it count!