

Getting Ready for Interns: A Checklist for Success

- Manage expectations by clarifying whether the internship is paid/unpaid from the beginning of the relationship. Include whether the position is paid or unpaid in the job posting and written job description.
- Before the first day, share specific information so the intern knows what to expect. Let interns know what time to arrive at the office, who their supervisor or mentor will be, what the general plan for the first day will be if known, and whether or not there are special plans for lunch the first day, just as you would for any new hire.
- On the first day or soon thereafter during an orientation, provide a short description of the significance of being a volunteer versus an employee. (Certain personnel policies at the workplace don't apply to volunteers – others may. Clarify which ones do or do not apply.)
- Make sure to go over safety policies with all interns, including building evacuation routes. Show interns where fire extinguishers are and where the first-aid kit is kept. Remind them to report any unsafe conditions they observe, and to report any injuries, right away.
- Remind interns about simple practices such as how you'd like them to answer the phone (as applicable), dress code, and greeting people they meet in the office or at work-related events. For some, this may be their first experience working in an office and representing an organization as an ambassador.
- Remind them about the fact that there is a designated social media spokesperson for the nonprofit – usually not them! Talk candidly about the nonprofit's goals for social media and what the expectations are for their own involvement during the internship. Assume they will mention the nonprofit, or their internship, on social media at some point, so give them the tools they need to promote the nonprofit's best image, such as branding guidelines.
- Have a discussion about the culture in your office surrounding emails. Make sure they are aware of preferences for email use. Do teammates email a quick "Thanks!" to each other or "Done!" when tasks are completed? Or is the culture at your nonprofit that teammates reserve email for more substantive messages and say "thank you" in person?
- Know whether interns are covered by the nonprofit's workers compensation and Director & Officers Liability insurance.
- Incorporate the intern into as many discussions about impact/outcomes and the difference your nonprofit is making in the community as possible. You could be cultivating the next generation of nonprofit leadership and encouraging someone to choose a career in the nonprofit sector for the long-term!
- Learn more at <https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/tools-resources/interns-employee-or-volunteer>.