

MAKING THE MOST OF SUMMER

Volunteering,
Internships, and Jobs
How Colleges View
Them

Multiple Sources

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Every summer, high school students choose between internships, jobs and volunteer opportunities. All of these can be rewarding, but many students wonder what colleges and universities will think of their choices.

When deciding between an internship, job or volunteer work, it's important to think about how your choice highlights your interests and furthers your goals. You also need to take time and finances into account. Take a look at the list of advantages and disadvantages below before you decide how you want to spend your summer.

Advantages of Volunteer Work

Not only does volunteer work help people who need it, but it also shows that you're engaged with your community. Admissions officers appreciate your dedication to others.

Volunteering also can expose you to adversity in ways you wouldn't normally experience, which can broaden your perspective.

Disadvantages of Volunteer Work

Volunteering is increasingly common among high school students. Many high school organizations also require students to volunteer for a minimum number of hours.

Admissions officers can tell when you only volunteered because you had to.

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Additionally, volunteering abroad can be a profound personal experience, but extravagant mission trips risk coming across as privileged. Finally, remember volunteering for a week every summer is no substitute for a full-time job or internship.

Advantages of Internships and Summer Jobs

Internships and summer jobs can be difficult to obtain, but they're a great indication of interests and future aspirations. A summer job or internship shows maturity, responsibility and financial planning.

Both look impressive on an application and your work experience will make it easier to apply for jobs and pursue professional opportunities in your undergraduate career and beyond.

Disadvantages of Internships and Summer Jobs

Internships and jobs aren't always the most fun or fulfilling way to spend your time. If your job or internship has nothing to do with what you want to study or do professionally, it can be a question mark on your application. Internships might be harder to secure and most are unpaid.

Of course, there's no reason you can't both work and volunteer, if you can find the time. Ultimately, figure out which opportunity shows engagement, maturity and open-mindedness.

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Hi everyone! I'm a junior who's going to apply to a few prestigious universities in the fall. How important are summer programs and internships? All the ambitious kids in my school seem to have enrolled in expensive summer programs or gotten paid internships. I heard that if you go to a summer program at a top-tier college, you can make connections! Unfortunately, those programs can cost up to \$7,000, which is far more than I can afford, and scholarships only cover a few thousand at most. It's also too late for me to apply for any

paid internships, which is a bummer.

I've been so busy lately with AP classes, SATs, and extra curricular activities that this is the first time I've thought about the impending summer. Will colleges care if I don't seem to have made any accomplishments in the summer? All I want to do is relax with friends, maybe take a few classes at my local CC, and do some volunteer work. My parents don't have the money to take me on a vacation let alone pay \$5,000 so that I can be in a summer program.

Post edited by Retrench on July 2012

When reviewing college applications, admissions officers take note of a student's work experience. Work experience is a great way to demonstrate passion, display initiative and explore interests.

Two of the most common forms of work experience high school students gravitate towards are jobs and unpaid internships. There are benefits and drawbacks to both opportunities, and in this blog post, we'll go over the pros and cons of both in order to help you determine what form of work experience is best suited to you and your needs.

What You Need to Know About Getting a Job

Common jobs for high schoolers tend to be concentrated in fields such as sales, food service, or retail, to name a few. High school jobs are a great way to gain experience in these fields and develop skills that are directly applicable to many other pursuits.

For instance, a student who works in food service at a local fast food restaurant has to interact with customers on a daily basis. They must creatively and professionally address any complaints, ensure that the customer's needs are fully met, and guarantee that patrons walk away satisfied with their experiences. As a result, this job allows the student to develop exemplary interpersonal skills, which are invaluable both in and out of the classroom.

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Similarly, as an employee, this student must collaborate with his or her coworkers on the regular, and as such is able to learn how to proactively work in a team. This skill is a great asset to have as a future college student, as university life frequently necessitates working closely with other students. Additionally, the student may have to take charge of certain projects in the workplace, allowing them to develop their leadership abilities, which they can then apply to academic and personal pursuits in the future.

Clearly, jobs are a fantastic conduit for personal growth. College admissions officers know this, and as such, they are likely to view a student's employment history in a positive light. On a professional level, working a job in high school can help open many doors for you in the future. Often times, entry-level positions can be a stepping stone for others forms of employment, as jobs in many different industries look for a similar core group of skills and attributes in a potential employee.

Employers like to see that an applicant has successfully worked a job in the past, as this makes them more certain of a potential hire's ability to succeed at their establishment.



This can be particularly beneficial to your college career; for instance, if you are looking for a side job to make money as a college student, you may find the search process easier if you already have a strong resume with a lot of work experience.

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With your personalized strategy session, Andi takes into account your history, background, test scores, and extracurricular activities to show you your real chances of admission—and how to improve them.

Additionally, in comparison to an unpaid internship, your job will probably allow you more control over the amount of time you work. You are likely to work fewer hours overall, as paid jobs in the industries you will likely be working in high school are typically less of a time commitment.

Why is this? With paid jobs, you are usually able to create your own schedule and choose hours that are best suited to your needs. However, as an unpaid intern, you will probably have to abide by the office-wide schedule already in place. For instance, summer internships will usually require interns to work 9-5, just as every other employee at that specific organization does.

To summarize, that working a job in high school can significantly benefit to your overall college application. It is especially impactful if you hold the position for a significant period of time, or if you can get promoted, as this directly demonstrates your dedication and your hard work.

Getting an Unpaid Internship in High School

Unpaid internships for high school students are typically more specialized than paid jobs.

Some examples of unpaid internships that may accept high school students include working at your local congressman's office, a legal office in town, or a nonprofit organization.

Internships can help you gain work experience in your field of interest, as they are generally more targeted. This can help boost your chances of acceptance to a major specific program, or a specialized school. Additionally, unpaid internships can help demonstrate a student's passion in a given field. For instance, working an unpaid internship at an art gallery can help a potential art history applicant really stand out from the ground.

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What's more, obtaining an unpaid internship can sometimes be a challenging process, as there are usually more applications for these positions than there are spots available.

Depending on the internship, landing an unpaid internship can be somewhat prestigious in the eyes of a college admissions officer. Additionally, the initiative required to seek out these specialized positions can help show a student's dedication to a given field.

Unpaid internships can also help students develop many of the attributes we listed above, from developing strong leadership abilities to being a good team player to cultivating interpersonal skills. Often times, interns will be faced with tasks that help them develop important skills that they can apply to a slew of different scenarios they may later be faced with.

Furthermore, because unpaid internships tend to be targeted to a specific field of interest, working such an internship in high school can also help you make connections and gain experience that subsequently makes it easier for you to get even better internships in college. Let's say you served as an intern at your local congressman's office. Perhaps once you're a university student, someone from the office connects you to a colleague of theirs who works for a political campaign. This connection could help you land a competitive internship on the campaign, and allow you to more fully immerse yourself in the political world.

Financial Considerations

Although unpaid internships can be a great way to further explore a specific field, if you need the money, then you should ultimately choose to work a job. Having a job can help make going out with friends and staying social easier since you'll have the funds to pay for outings. You can also use the wages you earn to help pay for school-related costs and other expenses, which can be particularly helpful if your family is of limited financial means.

For some, choosing to take on an unpaid internship is a luxury. You should not feel pressured to obtain one if you feel you cannot comfortably afford to work without pay. After all, having an internship is by no means a necessary component of a strong college application.

We hope that this information has helped you decide whether a job or an unpaid internship is right for you. Want more information on jobs, internships, and extracurricular activities? Our highly trained mentors are here to help. Use the form below to sign up for a free, one-on-one consultation with one of our admissions specialists!

Looking for help navigating the road to college as a high school student? Download our [free guide for 9th graders thru 12th graders](#). Our guides go in-depth about subjects ranging from **academics, choosing courses, standardized tests, extracurricular activities, and much more!**

Learn about Andi Frimmer

After many years in counseling, Andi started Prep4CollegeNow to help teens get into college. She has worked with over 300 students and has a 100% success with getting her clients acceptance letters into college. 96% of these acceptance letters are one of the student's top 3 choices! Working with admissions personnel from various colleges throughout the country, Andi has mastered the understanding of what teens need to do to prepare for the college application process and successful get their acceptance letters. To learn more about Andi Frimmer visit her website at www.Prep4CollegeNow.com and schedule a strategy session with her today.



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