

INTERNSHIP / VOLUNTEERING: WHICH DO ADMISSIONS PREFER

In the summers after sophomore and junior year, many students sign up for summer activities, academic camps, and internships that they think will boost their applications in the eyes of admissions officers. Though these ventures can be beneficial and personally rewarding, they will only enhance an application if the job or activity somehow highlighted your personality, interests, and personal growth along the way. If you're choosing between an internship or summer job and unpaid volunteer work, you'll have to take finances, time consumption, and the ultimate advantages of the pursuit into account. Take a look at the list below for some extra information before you make any final decisions.

Advantages to volunteer work.

Volunteer work is impressive because it demonstrates that you're engaged in your community and that you like to spend your time trying to empathize with others' circumstances. Admissions officers like to see that you've found a project or cause to which you are devoted, especially if you've been a part of that project for many months or even years. Volunteering also exposes you to adversity and differences among people, both of which are important attributes to have before enrolling in college.

Disadvantages to volunteer work.

Volunteering is impressive, but it is also becoming a more common pursuit. Most high schools require students to fulfill a certain number of hours volunteering in order to graduate, and admissions officers can tell when you volunteered out of perfunctory need rather than actual interest. Furthermore, though volunteering abroad may have changed your life as an individual, most admissions officers have seen and read thousands of similar anecdotes, so an essay on the subject may detract from the "wow" factor of your application.

Advantages to internships and summer jobs.

Like volunteering, an internship or summer job indicates passion and direction, especially if that job was in a field that you've spent time studying or pursuing in the past. Internships and summer jobs also exhibit maturity and familiarity with real-life responsibility, like finishing tasks on time, problem solving, and taking instructions from superiors in the workplace. Admissions officers also understand that many students have to take summer jobs that aren't exactly thrilling for financial reasons, but they still like to see that students seek to support themselves and are planning for the future.

Disadvantages to internships and summer jobs.

Many students end up taking internships or summer jobs as a resume filler, which ultimately robs them of the opportunity to develop an interest or try something new during their free time in the summer. Though demonstrating commitment to one subject area can be appealing to admissions officers, you can also be perceived as stubborn or close-minded if you've never developed a taste for different, challenging experiences. Internships and summer jobs are great, but only if you can present them as imperative to your development of a skill or your newfound understanding of a reality.

Ultimately, you want to show growth, personal development, and open-mindedness in your summer activities, and only you can choose the endeavor that will best fulfill those milestones.