

Top 10 Ways to Nail New York City Semester in Journalism

- 1. Take notes, take notes, take notes.**
In class. In networking lunches. When meeting with editors. Honest. No one will be handing out PowerPoints in your newsrooms, in crucial interviews, at major events all over the city. You are only as good as your notes. You will be graded, at work and at NYCJ, on your ability to take notes and follow directions.
- 2. Learn to say “yes” a lot.** You’ll have opportunities to do stories that seem scary and work that sounds exhausting (or pointless), but will help your newsroom. It’s easy to say “no.” Say “yes” to these opportunities and find ways to serve your newsroom. You will jump ahead.
- 3. Learn to read.** This is different than the skill you acquired in preschool. Train yourself to read entire stories, not just scan headlines or Twitter feeds (but read those, too). Read your own newsroom’s product! Figure out the top five email news alerts most crucial to your internship and read those before work. There is no substitute in journalism for an eager, curious mind and good reading habits develop out of discipline.
- 4. Focus on doing your own reporting.**
Remember: For years, this program’s motto has been, “Everyone in this town knows more stories than you do.” Read. Listen. You will write stories that really matter when your stories grow out of what you see, hear and read
- 5. Expect to be edited.**
Ask to be edited. Appreciate that editing and thank your editors! Paul and your other mentors are here to help, too, so don’t fear those editing pens.
- 6. Opinion is cheap, but information is expensive.** Information matters more to your editors than opinion. So find new information and attribute it clearly to your own sources. Interview people! Avoid stories built on PR paper! Do real reporting, not mere aggregation work.
- 7. Be professional.** You will hear NYC people saying, “Network, network, network.” Yes, make relationships, but beware relationships. Don’t become star-struck by subjects or sources. Expect to be treated professionally and act professionally.
- 8. Expect to experience feelings of uncertainty** and a lack of confidence that can strike at any moment. Counter fear with faith and with a positive work ethic. And please don’t “disappear” when fear strikes, rather than seek help. The learning curve in New York City is steep, but you can climb it. Remember why you’re here.
- 9. Keep asking questions** to your professors, as well as to each other. We are here to help you and we know what we’re talking about. Want bylines and better grades? Then take careful notes and then USE the reporting and writing tips covered in class. Honest.
- 10. One more time: Follow the directions.**
Remember that the highest compliment a newsroom intern can earn is this: “I only had to tell her something once.” It’s crucial to follow directions. Everyone makes mistakes, but don’t make mistakes over and over. This is linked to tip No. 1 -- take good notes about your mistakes and insights. Mark them up. Use them.