Women Take Washington
A BA Woman's Guide to a BA City
Welcome to Washington, you BA Woman!

We’re so glad you made the brave, bold decision to intern in our nation’s capital, working to improve the world in which we live. Here’s some key advice to excelling in your journey!

Who is a BA Woman

A BA Woman is daring and compassionate, tenacious and persistent. She’s a total BADass. She lifts while she climbs, making the world around her a better place, every step of the way. A BA Woman has a passion for change and the drive to go out and make it happen. Through her tribe of BA women, she’s unstoppable.
**Succeeding in Your Internship**

Here are our top tips to set you up for success:

1. **BA Prepared Newbie**
   Be prepared for your first day! Have realistic expectations for your role to ensure you’ll be a successful intern. Some of your tasks may feel a bit mundane. But being enthusiastic in completing these tasks gives you valuable experience, a new resume line, and—perhaps most importantly—the foundation to build your professional reputation.

2. **BA Trustworthy Hire**
   Gain—and keep—your manager’s trust early on by completing assignments well, with a good attitude, and ahead of deadlines.

3. **BA Dedicated Teammate**
   It can be hard to acclimate to new surroundings. Approach your work with accountability, respect, and dedication to fulfill your goals.

4. **BA Go-Getter**
   Take initiative and exceed expectations. Work to anticipate problem resolution before a need arises to be an asset to your supervisors and team.

5. **BA Lifelong Learner**
   Ask a supervisor for feedback on your performance. Soliciting feedback addresses any issues and ensures you’re fulfilling your responsibilities—preventing these from showing up later in a performance review.

6. **BA Gracious Individual**
   Thank your supervisors and colleagues as often and as earnestly as you can—even when receiving constructive criticism. This shows your gratitude for their advice and makes them more apt to give assistance in the future.

**Professional Development Events**

D.C. has great free and affordable events to boost your professional development. Ask your supervisor/colleagues if your company hosts events. Also check out professional communities like The Wing, or find opportunities via EventBrite or via Facebook event search.

**Networking**

Networking is everywhere! Struggling to make the first introduction? Find another person looking for a buddy in the room. Or, bring along a friend with interest in the industry.

Some networking events request an RSVP. Showing up sans RSVP can put you on the organizer’s bad side and leave you without a name tag. Don’t ignore any invites and respond to all invites with either a yes or a no—not a maybe. Don’t cancel within 24 hours of the event, excluding emergency.

**Business Cards**

Having a great conversation with a potential connection? Ask for their business card—and follow up! Get business cards for the summer if your internship doesn’t provide them. If they don’t, put together a card with your name, university, major, and professional contact information (email, phone, and LinkedIn). Your university career services center may even provide service or templates. Find deals to order online, or order with a favorite female-owned printer in D.C.

**Informational Interviews**

Large events not your thing? Network over coffee. Reach out to connections, ask colleagues, or ask your supervisor to connect you to the right individuals. Prepare with these tips:

- Be proactive, but intentional. It’s up to you to build your network, including scheduling calls and making appropriate follow-ups.
- Be prompt with meetings. Offer to meet them near their office.
- Be prepared. Prepare topics and questions for your mentor to come away with productive, forward motion. Evaluate why you feel the need to meet in the first place to ensure it’s a worthwhile connection.
- Be respectful. Dress professionally, always use proper grammar, and maintain a professional, grateful tone.
- Be grateful. Say thank you within 24 to 48 hours of meeting. This can secure your place in someone’s network—or ensure they’ll never call again.

“Use every appropriate opportunity to get to know people, what they do and why they do it. I once started up a conversation with someone sitting next to me on the train who was reading an USAID newsletter. It turns out she was a director at an international development nonprofit based in DC. We ended up getting lunch and I learned so much!”

– Angela Frimpong

FROM OUR ALUMNA
Women Take Washington

Dress Codes Decoded

D.C. is one of the more conservative cities when it comes to professional fashion. Show up on your first day dressed conservatively, ask your supervisor about the office dress code, and observe what your colleagues wear.

D.C. summers are hot, so consider wearing a light shirt for your commute and arriving to work early to change and complete your professional look once you’re there. If you can leave things at your office, store a blazer, sweater for chilly AC, and pair of formal shoes there.

Accessories, Hair, & Makeup

Simple makeup, neat hair, heels or flats, and minimal accessories are your safest choices.

Business Professional

Professional dresses, pantsuits, and suit sets. Consider getting 2-3 blazers to rotate throughout the summer.

Business Casual

Slacks or skirts paired with blouses. Blouses should be cap sleeve minimum — no tank tops.

Casual

Casual pants, skirts, and tops. Casual shoes and accessories are fine. Avoid jeans with tears or worn spots, and pair with them a blazer to make it professional.

Where to Shop?

Thrift stores have tons of resale and business outfits. Goodwill and Buffalo Exchange are some of the bigger names in D.C., and Secondi in Dupont has higher end items on consignment. Target and H&M also have workwear you can integrate into your wardrobe.

Check out sale sections of places like Ann Taylor, the Loft, the Gap, and J. Crew. Retailers also have outlets/factory stores selling overstocked/out-of-season merchandise at lower costs. We advise against store credit cards. Tempted by higher cost clothes/retailers? Consider a part-time job at one of their stores to qualify for an employee discount! Just ensure your entire paycheck doesn’t go right back in the register.

Workplace Rights and Sexual Harassment

While unacceptable, we know that sexual harassment still may occur in the workplace. As you embark on your internship experience, we want you to know your rights. Read our report and fact sheet at our website barudolphfoundation.com/reports/

Transportation

Cars are discouraged given limited and expensive city parking. The two most common ways of navigating the city are by using the Metrorail & Metrobus systems. The Metrorail has six different lines, and there are too many bus lines to count! To make things easier, download the DC Metro and Bus and/or Washington DC Metro Route Map apps.

Follow Metrorail etiquette. Avoid the left side of Metro escalators. Let people off the train before boarding for yourself. Offer your seat to elderly or pregnant women. When you get on the bus, go to the back so other riders can get on with more ease.

You can also use bikes—either your own or through Capital Bikeshare. The city has bike lanes through all the major roads and bike racks and poles to secure unattended bikes. Remember to use caution, wear a helmet, and secure your bike and wheels to something before leaving it.

You’ll walk a lot in D.C., so have comfortable shoes and Google Maps on your phone. We suggest one pair of shoes for walking to work, and another for once you’re there. Walk in groups and plan your route before setting out for an unfamiliar destination.

“Even though D.C. is geographically small, proximity to infrastructure is key! D.C. gets HOT in the summer, and you don’t want to be caught in your work clothes with a mile long hike ahead of you to get to a meeting. In my experience, the Metrosbus system was much cheaper than the Metrorail, but will usually take a little longer. Driving in D.C. is also not as bad as people say, but I avoided it when possible because it’s often difficult to find parking.”

– Vanessa Miller

Accommodations and/or Housing

There are options to make D.C. housing more affordable. People often live in houses with five+ roommates known as “group houses /basements, or even one-bedrooms with multiple roomies. Other options are neighborhoods with access to the Metro system—these reach as Silver Spring and Franconia-Springfield. Some universities also sublet dorms.

Here are some helpful safety tips for women:

Respond to posts made by women that include fellow women in the house.

Ensure your roommates are accepting—i.e. as an LGBTQ+ individual, ensure the house is affirming and accepting.

Ask about building security.

Inquire about the apartment floor. Often, women will want to stay away from first floor dwellings, as they have more accessible access.

Check walking distance to the nearest public transportation for all times—day and night.

Research on the neighborhood.
Safety

Check out our list of safety tips. The DCRCC also has a (slightly outdated) guide for area resources including shelters, legal services, and more at dcrcc.org/dc-referral-guide.

1. Avoid headphones and looking at your phone. Be aware of your surroundings. Note: Mace, or pepper spray, is illegal in D.C.

2. Ask campus women’s center or safety office about self-defense workshops. DC IMPACT on Georgia Ave offers one for $20.

3. Set up your iPhone in your settings to automatically call 911 by pressing the lock button five times in rapid succession.

4. The Washington Area Metro Transit Authority (WMATA) has designated staff for safety. There are also security guards and WMATA staff at every metrorail station.

5. Stay alert when using services like LYFT or Uber. Check for rideshare stickers and check the make, model, and license plate. Ask the driver “who are you here to pick up?” and if they don’t know your name, don’t get in their car.

6. Pay attention to the driver’s route. If you’re not familiar with where you’re going, keep your GPS/Google Map up and running to make sure you’re on the right path.

7. When out, always watch over your drink, alcoholic or not. Don’t accept drinks from others unless you watched them buy/pour/make it.

8. Use the buddy system. Share your whereabouts with friends and family, consider sharing your location on your phone, and walk in pairs.

Finding Fun, Free, Feminist Events

Websites like Washington.org and Travel + Leisure.com have great lists of activities. The Washington Post also publishes a ‘Going Out Guide’ each week with weekend guides. Our favorite social outings are Jazz in the Sculpture Garden and visiting the Smithsonian museums; especially the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC)! Check out the D.C. meetup category “Feminism Meetups” and subscribe to Women’s Wire—a weekly e-newsletter for news, opportunities, and events for D.C. feminists.

FROM OUR ALUMNA

“Austyn Holleman

“When you first move, do research and keep a list of weekly events to have on hand when you’re looking for something to do. So many bars have weekly open mic nights/poetry slams/trivia, and it’s helpful to write them down so you don’t forget. Museums also have cool late night events every so often—look on Eventbrite every week to see what’s going on. There are a ton of hikes within 30 minutes of the city if you’re looking for some nature!”

We’ll also share a list of women-owned restaurants in D.C. as the program kicks off!
Sometimes, the hardest part about moving to a new place is starting over and not knowing anyone. But, because you’ve applied to the EmpowHER Initiative, you’ve already made one friend—us! We already think you’re BA. Feel free to contact us at info@EmpowHERwomen.org. We’ve got your back!
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