

# Reducing imposter syndrome in interns and new staff

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I've heard from a couple of interns at EA orgs who have experienced imposter syndrome or anxiety about not being good enough. Tips from former interns and managers of interns:

- Make clear that the group of interns is not homogenous and that people are not expected to have the same strengths. They may be focused on thoughts like "I'm not as good at X as this other person" without paying attention to the fact that they're better at something else.
- Find time to tell each person the things you think they're good at and the strengths that led to them being chosen for the internship.
- Provide time for getting to know each other as people and not only as staff.
  - Giving What We Can used to have a day for this kind of thing at the beginning of an intern cycle.
  - Knowing "Owen the researcher" is different from "Owen who has hedgehogs living in his garden."
  - Ask senior staff to not show off — if they are super good at something in their personal life, this might not be the time to mention that!
- Consider assigning mentors who can take the person out for coffee. If there are multiple organizations in the same office, does not need to be someone at the same org.
- Provide regular feedback so people are not wondering if they're doing all right
  - Provide specific feedback about things they did well.
  - Ask each person if they know what form and frequency of feedback works best for them (although be clear that you might not be able to provide exactly what they'd prefer).
  - Communicate what the expectations are and where they are relative to the expectations.
    - If there are core parts of the program that interns are expected to come in knowing, are resources available outside of work hours if they don't know those things yet and need to get up to speed?
    - Which things are stretch goals that you hope they learn during the process?
- Communicate about the fact that imposter syndrome happens. It's common to wonder if you're falling short (or assume that you are).
  - Encourage them to ask their managers for feedback if they're wondering how they're doing.

Corresponding document aimed at interns and new staff: [Countering imposter syndrome for interns and new staff](#)