

Guidelines to an Effective Shadowing Experience



Shadowing a professional in a career you are interested in can be very exciting but might cause some nervous energy too. To help you come prepared and stay focused, keep these ideas in mind.

- ✓ Be clear in your interests and intentions when making the initial contact. Identify how you heard about this person, where you are from, your career interests (any specialty areas), and your intentions for the meeting (informational interview, observation, etc.).
- ✓ Come with a prepared list of questions to ask and something to take notes with and on for the person's responses. Some typical questions are provided here:
 1. Why did you decide to become a _____?
 2. What level of education/training/job experiences do you have?
 3. What is a typical entry level job titled and what duties are associated with it?
 4. What is a typical day at work like for you? Who do you interact with? What are the hours?
 5. What do you like most about your job? What things do you find frustrating about your work?
 6. Are there recommendations you have for how I can prepare myself now for this line of work? Skills to develop? Courses to take?
 7. Would you suggest certain professional organizations to learn about or join? Which ones?
 8. What professional journals or magazines do you subscribe to? What other ways do you suggest keeping up with trends in the field?
 9. Could you connect me with other professionals who would consider allowing me to shadow/interview them to gain additional information and experience?
- ✓ Dress appropriately for the setting. If it is an informational interview where you are not going to be active, business casual might be best. If you are shadowing, it could become more hands on so you may want more comfortable clothing. It is acceptable to ask the professional what type of activities to expect so you can dress accordingly.
- ✓ Listen and observe. Pay close attention to what is being shared in addition to your surroundings. You may only have a short period of time so you need to use all of your senses to pick up as much information as possible.
- ✓ Obtain a business card from the professional so you have their most recent contact information and correct spelling of their name.
- ✓ Send a personal thank you to the professional after the experience. It is important to acknowledge your gratitude of their time and insights to the profession.
- ✓ Make notes about your experience. Keep these thoughts in a central place to compare to other reflections you have from additional shadowing experiences or informational interviews and to organize business cards or other career related items you collect.