

JOB SHADOW GUIDE

Job shadowing is a method to explore career fields and organizations by spending time with someone in that position. Typically between 4 and 8 hours, job shadowing is more than an informational interview, it is a chance to directly observe the activities and organizational culture of a profession with someone during their workday. This gives the shadower insider information that can't be found online and a chance to experience the career firsthand to see if it is a good fit for you. This can be done at varying stages of your career development.

How to Get Started

Know what you're looking for: what positions, fields, and companies might you want to know more about? The Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook and O*Net online are two places to start to learn more about a job's education and training level, typical work activities and skills, and similar positions.

Who do you contact?

Begin with who you already know - check with friends, family, fellow students, co-workers, and professors to see if they know anyone who would be willing to let you shadow.

Job Shadowing:

- Puts more responsibility on the professional - they decide what experiences you will be a part of.
- It is a more substantial request than an informational interview - the professional will likely lose productivity for part or all of the day while introducing you to the job, rather than 20-30 minutes for a conversation.

Initiate Contact/Request a Job Shadow Experience

Whether with a phone call, e-mail or LinkedIn message, this is a professional request.

Sample Contact/Request:

Dear Ms. Silver,

I am a sophomore majoring in sociology at Loyola University Chicago. I am interested in learning more about non-profit work with adolescents, and Professor Jones gave me your name as a possible professional I might shadow.

Even though I have some experience working with children, I believe that by observing the daily tasks and activities that you do with teens at the ABC Chicago Youth Center will give me a better sense of the field and career I am considering. I would prefer a half-day but understand that you are busy with many responsibilities and would appreciate any time you could give me.

Thank you for considering my request. I will contact you within the next two weeks to schedule the job shadowing if that is a possibility. In the meantime, I can also be reached at (312) 555-1212 or Jenna.Hewitt@gmail.com.

Sincerely,
Jenna Hewitt

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Preparing for the Job Shadow

Write a list of questions, keeping in mind the conversation will be short - what do you most want to know? Continue your research- look at your contact's LinkedIn profile and their company's website. Use web searches to find professional organizations, industry news and publications. Does that information create any additional questions for you?

Make sure all arrangements are made, including requesting any specific experience or meetings with additional people you might like to speak with.

During the Job Shadow

Treat this as a job interview (even though it isn't!): dress professionally and be on-time. Be prepared with your questions and a brief statement about who you are: what you're doing now, what you are interested in, and future goals.

Be open to the unexpected - sometimes schedules change at the last minute. You may be able to attend a meeting that wasn't planned until that morning. Take notes, and observe the entire culture of the organization: how do they interact? What is the office environment like?

Ask questions, but also allow the person to do their job and don't interfere with the daily routine of the professional or organization.

After the Job Shadow - Say Thank You!

Continue job search etiquette - send a thank you note or email within 24hrs of your conversation. Add them to your network on LinkedIn if you asked permission to do so during your conversations. Send them status updates if you get a new position. Take the opportunity to build the relationship.

Keep a tracking system of your contacts it's good to do multiple informational interviews! Note the person, organization, their contact information, when you talked, and what you discussed. This will be helpful for future networking and contact.