

Job Shadows

Job Shadowing is a great way for you to learn more about a particular field of work by seeing it “up close and personal.” Most Job Shadows involve spending a full day or part of a day with someone at his or her place of work observing what a typical day is like. Job Shadows also give you an opportunity to ask specific questions you may have about a particular field of work and may help you expand your professional network of contacts. Job Shadows are particularly useful for first-year students who are undecided about their program of study / major or potential career options.

How to arrange a Job Shadow

- Identify a contact person at a business, company or organization whom you would like to shadow.
- Before you contact them, review your own schedule, know which days and times are good for you, and rehearse what you will say.
- Call, e-mail or visit your contact in person and ask to schedule a Job Shadow.
- Introduce yourself and ask to arrange a date and time to Job Shadow. Ask if he / she has a specific day in mind and try to accommodate his / her schedule.

Although there are many techniques to requesting an informational interview, the following is a good approach:

“Hello, my name is _____. I am interested in a job in your organization’s field and am hoping I might be able to do a Job Shadow I would appreciate the chance to visit your organization for a few hours and observe a _____ at work to see firsthand what the occupation is like.”

Other topics to discuss when arranging the job shadow

- Directions to the site.
- Recommendations for parking.
- Any special clothing requirements, dress code.
- Particular interests you have in regard to your Job Shadow experience. Let your contact know if there are specific aspects of the job that you are most interested in, and if there are other areas of the organization which you are hoping to be exposed to.
- Suggestions for pre-visit reading.
- Before ending the conversation, confirm the day and time of your Job Shadow visit.
- End the conversation with, “Thank you very much for your time. I’m looking forward to meeting you.”

- NOTE: Leave a message for the individual to call you back if s/he is not available when you call. Follow up within a couple of days. This would also be a good time to consider what kind of greeting you have on your voice mail.

Use a businesslike greeting if you are anticipating calls from professional contacts.



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The day of your Job Shadow visit

- Give yourself plenty of time to arrive so that you are not late.
- Be prepared to share about yourself: work values, interests, skills, work style and why this career choice is of interest to you.
- Make sure you are dressed appropriately.
- Ask lots of questions.

If you need to cancel due to an unexpected emergency

- When you have finalized plans with your contact to make a Job Shadow visit, make this visit your top priority. This means you must plan ahead. Lack of transportation, having too much homework, being scheduled for a work shift, etc., are not valid reasons to cancel a Job Shadow appointment. Remember that your contact will frequently go to a lot of effort to schedule a Job Shadow visit for a student, and you need to show professional courtesy and honor your commitment. The only good reasons to reschedule are for unforeseen emergencies, such as illness or a death in the family.

If an emergency comes up:

- Call your Job Shadow host immediately. Apologize for any inconvenience your cancellation may cause, and ask if it is possible to reschedule.
- Follow up with a note to your contact regarding your cancellation / reschedule, thanking him / her again for willing to be flexible and allowing you to do the Job Shadow.

Preparing for your Job Shadow visit

Self-assessment

Preparation is essential for a successful Job Shadow experience. Be prepared to share a little about yourself. Consider ahead of time what you might say, including information about why this career choice is of interest to you, what your interests are, what kind of classes you are taking, any related experiences you may have had, and information about your work values, skills/abilities, work environment preferences, and / or work style. If you would like assistance in articulating your interests, skills, and career values, meet with Career Services before your Job Shadow visit. Being self-aware will enable you to compare and contrast what you learned and how you might “fit” into an organization or position.

Research the organization

In order to ensure a quality experience, you should research basic facts and information about the place of employment. The value in doing this research is that it will boost your confidence, aid you in asking intelligent questions, and help you begin to integrate career knowledge into your decision-making. Gather general information regarding the organization’s products and / or services they provide, its location and history, and organizational goals. There are several possible sources for such information. The most direct is to acquire company literature such as newsletters and annual reports. Check out the organization’s website, as well as other sites with related information.