

Job Shadowing Tips

Job shadowing can be a helpful step when deciding which career path you will follow. The tips and questions below will help you navigate a shadowing opportunity with ease.

Before Shadowing

1. Locate a few contacts through the yellow pages, career center, alumni center, or personal contacts.
2. Prior to the shadowing experience, conduct some basic research on the profession and industry setting. This will give you some basis for understanding what to expect.
3. Prepare 5-10 topics or questions that will help you focus your observations. Your goal is to get a sense of the day to day life in that profession.

While Shadowing

1. Observe actively. Note as much as possible about the environment, such as the other workers, the manner in which interactions with co-workers and customers occur, and the general pace.
2. Ask questions to clarify what you are observing and to learn more about the professional's career progression. Transition times are often ideal for these conversations.
3. Take brief notes, if possible, but do not write everything down.
4. Ask the professional for their business card for future follow up.
5. Expect to be asked about your interests, goals, or academic experiences.

After Shadowing

1. Send a brief note or email to thank the professional for letting you observe their work.

Sample Observation Topics and Filler Questions

About Entry into the Profession

1. How did you get into the profession? Tell me about your career progression. What degree/academic training is needed for a job in the field?
2. What preparation would you suggest for someone interested in this field?
3. What, if anything, would you do differently if you could start over and why?

About the Professional

1. How does this compare to a typical work day?
2. What skills and abilities do you find are most important in your work?
3. What are some of the problems you encounter and what does it take to solve them?

About the Organization

1. How does this position fit into the overall organization? Is this typical?
2. With whom in your organization do you have the most contact?
3. Where do you see windows of opportunity within the profession/organization in the future?
4. How long does it take to move from one step to the next in this field?
5. How does this organization compare with some of the other's in which you've worked?

Advice for You

1. Do you have any special advice for someone entering this field?
2. Which of your college courses do you use most in your work?
3. What out-of-class experiences (work or other) would you recommend to test an interest in this profession?