



Job Shadowing

Job shadowing with a professional who has specific knowledge about an occupation or career in which you are interested, can be a useful method to get a glimpse of a particular career. Because perceptions of a career may be quite different from reality, job shadowing can help develop realistic expectations about a career. Job shadowing might also be used to develop your networking skills.

Can a job shadow be helpful?

Yes! A job shadow experience may:

- Allow you to observe aspects of a job shadow host's daily routine.
- Present up-to-date facts about an occupation that can assist in your decision making.
- Inform you about the skills, education, and training required for specific occupations.
- Help you to determine if further investigation of a career interest is warranted.
- Help you develop communication skills and self-confidence when talking to career professionals.
- Provide you with career information unavailable in the classroom.
- Identify what it takes to be a successful professional in that particular occupation.
- Show how technology is incorporated into work.

Getting Started?

You can try to connect with someone in your field of interest by consulting with:

- Relatives and friends
- Advisors
- Career Services
- Faculty
- UW-La Crosse Alumni Group
- Human resource offices of local businesses
- Civic organizations (example local chamber of commerce)
- Social networking sites such as LinkedIn.com

Preparation for the Job Shadow

As you prepare for your job shadow, be sure to:

- Have specific questions in mind to discuss with your job shadow host.
- Research the job and company of your host. While your best research will come from the actual shadowing, find out enough about your host to ask informed questions.
- Dress appropriately. Consider asking your host if you are not sure about what is appropriate.
- Ask for directions to your host work site, to ensure that you arrive on time for the shadow.
- To bring writing materials so that you may take notes.

On the Day of the Job Shadow:

- Be sure to be courteous and enthusiastic. It is important to show your host how much you appreciate their time and opportunity to learn about their career.
- Think about obtaining additional contacts, by asking your host if there are other people that they might recommend that you talk to. This may help you to gradually build up your professional network.
- Respect confidentiality.
- Ask for your host's business card.
- Ask questions! Inquire about your host's occupation, experiences, and personal insights. Listed below are potential questions that can serve as a guide:
 - How long have you been in your position?
 - What are the main duties and responsibilities of your job?
 - Why did you choose this career?
 - Can you describe what a typical workday might look for you?
 - What role does technology play in your position?
 - What aspects of your position do you personally find most satisfying?
 - Are there aspects of your position that you don't like?
 - Which parts of your job do you find the most challenging? How do you handle these challenges?
 - What are the specific educational requirements or training needed to enter this field?
 - Are there specific academic classes that have proved to be valuable to you in your work?
 - In this field, what are the typical entry-level job titles and responsibilities?
 - What personal characteristics or skills do you feel contribute most to being successful in this career?
 - What advice do you have for new professionals entering this field?
 - How can I get experience in this field while I am still in school?
 - Can you recommend other resources that will help me explore this career field?
- Avoid asking your host questions of personal nature. This includes salary, family history, etc.

Following Up

Here are things you should do after your job shadow:

- Be sure to email a thank you note to the individuals that facilitated your job shadow, especially your host.
- Take some time to reflect on your experience
 - What did you like best/least about the job?
 - Did the job "pique your interests?"
 - Does the occupation match your personality, strengths, and values?
 - Was the job different than you expected? If so how
 - Do you feel that you can acquire the skills to be successful in this position?
 - What was the most important that you learned from the job shadow?
- Think about courses you might take to prepare for entry into the field
- Think about finding a career-related work experience such as a part-time/summer job, internship, or volunteer experience.