



# JOB SHADOWING

Job Shadowing is a method for learning about a particular job or career by spending time following (or “shadowing”) a professional as they work. Accompanying and observing this person as they complete the tasks related to their job can provide a deeper understanding of their career and particular job. Job shadowing experiences look good on resumés and college applications and provide valuable learning experiences.

## HOW TO ARRANGE A JOB SHADOWING EXPERIENCE

Job shadowing experiences are a great way to get a real sense of a particular career or company and whether or not it might be a good fit for you. Working to arrange a job shadowing experience (or more than one, depending on the length of time of each one) could be a great use of your summer break. It will provide you an immersive opportunity to “try on” the career(s) you are interested in. It doesn’t take much to arrange a job shadowing experience, and in most cases you will be able to follow these steps:

**1) Research Companies:** Spend some time researching local companies in the industry you’re interested in. You can use the Company Research Worksheet to guide your research and help you take notes about each one. If you aren’t sure where to find companies, you can check with your school’s guidance department or other adults you know for places where you might be able to set up job shadowing based on your career interests and goals.

**2) Contact the Company:** If you know someone who works at a particular company on your list, begin with those. Reach out to your contact and ask about job shadowing opportunities. If you don’t know anyone at the company, contact the Human Resources (HR) department via phone or email to inquire about these opportunities. If you are unable to reach anyone in HR, call or email someone directly in the department in which you’re interested.

**3) Make the Ask:** Explain that you are a student who is interested in their particular field or career and that you are looking for an opportunity to shadow someone for a period of time, whatever is best for the company, and ask them if that would be possible at their company. Be prepared to answer any questions and let them know why you’re interested in their particular company or industry. You want to be perceived as confident and enthusiastic, but not overbearing.

**4) Figure Out the Logistics:** Once you've received permission to set up a job shadowing experience, the first thing you should find out is when and for how long you will be able to shadow. This may be for a few hours, a whole day, a couple of weeks, or the full summer.

- It may turn out that you are only able to schedule an informational interview with someone at the company. This would be a great opportunity to ask someone in your desired career or industry about their education, career path, and specific responsibilities on the job. This might seem less desirable than a full job shadowing experience, but any opportunity you have to learn more about a job from people who actually do that job is good and any chance you have to make a connection with a professional is worth it.

**5) Schedule More:** After you've scheduled your first job shadowing experience, don't be afraid to schedule others. As long as they don't create scheduling conflicts for things you're already committed to, schedule a few, particularly if they are only one day experiences.



## HOW TO PREPARE FOR A JOB SHADOWING EXPERIENCE

Once you've got a job shadowing experience scheduled, it's time to focus on preparing.

**1) Conduct More Research:** Dig a little deeper to find more information on the company. What else can you learn about them, their culture and values, their initiatives, or their reputation in the industry or the community? Learn more about the specific job you will be shadowing. What don't you know? The more you know, the better you'll be able to follow along with what happens during your shadowing experience. You don't want to come off as a "know it all" but you want to be knowledgeable on the job basics and the company.

**2) Send a Reminder:** Two or three days before your scheduled visit, call or email your contact to make sure it is still taking place. Ask if there are any details you need to know about gaining access to the building or where to go when you get there. Let them know you are looking forward to the experience. If it has been a while since you've scheduled the visit or if it has slipped their mind, this will also serve as a nice reminder and will let them know that you still plan to attend.

**3) Show Up & Be On Time:** A job shadowing experience is less structured than an internship or an actual job, but don't let that sway you. Show up for your scheduled visit about 10 minutes prior to the scheduled time. Do everything in your power to avoid having to reschedule, but if you must, make sure you give them as much notice as possible and apologize for the inconvenience. You want to take this seriously and share your best self because this could lead to the company being a reference for you or offering you an internship or employment in the future.

**4) Dress Professionally:** Try to match the attire required by the company. If you are unsure about their preferences or dress code, you can ask your contact about how you should dress for the experience. Otherwise, business casual attire should be fine; slacks and a button-down shirt, a tie, a dress, etc..

**5) Ask Questions & Take Notes:** Be ready to ask questions about the specifics of the job, things you don't understand or are confused about from your research, or things that come up throughout your experience. You don't want to over-do it with your questioning, but you definitely want to appear engaged in the experience and curious about what you're observing. Be sure to have a notebook handy to take notes or jot down questions as you go through the visit. You can also take some time before you arrive to write down some of your questions.

**6) Be Gracious:** Make sure to thank your contact and the person/people you've met and shadowed throughout the experience. Follow up after the visit with a thank you note or email to express your gratitude and, hopefully, leave a good lasting impression.

## WHAT TO EXPECT DURING YOUR JOB SHADOW

**Length of Time:** These types of activities may take between a couple of hours and a few weeks, depending on the job and responsibilities.

**Activities:** You may be invited to take part in a variety of job related activities and responsibilities such as observing meetings, touring the space, interdepartmental

conversations, and assisting with or trying out specific tasks. Be open to the experience and participate as fully as appropriate in each activity offered.

**Be Helpful & Learn New Things:** You may be asked to help with certain tasks, especially if you've been shadowing for a few days. This may create an opportunity to learn relevant skills, so be open to that.

**Be a Good Note-Taker:** Be prepared to take notes. Observe and take notes about how this person manages their time, organizes their work, interacts with others, and gets work done. You will likely want to take notes in a paper-based way, such as a notebook, to avoid being on your phone or other device.

**Ask & Answer Questions:** Ask questions and be prepared to answer questions. Asking questions for clarification or out of curiosity is a good practice while you're job shadowing. You may also be asked questions by the person you're shadowing or others, so be prepared to respond respectfully.

**Is This Job a Good Fit For You?** Use this experience to figure out if you'd enjoy doing this job or working for this company. You may be able to schedule a job shadowing experience prior to an internship or other placement.



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [What is Job Shadowing?](#) Complete Guide for Students, Tallo
- [The Job Shadow Playbook](#), Buck the Quo
  - [Job Shadow Email Templates](#)
- Job Shadowing Video Series, HashtagCareerGoals
  - [What is Job Shadowing?](#) | How it Can help You Choose a Career Path
  - [5 Benefits of Job Shadowing](#)
  - [Job Shadowing Questions](#)
- [A Day in the Life: Job Shadowing Guide](#), Hamilton College
  - Includes general information, as well as templates for email communication, sample questions, and more. (Specifics related to their unique program can be ignored).
- [Complete Guide: Job Shadowing for High School Students](#), PrepScholar

