

# Shadowing and Informational Interviews

Shadowing and informational interviews are enjoyable ways to discover a career path, to research a job or industry, and to prepare for an employment interview. Why wouldn't you want to do them?

## **What is shadowing and how does it differ from an internship?**

- Shadowing gives you the opportunity to learn more about a profession after you have researched it.
- Shadowing is a short-term experience: an afternoon, a few days, maybe a few weeks.
- An internship is a structured "work" experience during which you are doing a job and learning by doing.
- Shadowing is more focused on observing and asking questions about the job, rather than actually doing the job.
- You will typically complete an internship your junior or senior year, after you have acquired work and course experience.
- You can shadow a professional in your field of interest anytime, but it can be especially beneficial for first-year students and sophomores who are discovering career paths.

## **What is informational interviewing and how does it differ from an employment interview?**

- An informational interview is a meeting to learn more about a profession by "interviewing" the professional.
- The interview can be at the office, over coffee, or over a meal. It is professional, yet informal.
- In an informational interview, you will be asking most of the questions. In an employment interview, someone else will be asking you most of the questions.

- An informational interview will help you explore a career. It may lead to a shadowing opportunity or internship, and it provides you a networking contact, which is essential for the job search.

**Sample questions you may consider asking while shadowing or conducting informational interviews:**

1. What lead you to pursue this career path? What others did you consider?
2. What do you enjoy most about your job? Least?
3. What specialized skills are essential for success in this job?
4. What does a "Tuesday" look like in your work? Can you talk me through a typical day?
5. What technological, intellectual, or other developments have changed your work?
6. What is this job outlook for this career? How does one advance?
7. What professional development/continuing education opportunities exist for this career?
8. What advice do you have for someone who wants to pursue this line of work?
9. I have brought my resume for you to review. Which experiences stand out as ones that will be helpful to pursue this career?
10. What else would an employer look for? What other experiences should I pursue?

These are only a sample of the types of questions you can ask. Feel free to come up with others.

**How to set up a shadowing experience or informational interview**

1. Write a strong résumé. That demonstrates your commitment to professionalism.
2. Research the career(s) you are interested in pursuing; take notes to develop a list of questions.
3. Visit the professional association(s) related to the career.
4. Identify local companies or organizations that employ these professionals to determine who you might contact.
5. Work with Career Development to identify alumni and community contacts who you can potentially meet.
6. Make contact. Write a professional email to the contact explaining what you are seeking. Make it clear that you are exploring the profession and would appreciate any time they are willing to give. Work with Career Development if you need assistance with your email or would like a draft reviewed. Attach your résumé to the email.
7. Dress professionally for the meeting; you are representing yourself and your university.
8. Write a thank you note immediately following the meeting; email is considered professionally appropriate.