

Tufts Career Center FAQ of the Week

I want to set up a career/job shadowing experience. Can you give me any tips?

It's often easiest to set up a shadowing opportunity with someone you know, e.g., a past supervisor, professor, family friend or other acquaintance in your network. Start brainstorming and jot down the names of people with jobs that seem interesting. Not sure who to list? Talk to family, friends, and professors, and see who they know. Be specific about what you're trying to accomplish, e.g., "I'm exploring career paths in XYZ area, and I'd like to learn more by shadowing someone with ABC type of job -- ideally for a week or two. Do you know anyone who might be able to help me?" If you receive a promising lead, you'll want to follow up with the individual in a timely fashion to discuss possibilities, i.e., timeframe for your shadowing experience, what you'll be expected to do, etc.

Along those lines, here are a few DOs and DON'Ts for shadowing opportunities:

DON'T take the term "shadow" literally—be active!

While yes, you may do a fair amount of observation, be proactive in asking how you can help beyond your expected duties. When you take initiative, your responsibilities may grow beyond simply watching.

DO ask questions (at appropriate times).

Employers are generally very willing to share their expertise with you, and you should take advantage of all the knowledge in the room. Demonstrate professionalism by saving your questions for the right time, e.g., a scheduled 1-on-1 meeting or a time when your supervisor isn't busy.

DON'T think of tasks as "busy work."

Proving that you have a good work ethic is important, and that often comes with doing tasks that may seem mundane. Think about how your contributions are important to the bigger picture. In addition, once you've mastered smaller tasks, you'll often be given larger ones.



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