

GUIDE TO JOB SHADOWING & INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

FIRST STEPS

- ✓ Reflect on your own career path and think about your interests, values, abilities, and skills.
- ✓ Search for jobs that you are considering or are interested in learning more about.
- ✓ Develop a system to keep track of the companies and people you have contacted and/or plan on reaching out to in the future.

OVERVIEW OF JOB SHADOWING & INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

With informational interviews and job shadowing, you'll gain great insight and make better career decisions by talking with professionals in the occupations and workplaces in which you are interested. Those conversations can also help you overcome barriers, make connections and market yourself in the job search process.

The process of gathering information through a one-on-one meeting with a professional is known as informational interviewing. Job shadowing involves observing the daily duties of a professional. While an informational interview usually takes place in a 30-60 minute time frame, a job shadow could last a few hours or up to a week.

GOOD SOURCES OF PEOPLE TO SHADOW AND INTERVIEW

- Individuals who are in fields that you are considering or are interested in learning more about first-hand
- Individuals who have experienced some of the challenges you believe that you face, or have followed a similar path
- Individuals who are knowledgeable about their organization or industry, or what that organization or industry seeks in its applicants

WAYS TO MAKE CONTACT WITH POTENTIAL PEOPLE

For many students, it is easiest to begin with the people you know, and to branch out from there.

- Sending an email, LinkedIn message, or call and explain your need for information and your desire to arrange a time to talk about or observe that individual's work
- A referral from someone you know or have spoken with previously (be sure to mention the mutual contact's name)
- Contacting an organization and asking to be put in touch with someone who does the particular kind of work in which you are interested

Here is some language of a sample email to get you started (make edits as needed):


Hello _____,

I am a student at the University of Missouri and I am currently exploring different majors that I may want to pursue. I am interested in what you do and I was wondering if you would have time for me to ask you some questions over the phone or in person to learn more about your position.

I look forward to your response!

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CONDUCTING AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW OR JOB SHADOW

Be sure to follow a professional process to get the most out of your time and make a good impression.

1. **Logistics:** Make sure you are clear that you are seeking information only (not a job) and be flexible in arranging a meeting time and location.
2. **Follow through:** In advance of your meeting you may send a copy of your résumé restating your appointment time and sharing your appreciation. Be sure to emphasize that the résumé enclosed is for their information only (again, you're not looking for a job).
3. **Do your homework:** Informational interviews, like real interviews, require advanced preparation. Do some reading in advance on the profession or organization so that you appear prepared, knowledgeable, and professional.
4. **Restate your purpose:** At the beginning of your interview, restate the information you are seeking. Ask prepared questions to get the conversation started, but ask questions that are open-ended for the best information. If job shadowing, ask for time to shadow as well as time to meet one-on-one to discuss your observations.
5. **Be a good listener:** Ask questions, but also listen to the information given in the answers.
6. **Be respectful of your contact's time:** Thank the person for their time and willingness to meet. Don't extend your meeting past the agreed upon time, unless invited to do so.
7. **Follow through again:** At the end, ask the person if they know of others who might be able to provide you with further information. *Always* write a thank you note within 24 hours of your meeting.

SAMPLE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The real value of an informational interview or job shadow lies in the personal insight that can be gained from the experience. Remember that this is one view of many. Try conducting multiple interviews or shadows in order to gain a variety of perspectives. Here are some sample questions to get started:

Background of Interviewee

What has been your career path into this profession?
When did you know this was the career you wanted to pursue?

Nature of Work

What is a typical day in the life like for you?
What do you like most about your career? What areas would you change if you could?

Job Outlook

What types of trends and changes are occurring in your field?
What kinds of opportunity exist for professional development and/or promotion in this field?

Training, Experience, Other Qualifications

What major(s) and/or degrees lead to jobs in this field?
What other certifications, licenses, continuing education, or professional development experiences are required or encouraged?
What would you do the same or differently, knowing what you know now?
What advice do have for a student like me to gain knowledge and skills toward this field?
What campus activities or college experiences would be helpful for entering this field?

NEXT STEPS

- ✓ Follow up your conversation with the employer with a thoughtful thank you note and remember to stay in touch to continue cultivating the relationship.
- ✓ Visit <https://career.missouri.edu> and click on the "Resources" Tab to visit [Mizzou Career Tools](#), where you can search our site for career guides, videos, links, infographics, and more!