

Job Shadowing

Obj. 15.7: Prepare for and participate effectively in a job shadowing experience.



Picture Your Ideal Job...

Imagine your dream job. What does the job look like on a typical day. In the box below write a descriptive account of a day on the job.



What is Job Shadowing?

Job Shadowing is a common tool that involves observing and/or interacting in some fashion with a professional in the career of interest. Sometimes the person shadowing and the professional can carry on conversation throughout the shadowing experience. Other times, it must occur after the fact, due to the nature of the work or the particular circumstances that arrive at the time. For example, a student observing a surgeon would need to save all, or most, of his/her questions for post-surgical time. However, an epidemiologist analyzing a set of data on a computer may be able to talk through things with the person shadowing immediately, in real-time. Job shadowing can also be used between two employees for on-the-job learning, career development, and/or leadership development.

Have you ever job shadowed? If so, what was the experience like? What are some positive and negatives that came out of it? Did you prepare in advance for the shadowing experience?

DISCUSS

Why Shadow?

With a partner, discuss benefits, advantages, or positive outcomes that can arise from job shadowing a professional in a career you are interested in.



Preparation = Success

Before setting off to shadow or meet with a health professional it is very important to know what you are hoping to gain from the experience and preparing yourself to maximize the opportunity. A few ways you can prepare include: researching the career, writing a list of questions, identifying and managing your expectations, and ensuring you are ready to display professionalism in every way. Let's walk through these ways to prepare one by one!

1. Research the Career

Complete the KWL chart below to identify what you already know about the career, what you want to know, and what you have learned after conducting preliminary research. Before you fill in Column 3, be sure to find at least two credible sites that contain useful background information about the career.

| Know | Want to Know | Learned |
|------|--------------|---------|
| | | |

2. Prepare Questions

Think about what you want to learn. What questions from Column 2 of your KWL are still unanswered. What else do you want to know?

| Questions |
|-----------|
| |

3. Identify & Manage Expectations

Re-read your response to the Do Now question about a day on your ideal job. Do you think your account is realistic or did you glamorize it? Do you feel you have a strong sense of what a day is like on the job, or were you guessing about most things?

Reflecting upon your expectations is a useful way to ensure you aren't setting the bar too high or low. Consider the shadowing experience to be just one new piece of information, not necessarily the make-or-break moment that tells you if the job is right for you or not (although in some cases, it can turn out to be!) It is important to remember that what you will see (if you are able to shadow) is only one or a few hours, or one day, within a much larger scope of the career. You may see things that are exciting and interesting, or you might see something that seems dull and boring. Most jobs have a spectrum of tasks and employees typically enjoy some more than others. In many jobs it is difficult to predict exactly what will be happening at certain times in advance, so the professional you are working with may or may not be able to let you know ahead of time what to expect.

4. Prepare to Display Professionalism

Before the date of your shadow session or meeting arrives, be sure to do the following:

1. Confirm details with the professional by phone or email a few days before.
2. Prepare professional attire to wear. If you are unsure about what to wear, ask for a second opinion from an adult you trust.
3. Arrange your transportation and map your route. Be sure you leave plenty of time so that you arrive promptly, approximately 10-15 minutes prior to your meeting time. Bring reading material to use while you wait.
4. Prepare questions on paper and be sure to pack a writing utensil. Bring water and a snack or lunch if you will be spending a longer portion of the day with the professional.

Afterward, be sure to:

1. Write out a reflection of the experience, considering what you learned and observed and how it influences your overall impression of the career.
2. Write a thank you note to the professional you observed and send it within one week of the date you met. Be sure to give specific examples of what you found most valuable.
3. If you are interested in learning more about the career, through meetings or shadowing, ask them if they would be willing to schedule another date, or refer you to one of their colleagues.



Arrange a Job Shadow or Meeting

Now it is time to set up your own job shadow or meeting with a professional. Arrange a visit with a professional. You might find someone by asking family, friends, teachers, or other adults for recommendations. You might also find someone in your community by searching online. If you get stuck, be sure to ask your instructor for help. Use all the tools in this lesson to prepare yourself for a great experience! After you complete it, write a one page reflection about the experience.