

Job Shadowing Guide

What is Job Shadowing?

Job shadowing is a work experience option in which you partner with a professional to “shadow” them at their workplace. Job shadowing experience is a temporary un-paid exposure to the workplace in an occupational area of your interest. You will observe the employee to understand the nuances of a job, work environment, duties, interactions with customers and colleagues, occupational skills in practice, the value of professional training and potential career options. Job shadowing helps you increase your career awareness and reinforces the link between classroom learning and work requirements.

While the **purpose of job shadowing** is to gather career related information, it also allows you to build interviewing skills, become aware of the trends in the field and build your network contacts. Multiple job shadowing experiences will allow you to explore a variety of occupations especially if you are looking to declaring a major, job searching or changing careers. You decide what is your purpose and what you want to accomplish.

Why is Job Shadowing Important?

A job shadowing experience may:

- Present facts about an occupation that can help you make a major and career decision.
- Provide you with a better and realistic perspective of the job requirements.
- Expose you to the actual work environment and climate of the workplace.
- Assist in developing communication skills as you talk with professionals.
- Give you an edge with inside information that would help with future interviews.
- Establish valuable network contacts that could lead to internship and job opportunities.

Who to approach:

- **Contact someone you already know.** Check within your circle of family/friends if they know anyone who could help.
- **Send a cold outreach email/message.** Less common, but successful if done correctly. Reaching out via [LinkedIn](#) can be remarkably effective.
- **Contact the Career Services Center.** The Fresno Pacific University Network is a group of FPU alumni who have agreed to be available to FPU students like you who are looking for job shadowing experiences.

Before the Job Shadowing Experience

Writing/communicating your request:

- **Be clear, concise,** and let them know you are **asking for their help**. Make it easy for them to say yes: “I would love to talk to you about the opportunity to shadow you at your workplace. I am

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exploring fields of study and career options and your role as _____ is a career I would like to learn more about.”

- **Provide a hook.** Demonstrate why you want to meet. If you admire their career path and would like to know more about their work duties, let them know. “I admire your role and would like to observe how you put into practice your knowledge and skills.”
- **Be extremely considerate** about their time and the non-confidential tasks/duties you can shadow them in. Provide information about the duties/tasks you would like to observe and the length of time. Remember your purpose but also be open to other learning opportunities.
- **Do not make it seem like you are looking for a job.** Make it clear you just want to gain comprehensive knowledge about their job and career field.

Preparing for the job shadowing experience:

- **Coordinate a schedule.** Confirm the schedule for the job shadowing. Depending on the profession, some professions are year-round while others are seasonal or only during the academic year, like teaching. Coordinate with the professional for the best time to shadow them.
- **Prepare questions.** Enhance your job shadowing learning experience with questions. Be prepared to ask questions related to their education, skills, and application.
- **Prepare your [elevator pitch](#).** Be prepared to talk about yourself and your career goals.
- **Prepare your professional attire.** You are visiting a workplace, so dress professionally. Research the company’s dress code, when in doubt ask for guidance.

During the Job Shadowing Experience

- **Break the ice.** In general people enjoy talking about themselves, so initiate the job shadowing with a conversation. Here are some sample questions:
 - How did you get your start in this field?
 - What is it like working at your company?
 - What projects are you currently working on?
 - What is your opinion on [insert a recent development in the industry]?
- **Keep your commitment** with the schedule and time frame coordinated to complete the job shadowing. Job shadowing is a short-term experience, and a one-day shadowing may not provide you enough time to learn about the intricacies of the job.
- **Make a positive impression.** Be prepared to talk about yourself and your long-term career goals (share your elevator pitch). If asked to complete small tasks, ask for guidance, and put your skills into practice to showcase your competencies.
- **Take notes.** Be prepared to take notes on your observations. At the end of the day reflect on what you have learned. Continue preparing questions throughout your job shadowing experience.

After the Job Shadowing Experience

- **Follow-up and thank you note.** Stay connected with the professionals you are shadowing. You have spent valuable time with them, and the ongoing connection can be beneficial to your future internship or job search. Send a **thank you note** (mail or email) to thank them for taking time to show you their work environment and how they fulfill the duties of their job.

Follow-Up Email Example

Avoid standard statements of "I learned a lot from your job." Instead, start by having an attitude of gratitude: "Thank you for taking the time to meet with me and make time to shadow you in your workplace," then recall specific bits of the job and conversation:

Hi [insert name],

Thank you so much for allowing me to shadow you at your workplace and showing me your day-to-day duties. I enjoyed talking with you about your experience in [career field] and certainly learned about the intricacies of your role through observation and the information you shared. I appreciate all the insights you provided and the importance of following through with job tasks.

Your comments were informative, helpful, and served to enlighten my interest in the career of [degree program/field of interest]. Your insights on [discussion topic during interaction one and discussion topic during interaction 2] were particularly intriguing.

Your career advice and experience has been extremely helpful throughout these 4 weeks. Your expertise in completing the job tasks has helped me in the decision-making process of selecting a field of study. I would love to continue speaking with you as I pursue a career in [career field].

*Best regards,
[Your Name]*

Conclusion

Job shadowing experiences are one way to learn about occupations when you are in the major or career exploration phase and are a wonderful way to push beyond the job search. When you follow these steps for planning, conducting, and follow up, you can gain valuable insight to plot a career path that is suitable for your skills, experience, and interests.

Need help setting up your LinkedIn Profile? Be sure to contact an FPU Career Counselor at career.services@fresno.edu or check out our [LinkedIn resource](#).