

Informational Interviewing & Job Shadowing

Informational interviewing and job shadowing are valuable career development experiences. Talking with professionals in an occupation or workplace of interest can provide a realistic view of the field and help you make informed career decisions, develop professional connections, and better market yourself for an internship or job search. Learn more about each experience below.

Informational Interviewing	Job Shadowing
<i>An informational interview involves talking with a professional working in a field of interest to gain first-hand information about the field. It can take place in-person, by phone, or via email and usually lasts less than an hour.</i>	<i>A job shadow experience involves spending time in the workplace of a professional in a field of interest to learn about an occupation and to experience the culture and nature of the work environment. A job shadow may last a few hours to a few days.</i>
<i>Can be completed anytime of year (fall, winter break, spring or summer) from freshman year through senior year.</i>	<i>Can be completed anytime of year (fall, winter break, spring or summer) from freshman year through senior year.</i>
<i>Arrangements are made by the student directly with the employer/professional.</i>	<i>Arrangements are made by the student directly with the employer/professional.</i>
<i>Will require professional attire if meeting in person.</i>	<i>Requires professional attire specific to the industry.</i>
<i>Informational interviews usually are not listed on a resume and there is no notation on your official transcript. No academic credit is awarded.</i>	<i>Job shadow experiences may be listed on your resume, but there is no notation on your official transcript. No academic credit is awarded.</i>

Get Started Now

1. Decide who to interview/shadow

When considering who to interview or where to shadow, consult those who are closest to you first.

- CDC staff
- Professors
- Fellow students/classmates
- Parents
- Parents of your friends
- Friends of your parents
- Relatives (Aunts/Uncles/Cousins)
- Neighbors

Once you are comfortable with the interviewing and shadowing process, expand your reach. Look for “experts” in your field of interest. Here are some additional resources.

- KU Career Network
- KU Office of Alumni Engagement
- Social Networking sites i.e LinkedIn
- Business or Professional Journals
- Online and Print Directories
- Print media (articles/feature stories)

2. Arrange the interview/shadow

Once you know who you would like to interview/shadow, contact the individual to set up an appointment. Explain who you are and the purpose of your contact. Be sure to let him/her know that that you are not seeking a job, only advice and information about their career field.

Sample Email Request

Informational Interview

Dear Ms./Mrs./Mr./Dr. and last name:

I am a sophomore at Kutztown University and I am interested in learning more about the field of _____. Specifically, I'm looking for some candid advice about how to get into this field, what the future prospects are, and what the pros and cons are, as you see it. Would you be willing to give me a few minutes of your time?

Thank you for considering my request. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Name
phone number

Job Shadow

Dear Ms./Mrs./Mr./Dr. and last name:

As a _____ major at Kutztown University, I am considering several career options. One of my areas of interest is _____.

I am interested in shadowing professionals in your field and wonder if you would be willing to let me spend a few hours observing you? I believe that by actually observing the tasks you perform on a regular basis and the skills you are using most frequently, I will get a better sense of the field of _____. Any amount of time you would be able to provide would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you for considering my request. I can be reached at (phone number). I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Name

3. Prepare for the interview/shadow

RESEARCH the job/career and the employer/organization of the professional whom you will be speaking with. Having this background information will allow you to ask intelligent, informed questions.

What is the job title of the professional? _____

Using the O*Net (www.onetonline.org) or the Occupational Outlook Handbook (www.bls.gov/oco) enter the job title in the keyword search and research the following aspects of the career:

- What are the primary job responsibilities?
- What skills or abilities are required?
- What type of training or education is required?
- What are the expected wages and employment trends?

What is the name of the employer/organization of the professional? _____

Using the company/organization website, research the following:

- Is it a for-profit or non-profit organization?
- What is the mission?
- What product or services are produced/offered?
- When was it established?
- How many employees does the organization have?
- What is the organizational structure? How does your host fit into the structure?
- What new products, services, or projects are being developed?

Additional Sources of Company Information

Business Journals

- Central PA Business Journal
(www.centralpennbusiness.com)
- Lehigh Valley Business Journal
(www.lvb.com)

Online Newspapers

- Rohrbach Library
(www.kutztown.edu/library)
⇒ Articles and Database Portal

LinkedIn Profiles

- Research host and organization
(www.linkedin.com)
⇒ Join LinkedIn and create a professional profile

PREPARE questions for the interview/shadow. You are in a position to guide the conversation through the type of questions you ask. Walking in and asking, "Tell me about your work" may not result in getting the information you need. Your interest, preparation, and planning will be remembered by the professional.

Sample Questions

- How did you first become interested in this field?
- Please describe a typical workday in this industry.
- How did you prepare for the work that you do?
- What skills and qualities are needed to be successful?
- What is most rewarding about your work?
- What are your biggest frustrations?
- What advice would you give a student interested in pursuing this field?
- What types of internship and employment opportunities are available?
- Is there anything I can do to make myself more qualified for this type of career?

PLAN your attire and trip if you are interviewing in-person or job shadowing.

What is the dress code of the organization? What you wear determines how others see you as well as how you see yourself. If you are not able to obtain information on dress code, err on the conservative side by dressing a step above business casual.

Map out your travel route and plan to arrive on time (about 10 minutes early). Make sure you know where to park and how to enter the building.

PRACTICE good workplace etiquette.

- Call one day before your interview/job shadow to confirm the arrangements (date, time, location, attire).
- Think about how you will introduce yourself.

"Hi, (name)! Nice to meet you. My name is _____. I am a _____ major and exploring careers in the field of _____. I am looking for advice today on _____."

- Be ready and prepared to learn. Have a notebook and pen handy.
- Be prepared to discuss how you became interested in the field.
- Listen more than you talk. Observe the culture of the work and people.
- Be respectful of the employer's time, feelings, and thoughts.
- For in-person interviews and job shadow experiences:
 - ⇒ Shake hands and introduce yourself to those everyone meet.
 - ⇒ Ask for business cards for each employee with whom you come into contact. You will need this information later for thank you notes.

This is your chance to learn what skills and behaviors you'll use throughout your career. Even if you decide this is not the career for you, take what you can from it: knowledge, exposure, and contacts.

4. Follow-up after the interview/shadow

- Immediately following the interview/job shadow, jot down some notes to help your remember key points. These reflections may help you make informed decisions about your future.
- ALWAYS send a thank you note to every person who met with you! If you are not sure of an employee's name or title, call the office to find out.

Sample Thank You Note

Informational Interview

Month, Day, Year

Dear Ms./Mrs./Mr./Dr. and last name:

It was a pleasure speaking with you on _____. Thank you taking time from your busy schedule to answer my questions. Your insight was very helpful and has given me a more realistic view of this career field.

I appreciate the interest you have shown in helping me with my career plans!

Sincerely,

Signature

Name

Email and phone

Job Shadow

Month, Day, Year

Dear Ms./Mrs./Mr./ Dr. and last name:

Thank you for allowing me to come into your workplace observe your daily routines and learn about your position and employer.

This opportunity has given me a more realistic view of this career field and has provided valuable insight into my future career plans.

Thank you again for this opportunity!

Sincerely,

Signature

Name

Email and phone