Getting Ready For Your Job Shadow Day

Remember: Your host is here to help
Try not to be nervous – your host signed up for this program because they wanted to connect with UVM students, and they are there to answer your questions. Be yourself, and act naturally. Students from past years provided this advice after their job shadowing experiences:

• “Don’t be afraid. If you go in with confidence, you will leave with so much knowledge. The hosts want to help, just let them show you the way.”
• “Ask a lot of questions. That’s what they’re there for!”
• “Don’t be nervous! They’re really friendly! If they weren’t they wouldn’t be participating in this program!”
• “From my experience, the only thing I wasn’t expecting was how friendly and helpful everyone at KGA was.”

Communicating with your host
Remember to be courteous and respectful at all times. Address your shadowing host as "Mr./Ms./Dr. LastName" unless they clearly give you permission to call them by their first name.

Communicate professionally and respond promptly to any calls or emails. It is reasonable for your host to expect a response within 24 hours, even if it is letting them know that you have received the message and will respond in full at a later time.

Once you receive the email matching you to your host, it’s your responsibility to reach out to introduce yourself. This is an example of what you might write in an email:

Dear Ms. Smith,
My name is Amanda Chase, and I am your match for the UVM Job Shadowing program. Thank you for offering your time and allowing me to spend a day with you at your position.
I am a sophomore majoring in political science, and am very interested in learning more about state and local government. I am excited to spend a day with you at your position in the governor’s office, and would like to have the chance to introduce myself over the phone. Is there a certain time that would work to schedule a call?
I would be available to shadow between December 21st - 23rd, or January 4th - 15th. Could you please let me know what day would be most convenient for me to join you at your office?
Thank you,
Amanda Chase

You might also include some of your reasons for choosing this site, and what you hope to learn.

Once you have a time set up to speak to your host on the phone, you can start discussing the details of the day.
You should ask your host about:

- The date the shadowing day will happen, and when the workday begins and ends
- Dress code: What do they recommend?
- How you get there (public transit? Driving?) and where you should park and check in
- What you should bring (ID? Lunch?)
- Who should you expect to meet?
- Is there anything that you can read, listen to, or watch to prepare yourself for the day?

It’s also good to have some ideas ready about what you want to learn or see. For example, you could request to meet with other staff members to get different perspectives, or ask for a tour.

**Prepare Yourself**

Even though you aren’t expected to have prior knowledge about the host’s company and industry, you should prepare yourself as best as you can. Past shadowers gave the following advice:

- “Prepare a list of goals and questions before hand – extremely helpful for you and your job shadowing host.”
- “Be prepared to engage in meaningful intellectual conversations about the host’s work itself. Do your background research on the industry.”
- “Do your research before you shadow! Think of this day as an extended interview- you want to make sure you impress while learning everything a website cannot convey.”
- “Do research on your host. I looked up [my host]’s LinkedIn and saw that she had a Twitter account and saw that she loves music so I talked about that with her a lot! It helped to establish a connection. Do research on the site at which your shadowing but also the host, if possible.”

**Sample Questions to Ask**

These are some sample questions that you could ask on the phone or during your shadowing day:

- What skills, talents, and characteristics are needed for working in this field?
- How do your education and experience relate to what you are doing now?
- What kind of experience will help me enter this field? Do you recommend volunteer work, internships, or part-time jobs?
- Could you recommend some courses that I should be taking now in preparation for a career in this field?
- Are there requirements to enter this field, like a graduate degree, licensure/certification, or other kinds of training?
- What professional journals, books, newspapers or publications do people in your field generally read?
- What are the most rewarding and challenging parts of your job?
- Are there other constituents with whom you frequently interact (like clients, vendors, consultants, etc)?
- Has your work experience differed very much from what you imagined it would be?
- What are the opportunities for advancement? What might a typical career path be in this field?
- What other kinds of careers are closely related to this line of work?
- How did you get into this field and this position? What strategies would you use if you were in a job search for a position in this field?