



# SHADOWING TIPS

## for Prehealth students

Shadowing provides a glimpse into the day-to-day responsibilities of a health professional. It can help you start to learn about specialties of interest, provide insight into doctor-patient communication, and keep you motivated toward your profession.

### Find Someone to Shadow

- Your pediatrician/physicians and family members' physicians are a great place to start since they know you.
- Family and friend connections (congregation members, coaches, high school teachers, parents of kids you babysit, anyone who has seen you in a professional role who could confidently refer you to health professionals they know).
- Peers who have had positive shadowing experiences—reach out to individuals they have shadowed
- HPA's Shadowing List for local doctors and dentists
- Doctor is In guests and other Princeton alums
- Princeternships during winter vacation and intersession (apply in January)
- Summer opportunities often include shadowing. When negotiating internship or research opportunities, inquire about the possibility of shadowing.

### Reach Out Early

It can take time to find someone who agrees to be shadowed and to fit you into their schedule. Start reaching out at least a month in advance.

### Introduce Yourself Professionally

- Calling the office or emailing is the most common way to establish connections.
- Start with a brief introduction, then describe how you found them and let them know what you hope to learn from them. Be specific in why their work interests you.
- Attach a resume if you've connected by email (see sample). If you call, have your calendar ready in case they are able to schedule you immediately.

*Sample email request to shadow:*

*Dear Dr. X,*

*I am a premed junior and Neuroscience concentrator at Princeton University. I received your contact information from Y. I am interested in combining research and practice as a physician and hope to see how others have done the same. I saw on your website that your research interests in ABC align with my experience [add more details]. I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to shadow you for a day or two. I have a lot of flexibility between May 4 and June 1, during Reading Period and finals. I'm happy to send you my availability in the coming weeks if you're available. I have attached my resume so that you can learn more about me. Thank you for your consideration.*

*Best,  
Chris Tiger '21  
Princeton University*

### Troubleshoot Obstacles

- If someone cannot accommodate you for shadowing:
  - See if they are willing to talk with you about their career path—you'll still gain helpful insight. See HPA's Networking Tips: Informational Interviewing" handout for details.
  - Ask if they have colleagues you might contact.
- If someone seems interested but is not available in your desired timeframe, ask when they may have time, make a note of it, and follow up.

### Prepare for your Experience

- Be sure you know where to go, what to wear, and what other expectations they may have of you.
- Brainstorm questions you can ask.
- Review AAMC Guidelines for Clinical Shadowing Experiences: [www.aamc.org/download/356316/data/shadowingguidelines2013.pdf](http://www.aamc.org/download/356316/data/shadowingguidelines2013.pdf)
- Explore Princeternship Blogs to learn about past students' shadowing experiences: [hiretigersblog.princeton.edu/tag/princeternship/](http://hiretigersblog.princeton.edu/tag/princeternship/)
- Map your route to the site so you can arrive on time.

## Maximize your Experience

- Research your contact so that you can make your questions more specific/tailored.
- Dress business casual and arrive on time.
- Lead with a handshake, make eye contact, and introduce yourself, stating your name clearly.
- Ask if there is protocol that you should follow if you'll be seeing them meet with patients. Generally, expect to stand quietly and attentively in the background.
- Pay close attention, jot notes in quiet times if you're allowed to do so.
- Thank them for their time and ask if they're willing to follow up in the future.

## Follow Up

- Jot down what you've learned right after shadowing.
- Send a thank you email or card with details about what you gained / learned from the meeting.
- Stay in touch and let them know how their advice helped you (if they're open to staying in touch).

## Pay it Forward

- Help your peers prepare for similar shadowing opportunities.
- Be open to networking requests now and as you move forward in your career. Be a mentor and a mentee at every stage of your life.

## Questions to Ask

- What initially drew you to this profession?
- What is your educational background?
- What is a typical week like for you?
- How did you know this was the right health profession for you compared to others?
- How do you manage your time and stress?
- What do you wish someone told you before you started health professions school?
- What do you find the most rewarding and this profession? What do you find the most challenging?
- What are some lifestyle considerations for this profession?
- What skills, abilities, and personal attributes are best-suited for this career?
- How did you choose your specialty?
- How do you see jobs like yours changing in the future?
- I'm worried about X—do you think this is realistic? Are there things I should thinking of in relation to it?
- How did you find mentors in your profession?
- If you could start over, would you still become a \_\_\_\_\_? Why / why not?
- Is there anyone else you recommend I speak with to learn more?

## More Resources

**Career Services Networking Tips:** [careerservices.princeton.edu/undergraduate-students/making-connections](https://careerservices.princeton.edu/undergraduate-students/making-connections)

**Princeton LinkedIn Community:** [www.linkedin.com/school/princeton-university/alumni/](https://www.linkedin.com/school/princeton-university/alumni/)

**Princeton Alumni Directory:** [alumni.princeton.edu/tigernet/onlinecommunity/](https://alumni.princeton.edu/tigernet/onlinecommunity/)

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