

Discovery: Career Research through Experiential Learning

A hands-on experience can help you to explore potential majors, and gain knowledge and insight into a career field. Experiential learning activities, such as informational interviews and job shadowing, can provide you with a wealth of information.

Job Shadow

Job shadowing allows you to spend a day with a professional observing the environment, the people, and the day-to-day activities of a job. This experience can last from a few hours to a few days.

Informational Interview

An Informational Interview is a 20-30 minute interview that you arrange with a person in the working world. This meeting can allow you to:

- gather first-hand information, advice and resources about career fields
- expand your network of professional contacts

Preparing for the interview

- Develop a list of questions to ask (see reverse side for samples).
- Dress professionally.

During the interview

- Arrive early with your list of questions.
- Listen carefully and take notes if needed. Be open to information, feedback, and coaching.
- Observe the work environment and organization's culture.
- Be respectful of the interviewer's time.
- Ask for a business card before you leave.

Finding Opportunities

- Search HIRE-UT for contacts through the Career Services Mentor Network, or the Employer tab.
 - Career Services Mentor Network- List of contacts who are open to providing informational interviews or job shadowing opportunities.
- Speak to employers at Information Sessions, Career Fairs, Focus on events, and open houses.
- Ask your family, friends, professors and advisors for ideas.
- Seek out a UT alum.
- Once a potential interviewee is found, send an email to introduce yourself, explain how you found his/her contact information, and ask if you can meet for an interview. Meeting in person is preferred, so be flexible to accommodate his/her schedule.
- Send a thank-you note after the experience.
- Maintain contact with the people who have assisted you.

Example Email

Dear Ms. Rodriguez,

My name is Sally Spartan. I am an undecided sophomore at The University of Tampa, researching a possible career in sociology. I found your name using HIRE-UT. I would like to meet with you briefly to (discuss your field, to conduct a job shadow, etc.), if your schedule permits. If you are unable to meet, perhaps you could suggest a co-worker I could contact.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Sally Spartan

Sample Informational Interview Questions

1. In the position you now hold, what do you do on a typical day?
2. What are the most interesting aspects of your job?
3. What were your previous jobs that led to your current position (i.e., career path)?
4. Are there positions in this field that are similar to your present position?
5. What are the required qualifications and training for an entry-level position in this field?
6. Are there specific courses a student should take to be qualified to work in this field?
7. What are the entry-level jobs (job titles) in this field?
8. What is the salary range for entry-level positions in this field?
9. What special advice would you give to someone entering this field?
10. If you could do it all over again, would you choose the same path for yourself? Why? What would you change?
11. Do you see this field as a growing one?
12. What is the best way to obtain a position that will start me on a career in this field?
13. Do you have any information on job specifications and descriptions that I may have?
14. What related occupational fields do you suggest I explore?
15. How could I improve my resume for a career in this field?
16. Is there anyone else you would suggest I talk to, both in your organization and others? May I use your name when contacting him/her?