

# Job Shadowing

©

## A guide for students, educators, employers, and parents.



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An Initiative of  **THREE RIVERS**  
**WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD**  
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## INTRODUCTION

Imagine you need an outfit for an important occasion. You wouldn't just dash into the mall and buy the first thing you see off the rack. More likely, you would visit several stores, carefully consider the selection, choose a few possibilities, and then head to the dressing room to try on each one until you found the perfect fit.

*Job Shadows or Work Site Tours* follow the same theory. These are opportunities for young people to have first-hand experience of the world of work. A *Job Shadow* is a half-day or full-day experience in which a young person “shadows” a working adult to learn about an industry, and see the day-to-day responsibilities of a specific job. A *Work Site Tour* is with a small group of students and provides an overview of the organization with a tour and presentations from a variety of staff. Like the search for the perfect outfit, these experiences provide young people the opportunity to “try on” jobs to find the perfect fit.

The roles and responsibilities of students, educators, employers, and parents are distinct – but they complement each other to provide a day that could impact a student for the rest of his or her life! This guide will help you know your role in these experiences *and* know what all of the other parties are doing to make the day a great success.

Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board is committed to helping improve and facilitate your job shadowing and worksite experiences. Please contact us at [e4info@twib.org](mailto:e4info@twib.org) for more information, or visit us at [www.trwib.org/practices/youth/e4/](http://www.trwib.org/practices/youth/e4/).



## STUDENTS

Job Shadows and Work Site Tours are like a one-day internship and your chance to peek into a world that could shape your future.



### ***Before you go. . .***

- Let your teachers know the careers that have already caught your interest . . . *but* be open to exploring new industries and a variety of jobs.
- Compile a list of questions you'd like to ask employees at the company.
- Prepare a resume. Include academics, extracurricular activities, and community service, to paint a full picture of your abilities and accomplishments.
- Choose attire that relays respect for your host and work environment.
- Practice greeting people and introducing yourself with confidence and maturity.

### ***On the Big Day. . .***

- Be *on time*, follow your host's itinerary, and be respectful and attentive throughout the visit. Ask thoughtful questions and take notes.
- As you tour the facility, pay close attention to jobs you didn't expect to find there, for instance, an accountant who balances the restaurant's books, or a graphic designer who creates a manufacturer's brochure.
- Consider how different departments in the company all work together to contribute to its overall success. Think about how *you* would fit into the team.
- Note any special skills being applied on the job, from computer skills to communications, writing business reports, and managing budgets. The more specialized skills you have, the more likely you are to earn a higher salary.
- Look for a hands-on learning opportunity to accomplish a task or contribute to the company's productivity.

### ***After. . .***

- Follow up your visit by writing a thank you note that conveys your appreciation for your hosts' time and effort.
- Your teacher may guide you in a reflective exercise to help you think about how your day of job shadowing affected your understanding of that career or industry, whether reality matched up to your expectations, *and* how the day of job shadowing influenced your understanding of your career and education options.



- Talk about the experience with family members and friends. Offer to lead a classroom discussion or present a demonstration to share what you learned.
- How did your experience help you identify your dream career? Speak with the adults in your life to set up a schedule of classes and new activities that will help you prepare for that career.

## EDUCATORS

Job Shadows and Work Site Tours show your students how to apply classroom lessons in a real-world context. You play a vital role in helping students prepare for a day in the working world. Lastly, your influence is critical in maintaining a positive relationship with the company that has opened its doors to your students – please be sure to follow through on the plan so that future youth will have the same opportunity for a very rich learning experience.

### *Before . . .*

- Work with your local Workforce Investment Board to contact area businesses and identify potential hosts. Be creative in finding industries that match your students' personal interests.
- Contact the host site to establish the date, name of participating students, duration of visit, and details about arrival time and lunch options.
- Provide time for students to do research about the company and industry they will visit. Help them formulate questions to ask about their host company's history, product, and services.
- Assist your students in putting together professional-looking resumes.
- Help students practice "office etiquette" and "soft skills," and define appropriate clothing for the business they are visiting.



### *On the Big Day . . .*

- Collect Parent/Guardian consent forms and Medical Authorization Forms required by your school when students travel off-site.
- Review workplace safety policies with the students, and verify details about arrival and departure time, transportation, and lunch options.
- Place a brief phone call to confirm that all students have arrived at the site.

### *After . . .*

- Guide students in an exercise to help them reflect on the experience, and determine ways it influenced their perceptions of that industry, and their own career paths.
- Remind students to write a thank you letter to their hosts.
- Allow the student to demonstrate skills he or she learned "on-the-job," or lead a classroom discussion that relates to a current lesson.
- Guide students in making a list of the skills they observed, and discuss classes they can take at school now to help them acquire those skills.
  - Invite students to continue to track the host company's successes and challenges, using such things as stock market reports, local press coverage, annual business reports, or industry newsletters.
  - Emphasize that the higher and broader a student's knowledge and skill level, the higher their potential earning power.



## EMPLOYERS

Have you ever wondered if your business is on the radar of the future workforce? Do you have the visibility you want with upcoming talent? While Job Shadows and Work Site Tours are an excellent educational experience for young people, they are *also* the chance to be seen by the workforce that will one day staff your firm.

### *Before . . .*

- Check with your company's human resources department to review its policy about Job Shadows and Work Site Tours. Or, help to draft one, addressing workplace standards, the extent of your commitment, and a confidentiality policy regarding minors.
- Contact your local Workforce Investment Board to offer your services as a job shadow host site. Establish a liaison at the Workforce Investment Board who will work with you to confirm details of the visit.
  - Plan a varied itinerary for the day that will place students in different environments, and introduce them to a variety of staff members.
  - Send a copy of your planned itinerary, as well as a brief history of your company and industry, to the school liaison, who can use it to prep students.



### *On the Big Day . . .*

- For Work Site Tours and Job Shadows the experience should include:
  - A tour of the premises, identifying various departments and jobs, to provide a thorough overview of your company and industry.
  - An opportunity for students to get a hands-on learning experience *and* feel the satisfaction of making a real contribution to your company's productivity.
  - Pointing out specific skills the employees use, ranging from computer skills to mathematics, communications, organizational skills, or scientific research.
  - Take time to review students' resumes and draw a connection between the classes and activities listed to careers they've seen at your company.
- For Work Site Tours you may include presentations by the leadership, tours, and small group interactive activities.
- For Job Shadows describe your own job in great detail and point out your skills and responsibilities. Offer information about your career path, education, training, and skills you cultivated to get your current position.

### *After . . .*

- Write a short piece about the event for your company's newsletter, or for your community newspaper. Reinforce the theme that the world of work is within reach for every student.
- Communicate with the school liaison to review the events of the day and note elements that had the most impact on students.
- Reinforce your commitment to the school and community by extending the offer to serve as a host site in the future.



## PARENTS

You can help your child explore career options by encouraging him or her to job shadow. Much like Educators, you have an important role in both preparing your child to benefit most deeply in the experience AND to make a positive and lasting impression on the host company.

### *Before. . .*

- It's not unusual for adults to return to the comfort and security of their home after a hard day at work and blow off steam by griping about difficult co-workers or office snafus. But is that the *only* time you talk about work in front of your family? You might be giving your child a negative impression of work in general, so be sure to balance the gripes with stories of office successes and the benefits of teamwork.
- Your children may know your job *title*, but do they know your job *responsibilities*? Talk about the skills you use and daily tasks you perform.
- Provide examples of the skills you use on the job and how they relate to the salary you earn – and use that as an example of how your family maintains its standard of living.
- Give examples of your own workplace's etiquette expectations, and remind them to address people respectfully ("*Nice to meet you, Mr. Smith.*").
- Help them review their wardrobe and make appropriate choices to wear to the host site.
- Paperwork and permission slips usually have to be signed any time your child leaves school for a supervised activity. Promptly fill out all forms and return them to the teacher.

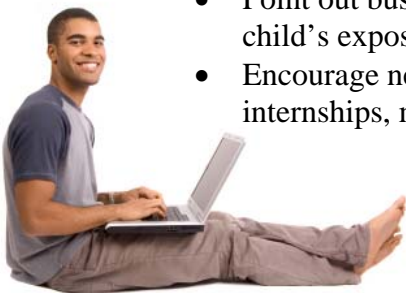


### *On the Big Day. . .*

- Provide a good breakfast; give your child's wardrobe one final review; and be sure he or she has copies of a resume and required permission slips.
- Offer to assist with student transportation to the host site, if possible.
- Wish the students good luck and send them off to the "real-life" world of work!

### *After. . .*

- Ask your child plenty of open-ended questions about the day. For instance, *What did you like the best? Did you see anything that surprised you? Did you see any new skills in use that you would like to learn?*
- Support new interests by encouraging your child to take a class at school, join a club or activity, or volunteer to perform a community service.
- Point out businesses you frequent and the workers on staff there, to continue your child's exposure to and understanding of the world of work.
- Encourage new opportunities for exposure to the world of work (such as internships, mentoring or volunteering) as your child refines his or her career goals.





**EDUCATORS AND EMPLOYERS  
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