

Exploring the Universe: A Successful Voyage

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Exploring outer space has been a challenge for astrologers and scientists throughout the centuries. The discovery of new moons and planets combined with charting space hazards, such as meteors and black holes, provide challenges for today's space travelers. Just as an astronaut trains and prepares for liftoff, so should you prepare by gathering information on your choice of career and where you might want to be employed. Do whatever it takes to find your ideal job.

Information interviewing and job shadowing are two ways of testing a career. In an information interview you talk with professionals who are actually doing the work you would like to do. In a job shadow you spend several hours following someone around on the job, watching a typical day. Before you approach anyone, make sure you have researched your field of interest. Remember your goal is to gather information and advice, not secure a job.

Prepare ahead of time your goal for the visit and the questions you plan to ask. Once you have done your research, talk with people you know— family, friends, co-workers, and community leaders—anyone you are comfortable with and who is accessible. Ask them to recommend people you might talk with about your field of interest and who might be willing to be shadowed or interviewed at work. Be sure to ask your friend if you may use their name when you make contacts.

Preparing for the Information Interview/Job Shadow:

- Research the field, the organization and the person you will be interviewing or observing.
- Prepare a list of questions that you know will be interesting to discuss. Even if you are observing, you will want to ask questions throughout the day.
- Practice your interview questions with a friend before calling a contact.

Setting Up the Interview or Shadow Experience

The Phone Call

Typically, you will call to set up the interview or job shadow.

A phone call has 3 goals:

- 1) Introduce yourself
- 2) Explain your goals
- 3) Ask for the interview

It may sound like this:

For example...

- Good morning. My name is _____ and I am calling because your name was given to me by _____ (if you have permission to use their name). I am interested in the field of _____.
- I have read about this field and discussed it with some other people, but I would like to know more.
- I wonder if you would be willing to meet and talk with me a few minutes about _____?

If you are seeking an Informational Interview, you might say:

- May I meet with you at your convenience for 20-30 minutes to discuss this field?

If you are seeking a Job Shadow, you might say:

- May I spend a few hours observing you on the job on a typical day? My goal is to get a picture of what this career is really about.

Before the visit

- 2-3 days ahead, call or e-mail the interviewer confirming your visit. Be specific about the place, date and time.
- If appropriate, sent the questions you plan to ask ahead of time.
- If appropriate, ask housekeeping issues such as where you should park, how you should pass through security to enter the building, etc.
- Plan what you will wear. You'll make a better impression if you dress professionally.
- Practice asking your interview questions ahead of time.

During the visit

- Express interest, enthusiasm and appreciative to those who give you their time.
- Record the comments.
- Ask for business cards and names so you can follow-up with a thank-you letter.
- Don't overstay; however, don't rush out if the interviewer shows an interest in you.
- Unless you've asked for feedback on your resume, don't give your resume to the interviewer. The impression will be you used this meeting as a ploy to distribute your resume. If the employer asks for your resume, e-mail or mail it that evening. Another strategy is to leave the resume in your car. The impression, then, is that you are prepared, but are not pushy.

After the visit

- Fill in and expand upon your notes immediately following the interview or job shadow while the thoughts are fresh in your mind.
- Write a thank you to both the person you interviewed or observed and the person who referred you. Express appreciation for the time they gave to you.
- Be sure to follow up on any commitments you have made with this employer.

Follow-Up

- Fill in and expand upon your notes immediately following the interview or job shadow while the thoughts are fresh in your mind.
- Send a thank you note to the person you interviewed or observed. Include your name, address and phone number. Express appreciation for the time they gave to you.

POSSIBLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

You should customize your questions

Personal Background:

- When you were in school, what did you think your career was going to be?
- What was your major area of study?
- How did you go about deciding your major and career?

Education and Training:

- What education, training, certifications, etc. are required for entry into this line of work?
- What kinds of prior experiences are necessary or helpful for entry into this kind of work?
- How did you prepare yourself for this profession?
- What other jobs have you had that have been helpful to you in this current job?

Present Job:

- How is your time spent in a typical work week?
- What skills and talents do you have that are most important in this type of work?
- What do you most enjoy about your work?
- What are some of the difficulties or frustrations you find in this job?
- What obligations are placed on you by your work place outside of the ordinary 40-hour work week?
Do you enjoy these obligations?
- How much flexibility do you have in terms of dress? The hours you work? The amount and use of your vacation time, etc.?

Advice:

- If you could begin your career again, what would you change or do differently?
- What educational preparation would be best for me if I choose to work in this occupation?
- What kinds of experiences and extra-curricular involvement would be helpful in order for me to reality test this occupation and develop important job skills?
- Is there anything else you would tell me about this career to help me in my decision?
- Who else do you suggest I talk with? (Try to get two or three references to talk to.) May I use your name when I call?