

Work shadowing

This page explains the various ways you can find shadowing opportunities and highlights the factors you should consider.

Shadowing (ie observing) a medic and/or another healthcare professional will allow you to directly observe the work of a doctor and to ask questions. If you already have an interest in a particular area of medicine, try to get some shadowing experience in that specialty.



Tips on finding an opportunity

- start looking for opportunities as soon as you can. It can take a while to find something and even then you may need occupational health and background checks through the Disclosure and Barring Service ^[1]. Bear in mind that this all takes time
- be prepared to approach lots of people before finding something suitable
- there are hundreds of organisations providing NHS healthcare. Don't just focus on NHS hospitals and GP surgeries. Consider contacting care homes, hospices, medical charities, private clinics and so on

- some hospitals have shadowing programmes for students. Start by searching for local organisations that provide NHS healthcare ^[2] services
- if you're still in education, find out whether your school or college has a list of possible contacts for work shadowing opportunities
- ask your own contacts (friends, relatives and neighbours) whether they know people who work in healthcare who may be able to put you in touch with someone willing to offer you a shadowing opportunity. You may know people yourself who work in health
- if you can't shadow a medic (or in addition to) consider shadowing a nurse or allied health professional, such as a physiotherapist. This will allow you to see how they interact with medics
- if you're struggling to find an opportunity, try getting advice from one of the Royal Colleges ^[3] or medical schools

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Things to remember

- work shadowing isn't intended to teach you about medicine itself but it will give you a taste of what a doctor does, how their work impacts on patients and other staff, the kinds of decisions and dilemmas they face and so on
- keep a log or diary of what you have experienced. Think about what you have learned, what you liked and disliked, anything that made a particular impression on you etc. This will be a useful reminder when it comes to applying for medical school
- it is essential to protect patient confidentiality – bear this in mind when writing up notes, or discussing your experiences
- ask the person you shadow questions. Why did they choose medicine? What do they consider the qualities of a good doctor? How do they manage their work-life balance?
- take the opportunity to talk to the people around you. You can find out a lot from other members of staff and patients. Remember to explain who you are and what you are doing
- offer to help out where you can. Simply taking a patient back to their ward or making a cup of tea can go a long way to show your commitment and will, in turn, encourage staff to help you

Source URL: <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/applying-medical-school/gaining-experience-medical-school/work-shadowing>

Links

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service/about>

[2] <http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/thenhs/about/Pages/authoritiesandtrusts.aspx>

[3] <http://www.aomrc.org.uk/>