



Tips on How to Find the Right Shadow Opportunity for You

One of the best ways to **demonstrate your commitment to medicine** in a physical way on your application to medical/other health related schools is by **shadowing a physician as a part of your clinical experience**.

When reviewing your application, the admissions committee will want to see that you've done your research and are sure that a career in medicine is really for you. They'll want to make sure that you know what you're signing up for and that you've logged enough clinical hours to confidently make the decision to become a physician.

Volunteering with patients, conducting clinical research or working as an office assistant or insurance coordinator in an office are all great ways to develop a broader understanding of the field of medicine. Though, they are **NOT** the same as shadowing.

Shadowing means specifically observing the physician-patient interaction.



By observing physicians at work, applicants can see how physicians deliver bad news or deal with difficult patients. Applicants will also develop a more realistic understanding of what medicine can and can't do. Although participating in medical mission work abroad may involve shadowing and is a wonderful form of service learning, it will not adequately provide an applicant with what the practice of medicine will be like in the U.S. Shadowing in the U.S. is an opportunity for prospective physicians to witness firsthand what they are getting into.

Most Medical Schools recommend applicants shadow for at least 40 hours in the U.S.

The 40 hours do not have to be with one physician or all in one week. In fact, shadowing multiple physicians over several months to years will give applicants an opportunity to explore not only different



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rounds) I am interested in the field of neurology and would like the chance to shadow you to see what being a neurologist is like firsthand. I have already completed the necessary HIPAA training. If you are willing, please let me know when and where is convenient for you.

Sincerely,

- **Enjoy the clinical experience**

You'll mostly be a silent observer in the office, learning from an attending physician and watching as they conduct their practice. When the time is right, politely ask good questions. Read up on the cases that you see during your time shadowing and bring questions from your readings. Express interest in the field even if you have none (it'll be good practice for rotations during your third and fourth year as a medical student). Offer to be helpful in any way you can. Many shadowing and clinical experiences turn into opportunities to gain a letter of recommendation.

- **Send a thank you note**

This may be the most important part. After the shadowing experience is over, send a personal, handwritten thank you note. Demonstrate that you're an appreciative adult and that you have manners worthy of a profession centered on taking care of others' health. You have no idea what impact this can leave on people.

Questions to ask yourself when shadowing

- Can I see myself doing what this doctor does on a daily basis?
- Can I see myself as a colleague of this doctor?
- What are the joys and frustrations of this career?
- What are the pros and cons of this particular type of medical practice?
- *Consider:* size of practice (solo or group), types of patients (age, sex, problems/diagnoses, insurance), size of community, salaried or self-employed, paper charts or electronic medical records, hours and call schedule, family life, community service and/or influence, ability to practice in rural area or overseas
- Am I drawn to diagnostic problem solving?
- Am I drawn to procedures?
- Is the doctor involved in clinical research?
- Is the doctor involved in "bench" (lab) research?
- How does a doctor learn more about his/her patients' personal lives? How is this knowledge factored into the patients' care?
- How does the doctor relate to his/her patients?
- *Consider:* formal or friendly approach, standing up or sitting down, rushed or not rushed, listening or interrupting, speaking with words that the patient can understand or speaking medical jargon or speaking in patient's primary language if it isn't English
- What factors seem to play into how the patients respond to the doctor?
- How do I feel when there is no "cure" or treatment options?
- How do I feel about chronic problems compared with acute problems?



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- How do I feel when I see patients who don't listen to advice or who don't take good care of their health?
- Did all patients with the same diagnosis seem the same? If not, how and why might they have been different from one another?
- Do I like situations in which a decision has to be made quickly?
- Do I like the pace of this type of practice?
- What did the doctor do when s/he didn't know the answer to something?



Shadowing Resources

- Scribe program for Emergency Departments: Search the internet for 'How to become a Scribe'
- [Scribe America](#)
- [Summer Health Professions Education Program \(SHPEP\)](#)
- [AAMC "How do I shadow a doctor"](#)
- [Shadowing Guidelines for Pre-Health Professions](#)
- [Tips for students who want to shadow doctors](#)
- [How to ask a doctor to shadow them](#)
- [CHOC Clinical/Non-Clinical Internships & Nursing Rotations](#)
- [ADEA How to Shadow a Dentist](#)
- [Shadowing a PT: What you need to know](#)
- [Shadowing Optometrist Info from Kaplan](#)
- [Shadowing Info for Pre-Vet](#)