

Want to Shadow?

Don't know when, where, or
how ? . . .

When to Shadow:

- You should start shadowing your freshman year and should try and shadow throughout your undergraduate career.
- Start taking advantage of your summers, winter breaks, spring breaks, etc. as these are typically the best times to shadow.
- Do not feel obligated to spend every holiday shadowing, but make sure to obtain some meaningful shadowing experiences before the end of your junior year, which is when most people actually start applying to medical school.
- Medical Schools expect you to have a significant amount of shadowing experience (~100 hours) and more importantly, you need to shadow in order to gain insight into the field and make sure a career in medicine is in fact the career for you.

Where to Shadow:

Many pre-medical students are interested in gaining shadowing experience. However, sometimes it is difficult to find a place to begin shadowing. Here are some suggestions:

- First, consider who you would want to shadow. A good place to start might be a family physician, or you could use a phonebook to search for local physicians that might interest you.
- Check the websites of medical centers and hospitals nearby for shadowing programs or contact info for directors of undergraduate shadowing.
- Ask your peers where they have shadowed. A doctor that was willing to have your peer shadow will probably be willing to have you shadow as well.
- Look into any shadowing opportunities that AED might offer.
- Remember, you want to gain as much experience as possible, so don't limit your search to formal internships or shadowing positions in just one field of medicine. Your goal is to gain a wide range of experience and to interact with as many patients and physicians as possible.

How to shadow:

When contacting a physician you do not already know about shadowing, we suggest:

- You ask about shadowing in person
- If you cannot meet in person, then send a formal, well written email
- Bring/attach a brief resume and cover letter.
 - Things to include in the resume
 1. Volunteer experience
 2. GPA
 - Things to include in the cover letter :
 1. Why you want to shadow
 2. Your Interests
 3. Your availability
- When taking the letter and resume in person to each physician, dress professionally.
- Some physicians are unable or unwilling to have students shadow. You may need to ask several physicians before finding someone willing to take you on. Don't give up.

When You Do Shadow:

- Dress professionally. You are representing yourself, The University of Alabama, and the medical profession when you are given the privilege of shadowing. Typically, slacks and a button down/nice top with closed toed shoes are appropriate for both males and females.
- Read a little bit the night before about the physician's area of medicine through scholarly articles or medical websites. (i.e. If you are shadowing a cardiologist, you should probably review the anatomy of the heart.)
- Do not be afraid to ask questions. Physicians would prefer you ask questions and not just awkwardly stand in the corner.
- Take a journal with you to take notes. You can't bring the journal in with patients, but you can jot things down about your experiences before or after.
- Pay close attention to the interaction between the patient and the physician as well as the physician and his co-workers.
- After you shadow, send a thank you note to the physician.