

PRE-MED SHADOWING

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Why Is Shadowing Important?

Learn about the importance of shadowing as we lay out the benefits and expectations of a shadow so that you are fully prepared for the entire experience.



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Insights From Medical Students

Learn insights from medical students as they share their experiences and what they wish they had known prior to shadowing.



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How To Gain The Shadowing Experience

Many students need help with how to initiate the process of gaining a shadowing opportunity. Learn the ways you can reach out to a physician.



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Reflect On The Experience

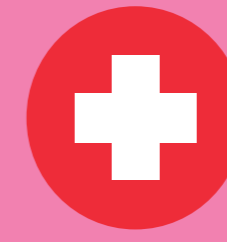
Reflecting after the shadowing experience can be very valuable. After your experience, answer the provided questions to contemplate your time with the doctor.



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What Do Students Wish They Knew?

Learn what students wish they knew before their shadowing experience with a physician. Recognize the value of learning from your peers.



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What Do You Do During The Shadowing Experience?

The shadowing experience consists of spending time with the physician and interacting with the healthcare staff and patients. Learn about what to do in each situation.



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Recommendation Letter

Learn about the value of gaining a recommendation letter and when it may or may not be appropriate to ask the physician you shadowed for a letter.



Pre-Med Shadowing is a guideline for students embarking on their next shadowing experience. Students may encounter shadowing with a physician with little preparation. Consider this handbook your companion for making a positive impression on the next physician you shadow because a prepared student allows for a more beneficial experience. Join us in the journey of learning to make your next shadowing experience great!

For Your Career

Shadowing means to increase interest and excitement in the student. Medicine is diverse, and shadowing allows students to experience different medical fields and additional healthcare professions. It introduces you to nursing, physician assistant, and nurse practitioner positions. It will enable you to see physicians' lifestyles and how they interact with patients in their day-to-day lives. Pursuing a career in medicine requires time, dedication, and financial commitment. Shadowing can be a valuable experience for your job, providing a deeper understanding of your pursuit. Use the shadowing experience to discern whether your reservations lie with the particular physician and their specialty or if they reflect a broader disinterest in the healthcare field, suggesting you might need to explore alternative career paths.

For The Hospital Environment

Through shadowing, you can gain insights into how medical professionals communicate with one another and observe standard etiquette practices. Shadowing a physician also introduces you to the hospital environment and what it would be like to be a healthcare worker. It allows you to understand the hospital experience and fully determine if the lifestyle is your calling.

For Your Medical Application

Additionally, many medical school admissions officers ask about your shadowing experience to gauge your level of interest. Shadowing will fortify your application and increase the effectiveness of essays and interviews. The physicians you interact with will allow you to build your network, strengthen your communication skills, and improve your chances of gaining physician recommendation letters.



**Why Is
Shadowing
Important?**

What Do Students Wish They Knew?



Before Their Shadowing Experience

Numerous students seek the following information, and perhaps knowing the answer to these questions will be beneficial for you:

1. What is HIPAA Violation?
2. What is the dress code?
3. Do I know the names of the people I will encounter in the office?
4. How many hours do I ask the physician to shadow?
5. What is the structure of the day?
6. What should I be studying before starting the shadowing day?

After Their Shadowing Experience

Finally, you may want to consider the following questions at the end of the shadowing experience:

1. How do I ask for recommendation letters?
2. How do I efficiently reflect on what I learned during my shadowing experience?
3. What is the importance of reflecting on the shadowing experience?
4. How do I transfer what I learned to my medical application?
5. How does what I learned change my thinking about the medical field?
6. How does what I learned increase or decrease my knowledge of what I want to do in the future?

During Their Shadowing Experience

Many students ask the following during their shadowing experience, contemplate the following:

1. Should I talk to the physician about my future plans?
2. Should I be talking to other healthcare workers about their experiences in the medical field?
3. How do I improve my confidence when speaking to the physician?
4. Should I be looking up medical terms discussed the previous day?
5. How do I help the physician without being in their way?
6. How can I make a lasting impression to be able to request a recommendation letter?

Insights From Medical Students

How Was Shadowing Beneficial Before Attending Medical School?

Engaging in shadowing can be helpful in numerous ways. Gaining insight into the role of physicians in healthcare, building professional connections, discerning future goal interests, and obtaining a letter of recommendation from a doctor for schools with such a requirement are some of the few benefits of shadowing.

Shadowing can introduce you to various healthcare opportunities, such as working as a scribe, medical assistant, or technician, which can further expand your horizons in the healthcare industry.

Shadowing provides valuable insights into the daily responsibilities of a physician and is particularly beneficial for affirming your interest in the field of medicine before embarking on medical school. Even just a small amount of shadowing can show schools your understanding of your role in the medical field. Moreover, it offers a glimpse into the dynamics of a typical medical office visit, which can be advantageous when participating in early clinic simulations during your training. These activities can be beneficial as you learn about your goals and interests.



What Do You Wish You Knew Before You Shadowed?

Begin the experience by understanding that physicians practice medicine in various ways. Aspects such as their bedside manner, medication and test choices, engagement with the healthcare team, and individual viewpoints can vary significantly. Thus, it is evident that you will run into something that will make you reflect or question what you observed. It's essential to recognize that what one doctor does may not necessarily represent the standard for all physicians. When shadowing, it's beneficial to realize that physicians don't expect you to possess the knowledge of a practicing physician or current medical student; they recognize where you currently stand in your educational journey. Asking questions is an excellent method to become comfortable and demonstrate your interest.

Additionally, it's courteous and highly beneficial to introduce yourself to the individuals you encounter in the healthcare setting, including medical assistants, nurses, physician assistants, patients, and others. This shows both politeness and aids in effective communication. It is beneficial when healthcare staff can address you by name to give instructions and feedback.

Feel free to clarify the exact time and place of your meeting with the physician. Clear communication is essential to ensure a smooth experience. Additionally, remember that other healthcare staff are valuable resources. Engaging and asking them questions can provide any additional information you need to help fill any knowledge gaps regarding the time, place, and expectations of certain medical opportunities you observe (surgeries, consultations, etc.). Also, don't be nervous to politely seek other physicians to shadow if your current experience feels unrewarding or doesn't contribute meaningfully to your learning.

How Do You Gain The Shadowing Experience?

How Do Physicians Prefer You To Reach Out?



In Person

It is preferred to ask in person and follow up via email or phone. Physicians prefer having a face-to-face conversation where they can see the student's enthusiasm for shadowing them. After having that initial conversation, it would be beneficial to follow up with an email or phone call to determine the details.

Email

Another option is to reach out via email. In the email, it is essential to provide your resume, explain why this particular physician interests you, and describe the aspects of medicine you hope to see. It is shown that physicians who prefer that students reach out to them via email enjoy reading a short paragraph explaining why they would like to shadow this particular physician. Additionally, it is always helpful to specify what you, as a shadow, hope to gain from the experience.

When emailing, mention your desire to have a phone conversation to express your interests. The first contact should be a politely worded email, followed by an interview through phone, Skype, or Zoom to ensure compatibility between the student and the physician.

Professional Networking Platforms

Reaching out through LinkedIn can also be effective. It demonstrates dedication to research and allows the physician to check your profile. However, be mindful that, unlike in-person conversations, phone calls, and emails, receiving a response to a LinkedIn message may take longer. Additionally, if you choose this path, make sure your LinkedIn profile is up-to-date.

Further, as a Notre Dame student, making use of resources like Handshake and Irish Compass can be extremely beneficial for networking with physicians. They are able to learn about your academic pursuits and form the initial Notre Dame connection.



What Do You Do During The Experience

What Should You Do Throughout The Day?

At the start of the day of your shadowing experience ensures you wake up early before departing to the hospital. Your experience will likely begin early, and your day may likely consist of standing for long periods and moving around to catch up with the staff. Physicians live a high-speed phase of life. Thus, you must ensure you are not purposely slowing them down. Once you arrive in your correct attire (asked beforehand), pass along a hello to the staff members that you see and try to address them formally by their last name. Put your phone away at the start of the experience; a physician knows when you are uninterested by paying attention to the number of times you go on your phone. Always take the time to pay attention to what the physician and other healthcare staff are showing you. Be bold and ask questions; remember that questions show your enthusiasm and interest in the subject. Also, try to take notes about your thoughts, experiences, and interactions that you encounter. Writing down what you see and how you feel can remind you of your time at the hospital and benefit you in many aspects (such as the application). However, be sure to only write at the appropriate time (i.e., refrain from writing while someone is directly speaking to you).

What To Do With The Physician?

Many students question what to do when directly interacting with the physician who has kindly allowed you to observe their day. It is essential to ask questions to showcase your interest, but be aware of what the situation entails. Please avoid asking questions in front of the patient unless the physician allows it, as your questions may induce further stress on the patient. At the end of each shadowing day, end by asking the physician for any comments, feedback, or suggestions they may have for you. This information is essential, but it also showcases your commitment to being an asset to their day; it expresses how you want to be helpful to them. Also, end by asking for a rough outline of the next day so you can prepare; it is important to give yourself an idea of what you will see, how many patients you will interact with, when you can take a lunch break, how long you will be standing (etc.). Finally, knowing what you will be embarking on the following day allows you to research terms, surgeries, procedures, typical patient prognosis, and more to discuss with the physician.

What Should You Ask The Physician?

Questions To Ask About Discernment

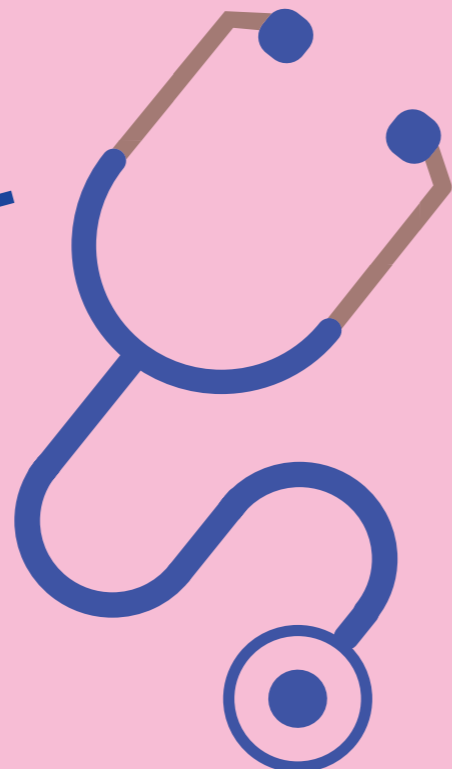
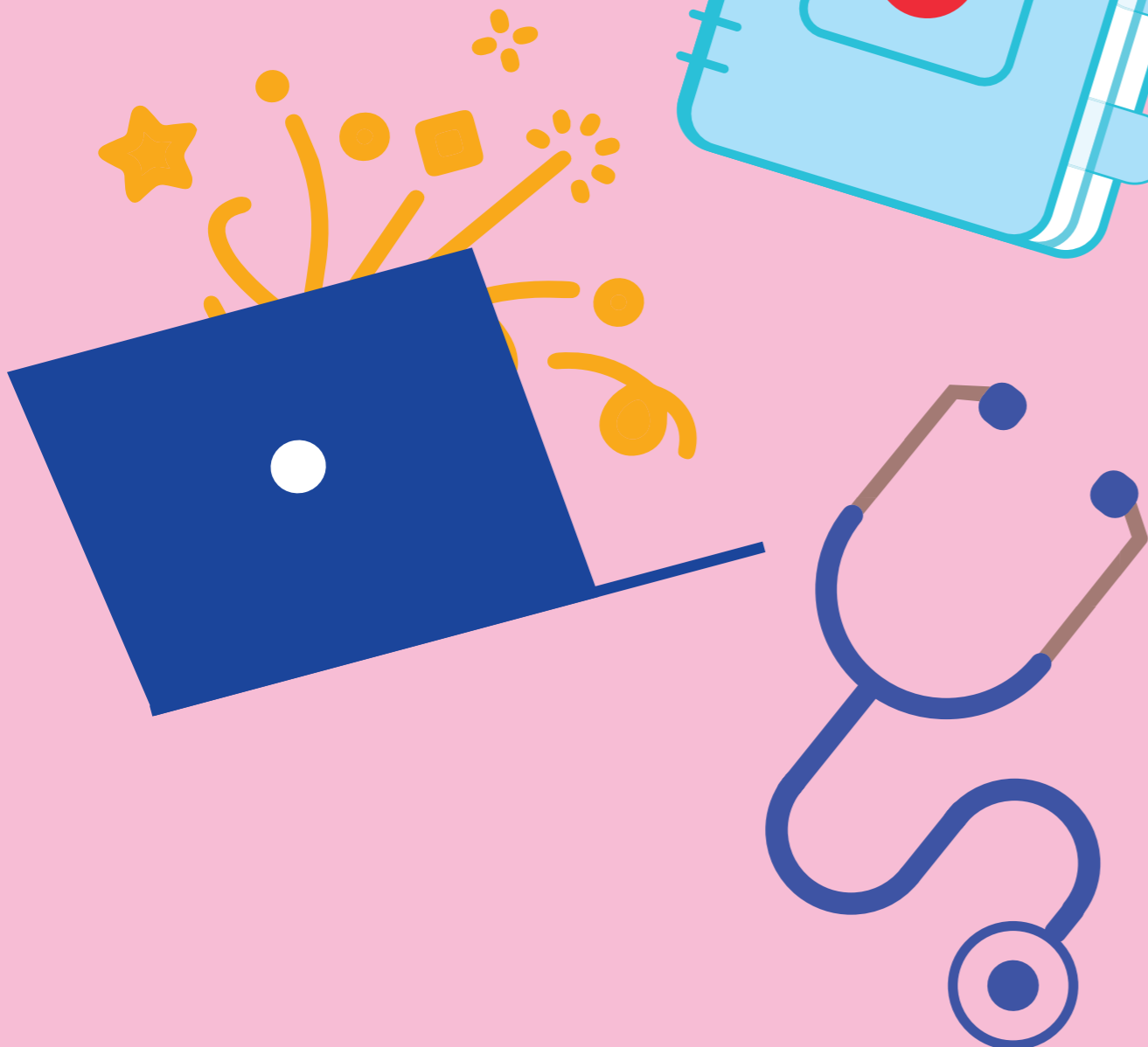
- How did the physician you shadowed know they wanted to be a physician?
- How did they decide their specialty?
- How did they decide on the medical school they attended?
- What steps did they take in college and medical school to further their excitement about medicine?
- Do they have a memorable interaction with a patient reaffirming their commitment to becoming a physician?
- What aspects of their specialty or job do they find the most rewarding?
- Who did they find as their most significant role models throughout their journey of becoming a physician?

Questions About The Physician's Life

- How is the physician's work life?
- How much free time does the physician you shadowed have?
- What was your physician's premed journey like? Be sure to share some similarities and differences from your journey.
- What does the physician see as their biggest challenge?
- What characteristics do they see as crucial for a physician to have?
- What do they wish someone told them before they became a doctor?
- What advice do they have for you?
- Do they have helpful strategies to prevent burnout in this field?
- How do they find themselves staying up to date on the latest medical advancements?

Reflect After The Experience

What Should You Ask Yourself?



Questions About The Patient

- What did you learn when you interacted with the patients?
- Can you recall an experience with a patient that made you think differently about the healthcare system?
- What did you like and dislike in your interactions with patients?
- In what way did interacting with the patient teach you about the compassionate aspects of the medical field?
- How did the patient teach you resilience?
- How did the patient interactions help you determine your career goals?

Questions About The Physician

- What did you notice about the life of a physician as well as their work-life balance?
- What did you like and dislike about the physician and their life?
- What skills and characteristics did you see in the physician?
- What did you see as the most rewarding aspects of being a physician?
- What are the sacrifices physicians make?
- How did you notice the importance of teamwork in the medical field?

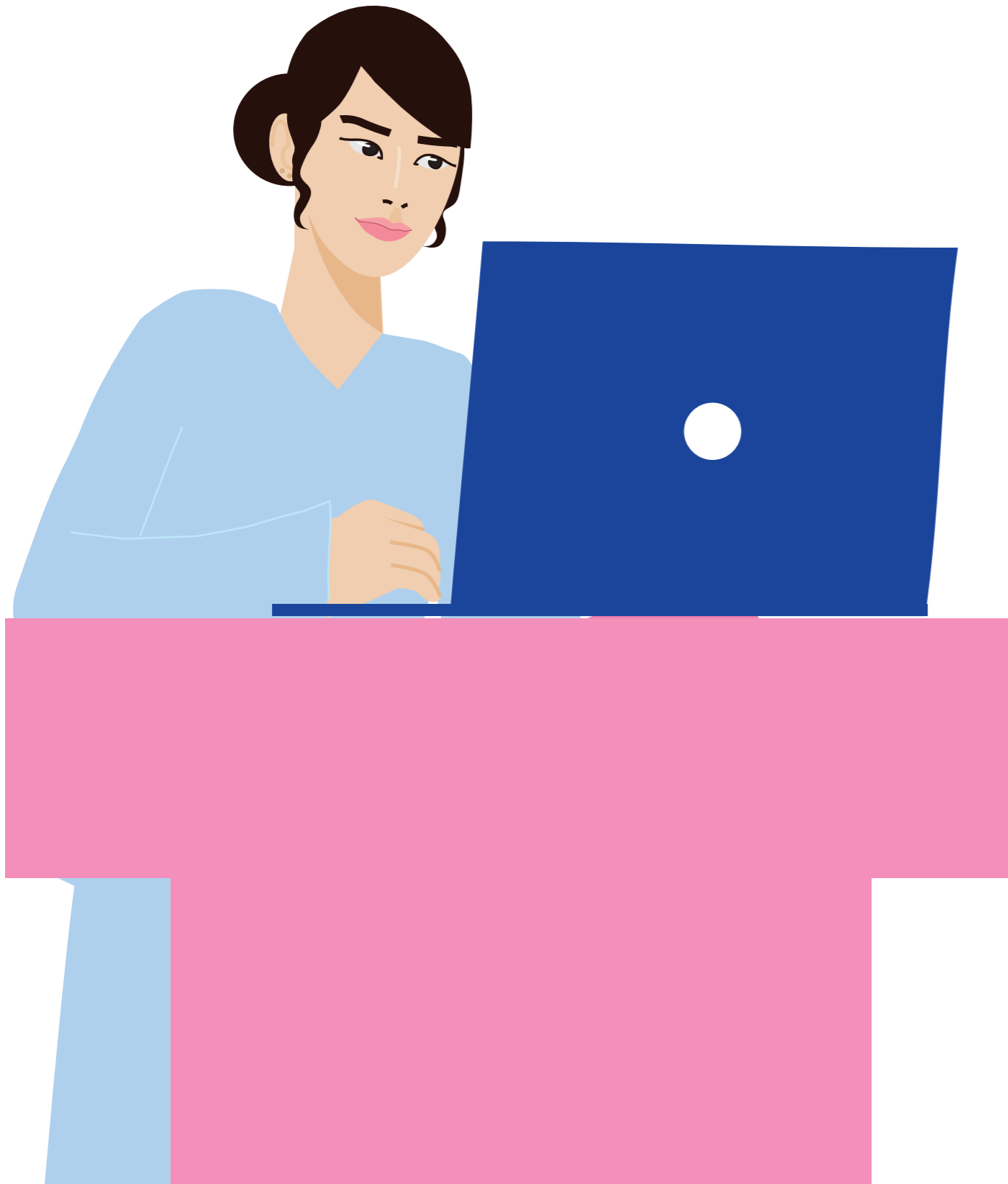
Questions About The Doctor-Patient Relationship

- How do you see physicians maintaining effective relationships with their patients?
- How did you see the physician maintain trust with the patient despite the difference in medical knowledge between them?
- Do you have one or more examples of successful doctor-patient relationships during your shadowing experience?
- Did you see the importance of empathy as the physician spoke with the patient?
- How do you see ways the relationship can improve?

Questions To Ask Yourself

- What did you like and dislike about the shadowing experience?
- What do you wish you saw that you weren't able to see during this experience?
- Did you enjoy your time shadowing? Can you see this in your profession?
- Did you find yourself drawn to different aspects of the medical field other than a job as a physician?

Recommendation Letter



Gaining a recommendation letter from a physician can be a treasured addition to your medical school application. This letter can show the positive impression you've made on the physician you've shadowed and show the medical admissions committee that the physician feels you are a good fit for the healthcare field. Making a good impression on the physician you shadowed is vital as their advice and expertise can help you immensely throughout your journey to medical school and beyond.

Although gaining a recommendation letter from the physician you shadowed is valuable, it's essential to exercise discretion and ensure appropriateness when requesting one.

To request a recommendation letter, begin by thanking the physician for allowing you to shadow them and asking if they would write you a letter. Provide an additional text message or email that states your hopes for a letter and include supplementary materials like your resume, cover letter, personal essay (etc.).

You Should Ask For A Recommendation Letter If:

- You spent the experience engaged and effectively showcased your interest in the various opportunities
- You politely asked questions
- You remained engaged with the patient and any healthcare staff member you encountered throughout the experience
- You provided the physician with your essential skills and characteristics, allowing them to effectively get to know you to formulate a well-written letter
- You saw a variety of opportunities such as surgeries, patient consultation, x-ray rooms etc.
- You remained respectful, off your phone, attentive to detail and listened to the physician when they spoke to you
- If you believe you've made a positive impression but they decline to write a letter, don't be discouraged. Consider that their decision might be influenced by limited time and availability. Express gratitude for their time and remember that you still have chances to secure letters from mentors and professors.

Thank You

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