

# Getting Related Experience

To get a job, work-related experience can be as important as obtaining the necessary education or training. It looks good on a resume and allows you to develop the necessary skills to excel at your chosen job. Related experience also lets you try out a job to see if you like it. First-hand experience is the best way to tell if a job is for you, and you'll get to meet people working at the job you're interested in.

Remember that you gain valuable work-related experiences in so many ways: organization and research skills at school; teamwork skills if you play team sports; and leadership skills from coaching. All your experiences pave the way for you to stand out at your job when you get there. You'll be better prepared to enter the working world, employers will be impressed by your initiative, and you'll be more confident in your abilities.

## Four Ways to Get Related Experience

### 1. JOB-SHADOWING

**Definition:** Job-shadowing involves following someone through a typical day of work.

#### Why do it?

Job-shadowing is one way to find out what the job you are interested in is really like.

#### How can you do it?

- Contact the training institutions and associations connected with your job and ask someone about job-shadowing opportunities.
- If you can't find a job-shadowing program, talk to a counsellor or teacher who could help you arrange a job-shadowing experience.

#### Rural and Remote Tips

- The EnviroCareer you're interested in may not exist in your community, so consider job-shadowing someone whose job might involve some of the same responsibilities as your dream job. For example, if your dream job is marine biologist, you can job-shadow a veterinarian now to learn more about working with animals as well as teamwork skills.

### 2. PART-TIME WORK

**Definition:** A part-time job means you work less than 20 hours per week.

#### Why do it?

You'll have a chance to get a sneak peak at the job even if it's only part-time. Plus, employers are impressed with demonstrated workplace experience, because it shows that you understand the working world.

#### How can you do it?

- Phone the work place you're interested in, and ask for a part-time job. Many employers will hire students but you'll have to sell them on the idea of what you can do for them. For example, if your dream job is in an office environment and you won't be qualified for this job for many years, offer to do filing for them now—anything where you'll get exposure to that type of workplace.
- Read newspaper classifieds to see who's hiring.
- Talk to your school counsellor, teachers, family or community support systems about part-time job opportunities.

### **Rural and Remote Tips**

- If there aren't many places to work part-time where you live, go to your library and read newspaper classifieds from larger centres near you.
- Ask your school counsellor if your school has money to send students to job fairs in larger centres.
- Check with your band office or other community offices to find out if they offer any funding to students looking to find part-time or summer jobs not available in your community.

## **3. VOLUNTEER WORK**

**Definition:** Unpaid work that you do for an organization.

### **Why do it?**

- When you do volunteer work that is directly related to your dream job, you meet people in the job you're interested in, develop skills, get training or employment-related experience, and maybe impress the boss!
- It's a great way to get exposure to your dream job while you're in high school and when you may not yet have the necessary qualifications.

### **How can you do it?**

- To find volunteer work, contact volunteer centres, check the newspaper classifieds, put out the word to your friends and family that you're looking for volunteer work, ask teachers and career counsellors, and talk to employers.
- Before you make a commitment, make sure the working hours are reasonable, and the organization or business will provide opportunities to develop job-related skills through meaningful experience or training.

### **Rural and Remote Tips**

- There may not be many volunteer opportunities if you live in smaller communities that are related to the environmental job you're interested in. But you can volunteer at your community or friendship centre, at your school tutoring other students, or at a natural resources centre. Any volunteer skills you can gain will look great on your resume.
- If your community or band has a committee that discusses local environmental issues, ask if you can sit on the committee as a youth volunteer.

## **4. NETWORKING**

**Definition:** Networking is when people exchange information, contacts and experiences. There are many opportunities for networking, you just have to take advantage of them when they come up. There will always be someone you meet, either at school or in the workplace, who will play a role in helping you reach your dream job. Your friends, your family, people in your community, and especially your teachers, counsellors, and employers, could be the connection you need, so make sure you nurture all of these relationships.

### **Why do it?**

- Your network of contacts may be able to give you job leads, offer you advice and information about a particular company or industry, or introduce you to the right people.

### **How can you do it?**

- Think about what connections your network of contacts has to your dream job.
- Talk to people in the industry you're interested in, and those you meet at different places such as trade shows and career fairs.

- Be prepared for networking by:
  - Being organized, by creating your own business card
  - Staying in contact with job leads through regular phone calls, emails, and holiday greetings
  - Setting yourself goals, such as contacting one new person per week

### **Rural and Remote Tips**

If there aren't many networking opportunities in your community, here are some suggestions:

- Ask your school counsellor if your school has money to send students to conferences or career fairs in larger centres.
- Check with your band office or other centres in your community to find out if they offer funding to students who want to attend conferences or career fairs.
- Contact organizations related to the field or job you're interested in, either through email or regular mail, so that you can get on their mailing list which allows you to connect with each organization's members. The Relations section in each EnviroCareer has a list.