Questions to ask at informational interviews

Here are some questions you may want to ask during an informational interview setting like Shadow Day. These questions are provided to help you start engaged conversations with the person you are shadowing. Select the questions that are most relevant to your field and your interests or create your own questions. Try to avoid asking questions that have "yes" or "no" answers; you'll get more information with an open-ended question.

Remember that you have a limited amount of time, so choose your questions carefully!

1. What is your job like? Describe a typical day. Would it be possible for me to shadow you someday?
2. What kinds of problems do you deal with? What kinds of decisions do you make?
3. Is your workflow steady or do you alternate between being very busy and very slow?
4. How did you become interested in this field? How did you get started?
5. What kind of jobs did you have before this one? How did they help prepare you for this work? Which jobs were most helpful?
6. What is the best educational preparation for this field? Is a recent graduate's GPA important in hiring decisions?
7. What kind of growth patterns are you seeing in this field that I should be aware of?
8. From your personal experience in this field, what attributes do you think are essential for success?
9. What professional journals do you read? What professional organizations do you belong to?
10. What part of your job do you find most interesting or rewarding? What parts do you dislike or feel dissatisfied about?
11. What skills are needed in this field? What skills should I be concentrating on at this point in my education? What skills are looked for in entry-level employees?
12. What experiences have you had that have been invaluable in learning your job?
13. What are some of the difficulties in working in this field and what motivates you to stay in spite of them?
14. What else should I know about this field to help me to be better prepared?
15. Can you recommend someone else for me to talk with in this field? When I contact this person, may I use your name?
16. Do you know of any comparable job titles I should be exploring in this field?
17. Does your company offer internships, co-ops, and summer jobs? What level of college students do you consider for these positions? Whom can I contact for more information?
18. Would you be willing to critique my resume?
19. Why did you decide to work for this company? What do you like best about it? How is this company different from the competition? What is the corporate culture like?
20. What kinds of professional development does your company offer? Do employees in this field generally get advanced degrees or special training?
21. What would you be doing if you didn't work for this company/in this field?