

How to... Email a Potential Mentor

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- ❖ Once you identify a few potential mentors, it's time to reach out!
- ❖ IMPORTANT NOTE: Start early! Some labs fill up quickly for the next semester
- ❖ Before reaching out, I suggest that you check and see if the mentor you're interested in has a personal (or faculty) or lab/research space website.
 - If they have a website, see if there are any instructions on applying to work with them (such as a date to apply or materials to include). Note: not all mentors have this.
- ❖ Many students reach out to a potential mentor by sending them an email.

Note: The OUR is happy to review emails! You can send a draft to the OUR to receive edits/comments before sending the email to a potential mentor. You can also receive assistance about steps that may occur after the email is sent.

 - By reaching out to a mentor yourself, you show initiative!
 - This email can be formatted in different ways but here are some common points/topics that can be included:
 - IMPORTANT TIP: Do not send an identical email to all professors in hopes of getting a response. This might deter potential mentors because it doesn't demonstrate a particular interest in working with them!
 - Along these lines, address your email properly
 - ◆ Instead of "Dear Professor" or "To whom this may concern", address them directly: "Dear Dr. (*insert last name*)" or "Dear Professor (*insert last name*)"
 - Keep the email brief
 - Introduce yourself (major/year)
 - If you already have a connection with that mentor (i.e., you took a class with them, saw them speak about their work), mention it!
 - Ex: I was in your Cultural Anthropology class last semester.

- Include why you are emailing them
 - Ex: I am looking to get involved in undergraduate research and the work that your lab does aligns with my interests.
- Be specific! Mention the research area/projects that the professor is involved in (this shows that you've spent time looking into the potential mentors you are emailing)
 - Ex: I've read about the ongoing project your lab is conducting on epigenetics. (specific areas of interest/more detail can be, briefly, added)
- Tie the work the lab is doing in with your own interests
 - Tip: Your interests don't have to align perfectly with the work that the lab is doing but try to find some commonality.
 - Ex: I hope to become an ophthalmologist after I graduate and the research that the Translational Vision Lab is doing on the impact of eye disease interests me greatly.
- If you have relevant past work/research/class mention it briefly (no more than 1-2 sentences)
 - Ex: For the past semester, I have worked for a crisis hotline which led me to want to get involved in mental health research.
- Ask for a meeting!
 - Now that you've gotten your interests in their research across, it's time to ask them for a chance to meet and discuss further.
 - ◆ Ex: I was wondering if you might have some time available in the coming days to discuss your research and a potential undergraduate research opportunity further.
- Remember to thank them for their time and consideration!

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- ❖ Once you email a professor, there are normally three follow-ups that you may receive
 - 1. A response to set up a meeting or interview
 - Great! This is ideal and gets you that much closer to getting involved in research.
 - 2. A “rejection” response. There can be multiple reasons why a professor might say no but some common ones are:
 - I am currently not accepting undergraduates in my lab
 - Your interests and mine don’t align
 - My lab is currently full OR all positions have been filled for the next semester
 - IMPORTANT NOTE: This final response could indicate a possibility to work with this professor in the future. I suggest you send them a thank you email and let them know that you’ll keep an eye out for opportunities to work with them in the future.
 - 3. Silence, or no response at all
 - There’s always a chance that you won’t hear back, whether this be because your email got lost in their inbox or another reason
 - It’s ok to send out a follow-up email if you have not heard back for over a week (give them time), but you should begin emailing other potential mentors in the meantime.

You can send email drafts to the [OUR](#) for edits/comments. You can also [meet](#) with OUR staff or OUR Ambassadors to receive assistance at any stage in the research/creative process!