

# Finding a Research Mentor

## Step 1: Identify Your Research Interests

The first step in seeking out a research mentor is to identify your interest(s).

Some places to start:

1. Previous classes
  - a. What topics were interesting?
  - b. Is there something you want to know more about?
2. Current interests
  - a. What are challenges that performers (e.g., athletes, exercisers, dancers) face when they are competing/performing?
  - b. Have you seen anything on TV or in the media that you have found interesting and want to learn more about?
3. Opportunities to assist with research
  - a. Can you assist researchers in your department currently working on projects that interest you?



## Step 2: Identify a Research Mentor

Once you have determined your research interests, the second step is to identify a research mentor who matches those interests.

Some questions to consider:

1. On what topics/projects are professors in your department working?
2. Does your academic advisor know of anyone outside of your department with similar research interests?
3. What are other resources on campus (e.g., Undergraduate Research Center) that may help you identify potential research mentors?

## Step 3: Contact a Research Mentor

The final step is contacting the potential mentor who shares your interests. It is important to be professional and concise when doing so.

Some points to include:

1. Introduce yourself

- Name
- Year in school
- Major

2. Make a connection

- What work of theirs have you read?
- What projects have you heard about?
- How do your interests align with theirs?

3. Propose your contribution

- How do you want to be involved?
- What previous experiences have prepared you?

4. Add a closing

- Your contact information
- Thank you

*“Always demonstrate professionalism and quality work in the classroom. Once you get an opportunity to work on research, treat it with the same importance as an academic class (communicate effectively, be prepared, and meet deadlines).”*

-Leslie Larsen,  
PhD Candidate

## Additional Tips:

1. Having a basic understanding of some of the work your potential mentor has done is also important.
  - a. It may be helpful to conduct a brief literature review on the topic of interest *prior* to contacting your potential research mentor. Doing so could allow for a more directed conversation.
  - b. Specifically looking at the “future directions” portion of the discussion may help give you an idea of where they are going next with her/his research.

## Example Undergraduate Email

Dear Dr. \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a current third year majoring in \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ University.

I recently read your article titled, “\_\_\_\_\_” and was really intrigued by \_\_\_\_\_. I am also interested in the potential of this research, and want to look at \_\_\_\_\_, which I think could fit very well with your work.

I have little experience doing research, but would love the opportunity to speak with you about how I could get involved with a project on which you may be working. I am very organized and always meet deadlines, so I think I can be valuable to you in addition to gaining more research experience. I am open to helping in any capacity that you may need.

I would love the opportunity to meet with you to discuss this opportunity further. I am available \_\_\_\_\_.

Please feel free to contact me via email (\_\_\_\_\_@\_\_\_\_\_) or by phone (\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_) at anytime.

I look forward to speaking with you more.

Thank you for your time,

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