

How to get Involved with Research

Before you begin a research project, it may be helpful to learn more about how to get involved in research. If you do not already have a topic, we recommend checking out our “Choosing a Research Topic” guideline. However, it is also possible to start looking for research opportunities before you are sure of your topic, or when you have multiple topics in mind. Regardless of where you are in your research journey, here are some helpful recommendations to get you started!

Step #1: Know Your Resources

Resources to help you get involved in research are all around you! For starters, you can sign up for AASP’s research listserv where members send out research updates and inquiries. You can also check various other tools such as your school’s directory, Google Scholar, AASP-sponsored journals (e.g., *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*) and other published Directories (e.g., *Directory of Graduate Programs in Applied Sport Psychology*) that list research interests. Below, brainstorm a list of some of the resources available to you, including people you may ask for help:

Step #2: Explore the Faculty Directory

Look through the faculty directory and each faculty member’s respective biographies. Limit your search to faculty in departments that are related to your field, future field, and/or interests. Make a list of faculty who have research interests that match yours. As you search through this directory, take note of their contact information along with the contact information of any Graduate Assistants (GAs) within the faculty member’s lab.

Before you contact any faculty or GA, read through some of their publications. This will give you a better idea of the kind of research the faculty conducts and simultaneously allow you to dive deeper into your own interests. Additionally, having a rudimentary understanding of the faculty’s research will provide more in-depth talking points for future communication and help provide evidence of your interest in becoming involved in their research.

Below, make a list of faculty and GAs (along with their contact information) with specific aspects of their research that you find intriguing:

Step #3: Use Google Scholar and References Pages

Type keywords into search engines (e.g., Google Scholar) identify research articles within your area of interest. Even if you do not know of a specific topic, typing in relevant keywords can open up a wide range of articles that may grab your attention. This can be a good way to begin finding studies and projects that you would like to be involved in as well as topics that your research can be informed by. When reading these articles, pay attention to the names of the authors and see if any names pop-up frequently. These could be potential collaborators of yours if you choose to conduct research outside of your academic institution. This could be a good opportunity to contact such authors to request a conversation and to ask if they are accepting new students.

While reading through the articles, also look at the references pages of articles that interest you. This is not only helpful for finding more potential researchers to collaborate with, but it can provide additional articles related to your topic of interest. These articles are important to for understanding the scope of what has been established in previous literature, and can serve as a foundation for your research topic. It can be very helpful to save each article that interests you and compile a folder of these articles. When you have identified a more specific topic to explore, you will likely draw upon these articles to read and reference in your literature review of the study you plan to conduct.

Step #4: Consider Summer Research Opportunities

Getting involved in research during the summer or in a time when you are away from your academic institution serves many benefits. One advantage of summer opportunities is the ability to focus more completely on your research without the simultaneous commitment to coursework. Additionally, summer opportunities can allow you to explore other parts of the state, country, or the world that may interest you while also obtaining knowledge and valuable research experience. The Career Center at your campus, along with your advisor, should be able to help you search for summer internship opportunities. The Graduate Information Fair at the annual conference for AASP can also provide information about research opportunities. Regardless of when and where you choose to complete your research, you should be cognizant of the amount of work you can handle. Some internship/externships that include research opportunities that you may consider include:

- American Board of Sport Psychology (New York)
- German Sport University Cologne
- Jacobs University Bremen (Germany)

- Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg (Germany)
- Premier Sport Psychology (Minnesota)
- Reaching Ahead (Maryland)
- Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Spain)
- University of Chieti-Pescara (Italy)
- University of Southern Denmark
- University of Stuttgart (Germany)
- University of Suffolk (United Kingdom)
- University of Thessaly (Greece)

Step #5: Explore Other Institutions

When considering research opportunities, it can be useful to look into other institutions are involved in researching topics that interest you. Research at other institutions can provide the opportunities to explore topics that are more specific to your interests which may not be available at your current academic institution. Moreover, doing research at another institution can broaden your network and allow you to meet new students, researchers, and faculty who can serve as helpful connections throughout your career. Now that you have more freedom to explore a topic that may or may not be a focus at your current institution, spend some time thinking about different research that peaks your interest. Take time to brainstorm potential topics of interest and write them down here:

Similar to your own your university, look at the directories of institutions of interest to your research topic and make note of the researchers who have projects within your area and follow the steps outlined above in Step #2. Additionally, it may be helpful to assess if professors in your current department have connections to these institutions or researchers as they could serve as helpful references when making research connections. When trying to get involved:

- Establish communication with the researcher/professor that you would like to work with via email or other recommended method if specified on the institution's website.
- Draft an email and have a mentor look over the email in order to provide revisions.
 - Information to include: academic year, current institution, research interests, what interests you about their research projects, what your goal is in connecting with them (what your request is).
- Maintain communication with the individual within their recommended timetable as this can show that you value this opportunity and you are able to complete tasks in recommended time constraints (e.g., filling out paperwork).
- Do not be afraid to reach out to several places at once when exploring future research possibilities. There are many reasons institutions may not work out (e.g., researchers

are not studying your topic, faculty may not be taking students). It is advised to explore your options and reach out to a variety of potential faculty.

Step #6: Attend Conferences

Attend conferences related to sport and exercise psychology and related fields of interest (e.g., American Psychological Association, AASP, American College of Sports Medicine). AASP hosts an annual conference usually in late September or early October while many regional conferences are held during the winter/spring semester. The annual conference can be a helpful space for learning and connecting since many faculty gather and speak here. The regional conferences are other, more accessible conferences that provide a more intimate space and are specifically student-oriented. Check out the AASP website for information on sponsored conferences. Take note of presenters who discuss topics that interest you and record their contact information. Similar to Step #5, contact these presenters to ask about research opportunities and/or advice on who to contact for research opportunities.