

# HOW TO APPROACH A RESEARCH SUPERVISOR

A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

## 1.) DO YOUR HOMEWORK



Find which faculty are actively working in the research areas you're interested in. Network, attend events, and ask for recommendations from other students and professors. Be strategic and targeted. Use research skills to find the right supervisor for you: do they share your values? Read about their publications and grants, and check if you meet university requirements.

## 2.) INTRODUCTION-CONNECTION

Send from a professional email address (not granny@hotmail.com). Use proper salutation (Dear Professor Smith). Introduce yourself: who are you, and what do you study? Be clear and target your pitch for that particular faculty member; form, mass-mailed emails are discouraged. Craft an error-free message (no typos, misspelled names, use excellent grammar). Attach an up-to-date resume. Ask the Writing Centre for help!



## 3.) KNOW YOUR GOALS AND TIMELINES



What are you asking for? Be direct (a four month full-time paid internship; honours supervision; a graduate student position; a part-time assistantship during the school year; a volunteer opportunity; field experience...) and know your timelines ("I'm available to start on [date]").

## 4.) KNOW YOUR STRENGTHS

How do you stand out? What do you bring that is helpful or unique? Everything from enthusiasm for the specific research project, ability to handle adversity, multiple languages, community or volunteer experience, to Python programming skills fits here. What is your passion, and what would you like to learn?



## 5.) BE SINCERE, HONEST, SPECIFIC



Being dishonest or exaggerating your abilities or knowledge will damage your credibility. Likewise, being too broad ("I'll research anything! I just want a job!") is a problem. Be specific about your own interests, and think hard about long term research direction. Why do you want to do research?

## 6.) BE PERSISTENT

It may take time to find a supervisor who is the right fit and has funding and space to support you. You may be a superb student, but they may just not have room. Be persistent in your search, but try not to be a nuisance. Be professional, improve your focus and approach, and try again. Move on with grace.



## 7.) KNOW WHEN TO SAY YES



Finding the right supervisor for you is key. If something about the conversation or offer feels wrong, listen to your instinct. You can negotiate, or decline. You are your own best advocate; you also know what you will need to make a situation work for you. The supervisor-student relationship needs to be built on trust and mutual respect. Always start there.