

# How to: Approach a Research Supervisor

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*Steps to find an undergraduate student research assistantship (USRA)*

## Prepare:

- Read about faculty in your area of interest. Find their publications and research areas. Places to look: professor's profile page; internet search; library catalogue search. Are you interested in their most recent work? Do you want to learn more?
- Ask around: has this professor supervised undergraduate students in the past? What were their experiences? Also: ask department administrators. They'll know if a professor is heading off on sabbatical or isn't taking on any new students.

## Connect:

- Use proper respect: Dr. Smith or Professor Smith is the best way to start.
- Make the first contact brief (in-person, by phone, or through email).
- Make an appointment for a longer conversation, either during scheduled office hours or at a time that works well for both of you.

## Questions:

- Plan open-ended questions specific to the professor's area of research.
  - Are you planning to continue investigating in your current area of interest or are other areas appealing to you right now?
  - What are the next steps in your research?
  - What roles might there be for an undergraduate student? What skills would be helpful to have?
- Options for discussion about research areas:
  - A topic or question from class that sparked your interest.
  - Information from a lecture, textbook, or elsewhere that you found curious or troublesome.
  - An idea or question you have related to the faculty member's published work.
- Does that faculty member have research funding in place? Will they apply for additional funding to support an undergraduate student?

## Share:

- Share your interest in the subject area as well as your academic and career plans.
  - Some may advise and mentor you or refer you to another professor.
- Bring a printed copy of your most recent resume, with your current contact information and NSID.

**Talking to professors helps you gather information, consider future action, get additional resources or skill direction, hear about opportunities, or find your summer research experience!**

***Good luck!***

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