

Writing and sending “cold emails”

What does “cold email” mean?

- The term may not sound familiar but you’re likely familiar with the process: a **“cold email” is an unsolicited email sent to a professor, researcher, or academic professional by someone who has not previously interacted with them.**
- Students, prospective graduate students, or early-career researchers send cold emails to inquire about research opportunities, seek mentorship, propose collaborations, or simply to connect professionally.

Why do people send cold emails?

- You’ve probably realized that the field of psychology does not do a perfect job of advertising concrete internships to undergraduates
- Oftentimes, the best way to find internships, post-bacc jobs, etc. is to reach out directly to people whom you are interested in working with.
- This applies for:
 - Undergraduate internships
 - Post-baccalaureate jobs
 - Graduate school applications (finding a mentor)
 - Proposing a research or academic collaboration
 - General networking

Writing cold emails:

You’re probably reading this document because you’ve realized that writing these emails can feel a little awkward! It’s hard to know what tone to use, what content to include, and other important details. It’s especially stressful as an undergraduate student reaching out to successful professionals. Here is a guide to help you in confidently writing these emails:

- **Subject line:** Clearly state your purpose of contacting them
- **Introduction:** Briefly introduce yourself
 - (Name, status, institution: e.g. *My name is ____, I’m an undergraduate at Smith College studying psychology.*)
- **Statement of purpose:** Why are you contacting them? Let them know in the first couple of sentences

- e.g. *I'm reaching out as I'm...*
 - *An applicant for _____ grad school.*
 - *Pursuing a career in _____ study and wanted to ask about research opportunities.*
 - *Interested in learning more about your work.*
- If the recipient has a website, look to see if there is information about getting in touch with them
 - For internships or research positions, they might let you know ahead of time if they are interested in undergraduate students
- **Personalize:** Specifically reference the recipient's work and express genuine interest. This shows that you've done your homework and that there is a clear reason you're reaching out.
 - Emphasize what about their work is interesting to you. Are you pursuing a career in a similar subject of research?
- **Why should they listen to you:** Briefly include something about your background that has led you to contact them. Whether it is previous research experience, a faculty member connected you, etc.
 - e.g. *I'm particularly interested in your work on _____ as I have experience in _____.*
- **Ending the message:** A specific request is a strong way to end your message, simply emailing to introduce yourself as an interested applicant might not start the conversation.
 - e.g. *As I am interested in _____ research project, I would be grateful to learn more about any current opportunities you have for undergraduates in your lab.*
 - e.g. *I would like to know if you are accepting applicants for the _____ application cycle and would also appreciate any advice you could offer regarding the application process.*
- **Brevity:** Academic professionals are busy, so a concise email that quickly gets to the point is more likely to be read.
 - This is why stating your purpose early on is important! Recipients may filter through 100s of emails a day: state who you are and what you want in the first section to make it easier for them to want to reply.
- **Professional Tone:** The email should be formal, well-structured, and well-researched
 - If the person holds a degree like MD, PhD, or PsyD, address them appropriately as Dr. or Professor, depending on their appointment.

- **Key things to include!!!!**

- Don't get into too much detail: **you should attach a recent copy of your CV or resume to the email.** If the recipient wants to vet you before responding, this gives them an easy opportunity to see your qualifications.
- For internships: if you have praxis or other funding to use for this position, tell them! This makes you 1000x more appealing.

Example format:

Subject: Undergraduate summer research inquiry

Dear _____,

I hope this email finds you well. My name is _____, I'm a junior psychology major at Smith College. I am interested in pursuing a career in _____ and wanted to reach out. I have interests in _____ and find your work on _____ fascinating and relevant to my career goals.

I've worked as a _____, researching _____ topic. As I continue my work during the academic year, I'm hoping to explore research at other institutions during the upcoming summer to _____. I have _____ funding that aids me to work in an unpaid position for a summer internship. There are a few details and time requirements that the job must meet to qualify for funding, but it's generally a flexible program.

If you're interested in a volunteer research assistant during the upcoming summer, I would love to connect and discuss any possibilities in your lab. Alternatively, if there are other opportunities you might recommend, I would greatly appreciate your guidance.

Thank you very much for your time, I've attached my CV for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
