

Emailing Faculty About Research Opportunities

Email Account

Your email should come from your USC student account (@email.sc.edu). Gmail and Yahoo accounts tend to get caught in the spam filter.

Subject Line

A subject line provides the reader with an introduction to the email. This will be the first item they read from you. Use this as an opportunity to signal to them what your email is about. For example, "Seeking Research Experience" or simply "Research Opportunity."

Salutation

Never start a professional email with "Hey" or "Hi." Review their professional website or Curriculum Vita (CV) to verify their education background. For example, if they have a PhD or MD, you will want to address them as "Dr." If you are not sure, "Professor" is appropriate.

Tone

Your initial email should be formal and professional. You want to avoid using casual language (no slang or text talk). Also avoid emojis or an overindulgence of exclamation points, they are not necessary to convey your enthusiasm. Ultimately, be sincere. You are more likely to get a response if you convey a genuine interest.

Length

Be brief. The email should include three parts:

1. Introduce yourself and provide some information about future academic/career goals and how research fits into those.
2. Tell them why you are contacting them. Be specific. Why do you want to work on their research? Do your homework before you send the email. Faculty know a template email when they see one.
3. Request a meeting to discuss research opportunities and thank them for their time.

Signature Block

A what? A signature block provides your reader with a brief snapshot of who you are academically. Information should include your first and last name, college and major, graduation year, email, and phone. Avoid quotes or images. USC Communications and Marketing has an [Email Signature Generator](#) available to students!

Resume

Do you have a resume that highlights your academic, volunteer, and work experiences? If so, attach it as a pdf to the email. Be sure to make a note that it is attached so the reader does not miss it. Been meaning to create or update your resume? A resume is not required when you send the initial email, but one may be requested at a later time, so it is good to get a start on it now. Schedule an appointment on Handshake with the [Career Center](#) for help writing and editing your resume.

Did you know?

The Office of Undergraduate Research will review your emails before you send them. Send a draft of your email to our@mailbox.sc.edu and request an edit!

Example 1

Subject: Research Opportunity

Dear Dr. [Last Name],

I am a rising sophomore in the Capstone Program majoring in Biological Sciences and minoring in psychology, and I hope to attend medical school.

I took BIOL 302L last semester and developed an interest in hands-on molecular biology research, especially as it relates to understanding disease progression. Having a strong research background will teach me more about the underlying causes of disease, which will make me a more well-rounded physician.

Your research focus on the impact of genetic abnormalities on cardiovascular disease caught my eye because I am interested in pursuing cardiology as a potential medical specialty. Your article, *Role of TGF-beta2 in Congenital Heart Disease (CHD)*, piqued my curiosity because of its clear clinical implications.

I am interested in learning more about your research and the possibility of assisting on any current projects. Would you have some time to meet with me to discuss any upcoming opportunities? I am available Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 3 pm to 5 pm, but I am also happy to meet at your convenience.

If you would like me to provide my transcript or resume, please let me know.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
First Name

First Name and Last Name

College

Major

Class of ‘

Email

Phone

Example 2

Subject: Research Opportunity – Child Development and Mental Health

Good afternoon, Dr. [Last Name],

My name is [Your First and Last Name], and I am a third-year Psychology major at the University of South Carolina. I am reaching out to express my interest in your research on child development, mental health, and adversity in Latinx communities.

I plan to pursue graduate studies in Clinical Psychology with the long-term goal of becoming a practicing psychologist. I am particularly interested in how early life adversity and trauma can impact a child's mental health and emotional development.

Your work examining the unique experiences of Latinx families caught my attention because of its emphasis on cultural context and the importance of highlighting under-researched communities. This focus aligns closely with my academic goals and personal interest in supporting children and families as they navigate the challenges of adapting to a new country, language, and culture.

I would appreciate the opportunity to learn more about your current projects and to discuss the possibility of contributing to your research. Here are some times I am available to meet, though I am glad to adjust to your schedule if needed:

- Tuesdays after 2:00 p.m.
- Wednesdays before 1 p.m.
- Thursdays after 2:00 p.m.

I have also attached my resume for your reference.

Thank you for your time and consideration

Sincerely,
First Name

First Name and Last Name

College

Major

Class of ‘

Email

Phone

Example 3

Subject: Mechatronics Research Opportunities

Dear Professor _____,

My name is [Your First and Last Name], and I am a junior in your EMCH 368 003: Mechatronics class majoring in Mechanical Engineering with a minor in Computer Science. I am interested in working in this field after I graduate because of its focus on integrating machine learning techniques into robotics, and I believe that getting involved in research in mechatronics will help confirm this career path for me.

In review of your faculty page, I read recent articles you published about programming unmanned vehicles to conduct studies like surveying wildfires for search and rescue missions, taking samples of water sources for water quality analysis, and detecting obstacles on railroads. The broad application of mechatronics is fascinating to me, so I am reaching out to learn more about your research and to see if there are any opportunities for me to contribute to your work.

If you are open to meeting with me, I am available right after class or at the following times:

- Mondays: 11am-2pm
- Tuesdays/Thursdays: 3pm-5pm
- Fridays: 9am-3pm

Thank you for your consideration!

First Name

First Name and Last Name

College

Major

Class of ‘

Email

Phone

Example 4

Subject: Interest in Research about Investor Behavior

Good morning, Professor _____,

I am [Your First and Last Name], a sophomore majoring in Finance at the University of South Carolina. I am very interested in your research on institutional investors and market efficiency and am writing to ask if there might be opportunities to contribute to your work.

My career goal is to become a financial analyst, with a focus on understanding investment strategy and market dynamics. At the same time, I am considering graduate studies in Finance and am eager to build research experience. I find your work especially compelling because of its focus on how institutional investors influence markets. I appreciate how your research connects both theory and practice, and I believe contributing to it would allow me to strengthen the skills I am developing through my coursework.

I would appreciate the opportunity to learn more about your current projects and discuss how I might be able to contribute to your research. I am generally available at the following times, but would be happy to adjust if another time works better for you:

- Mondays: before 3 p.m.
- Wednesdays: before 3 p.m.
- Fridays: open availability

I attached my resume highlighting my internship experience, relevant coursework, and leadership positions.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

First Name

First Name and Last Name

College

Major

Class of ‘

Email

Phone

Handout resource

Nordquist, R. (n.d.). *How to Write a Professional Email*. Retrieved from grammar.about.com/od/developingessays/a/profemails.htm