

Finding a Mentor at UW-Madison

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Finding a Research Mentor Overview

1. Narrow interests
2. Explore researchers
3. Write professional emails and finalize your Curriculum Vitae (CV)
4. Contact potential mentors
5. Prepare for an interview

Step 1: Narrow Interests

Before searching for potential mentors, determine what you are most interested in researching. Interested in Biology? Physics? Psychology? Math? That's great! However, keep in mind that UW-Madison is a research facility packed with an extraordinary amount of opportunities. Make sure that you have a good idea of what topics interest you the most within these broader areas of study. See below for a few examples.

	Biology	Physics	Psychology	Mathematics
Subcategories	-Neurobiology -Molecular Biology -Biochemistry -Genetics	-Quantum Mechanics -Astrophysics -Particle physics -Optics	-Developmental -Clinical -Perception	-Algebra -Analysis -Differential Equations -Probability
Research Topics	-Neural Plasticity -Oncology -Metabolism -Genetic Engineering	-Quantum field theory -Dark energy -Neutrino phenomenology -Coherence theory	-Language acquisition -Psychometric methods -Auditory processing	-Number theory -Complex analysis -Mathematical biology -Random matrices

Step 2: Explore Researchers

There are various ways to find researchers on campus. *Listed below are a few online resources:*

- Discovery Portal <http://discoveryportal.org/default.aspx>
- UW Experts Guide <http://experts.news.wisc.edu/>
- UW Departments <http://www.wisc.edu/academics/departments.php>
- UW Research Centers <http://www.wisc.edu/research-centers/>
- Graduate School Programs <https://www.gradsch.wisc.edu/mas/>
- Student Job Center <https://jobcenter.wisc.edu/>

Another good idea is to explore department home pages for a specific department's latest research news! This process could open your eyes to a research area that you may not have otherwise known exists.

Additionally, do not be afraid to talk to your professors about the research he or she is working on. If it is interesting to you, ask if you can contribute to his or her work.

Staying organized while exploring potential mentors will make the process more efficient and reduce errors that can occur while trying to keep track of so much information. *Below is an example of how you can organize this important information:*

Faculty Name	Depart.	Email	Area of Research	Research tools & methods	Why interested?
David Wassarman	Genetics	xxx@wisc.edu	Molecular changes in TBI	Molecular & genetic tools, fruit flies	Want to learn more about TBI
Kate O'Connor-Giles	Genetics	xxx@wisc.edu	Synapse formation, growth, plasticity	CRISPR/Cas9 in fruit flies	Want to learn how to use CRISPR

Step 4: Contact potential mentors

Writing a professional email:

- Formal Greeting
- Brief introduction (e.g. Year in school, Intended major)
- Why are you interested in their research? Be specific!
- Contributions (e.g. your past research experience, courses that may align, skills)
- How do you hope the research experience is structured?
 - Paid vs. Credit/Volunteer
 - Length of commitment (e.g. continuing in the future)
 - Hours per week in lab and schedule
 - Times available to meet (attach schedule or state in email)
- Attach course schedule, CV/resume, and unofficial transcript (optional)

You can attach a resume in your emails to potential mentors or have one ready to be available upon request or to bring along to an interview. Below is a general outline that can be used as a guide to writing a resume. Feel free to visit drop-in hours (listed below) or the writing center (<https://writing.wisc.edu/>) for help developing your resume.

Step 5: Prepare for an interview

Has a potential mentor asked you to come in for an interview? Great! Here are some steps to take to make sure that you are properly prepared to showcase your potential.

Interview preparation:

- Read papers from the lab and be able to talk or ask questions about them
- Think about what you want to get out of a research experience
- Know what you are comfortable with (and not comfortable with)

During the interview:

- Make eye contact and act professional
- Be able to talk about why you want a research experience, and why **this** lab
- Listen attentively and ask follow-up questions
- Ask about your role in the lab
- Discuss goals, expectations, and guidelines

Additional Resources

Find a Mentor video series:

Watch: <https://wiscience.wisc.edu/findamentor>

Spring 2021 Find a Mentor Workshops:

Wednesday, March 24, 6 p.m.–7 p.m.

Monday, April 5, 6 p.m.–7 p.m.

Register: <https://wiscience.wisc.edu/findamentor>

Spring 2021 Research Peer Leader drop-in hours:

Tuesdays, 4:30pm-6:30pm

Sign-up: go.wisc.edu/oq8vf3

NAME

Mailing Address | Phone Number | Wisconsin Email

EDUCATION

University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI

Major (GPA)

Expected Grad Date

High School

Date Graduated

(Additional education; certifications, degrees in progress, etc.)

SKILLS

- Any relevant skills (Microsoft office, electronic -
communication, specific laboratory techniques, -
writing and presentation, etc.) -
- -

AWARDS

Any award received (Scholarships, Academic/Professional Acknowledgement, etc.)

Year

Received

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Department, Institution, City, State

Name of Position

Time participated in (month year-month year)

Talk about transferable skills. Avoid only listing duties and instead mention techniques applicable to the position you are applying for (e.g. As a cashier, I developed my one-on-one interpersonal communication skills by creating a welcoming environment for the customers I interacted directly with.)

WORK/VOLUNTEER (CAN SEPARATE IF DESIRED) EXPERIENCE

Institution, City, State

Name of Position

Time participated in (month year-month year)

Talk about transferable skills. Avoid only listing duties and instead mention techniques applicable to the position you are applying for (e.g. As a cashier, I developed my one-on-one interpersonal communication skills by creating a welcoming environment for the customers I interacted directly with.)

Feel free to add other details and sections to your resume. There is no 'one size fits all,' resume's will change depending your skillset and the position you are applying for. Be sure to tailor your resume to the position you are applying for, make sure the sections that are most relevant and important appear closer to the top. Limit your resume to 1-2 pages.