



## Picking Your AP Research Academic Advisor



A research mentor should be...

- ★ **CREDIBLE:** The purpose of an academic advisor is to serve as an additional resource for your research. This means that you should treat your search for a mentor like you would a search for a credible book or website, since the information you get from these sources will be used in your paper. You can look for characteristics like titles (professors, doctors, degrees in your subject area), as well as recognitions (awards for research, publications). Overall, you need to make sure this person can be trusted to help you **WITHOUT** doing any of the actual work for you (they're guides -- you still need to do the research yourself!).
- ★ **KNOWLEDGEABLE:** It doesn't matter how well-known your mentor is if they aren't experts in *your* subject area. Finding an advisor who has a ton of experience in your specific area of study will be more beneficial than finding a random professor who specializes in a general area that your topic *could* fit into. For example, say you were studying the migration of sea turtles; it would be more helpful to consult someone who performed years of research about sea turtle migration patterns than it would be to consult with a random Marine Biology Professor who might not know how to help you organize your paper.
- ★ **AVAILABLE:** Make sure that your academic advisor will actually have time to talk to you. It doesn't help if you have a mentor who is on such a busy schedule that they can't help you with your research. Address this in your introductory email; make sure they are aware of their job as your academic advisor and the tasks they must complete to aid you. If they don't have the time to help, they shouldn't be your mentor.

Asking your research mentor to help...

- ★ **INTRODUCTION:** When asking your research mentor to help you, it is important to introduce yourself, what school you attend, your grade, the course you are taking with a brief description of the course (in this case it would be AP research) and the topic of your research.
  - To help with the organization of your email, have a separate paragraph for your topic of research.
- ★ **BODY:** In the body of your email, you explain why you choose the mentor you are writing to. It is important to show that you have knowledge of what he/she is an expert in and what he/she can help you with. Also in your body paragraph, you want to address the amount of time they will be committing to (no more than communicating once a month). Lastly in your body you want to ask for their assistance with your research, or someone they would recommend if they cannot.
- ★ **CONCLUSION:** Thank the research mentor for their time and sign your name. After your ending, make sure to include any further documents and/or attachment to help explain their role as a mentor.
- ★ **TIPS:**
  - 1.) Use polite language
    - Thanking the mentor for their time, expertise and help will make the mentor more inclined to help you
  - 2.) Be clear and concise
    - The mentor you are writing to will have limited time to read and respond to your email. Do not go on an unimportant tangent or use too many descriptive words.
  - 3.) Use a professional tone
    - Make sure to re-read your email before sending it. You want to fix any grammatical or spelling errors. You want to maintain a scholarly tone throughout your email
- ★ **FUTURE COMMUNICATION:** When writing to your mentor after you have established that he/she will be helping you, you first want to update your mentor on what you are currently working on. Next you want to include any questions you have along with a copy of your work. Do not overwhelm your mentor with unneeded emails. Keep a running list of what you need to ask or tell your mentor and write a singular email.
  - Your mentor should not be doing any of your work for you. Your mentor's purpose is to assist you. They can answer any questions you may have, give you feedback or recommend certain websites or databases. Make sure to phrase your email so your mentor does not feel burdened with your research.

