

Tips for Communicating with a Mentor

Reaching Out to a Potential Mentor:

If you're unsure about how to reach out to a potential mentor or advisor, it's ok! We recommend starting with a professionally worded email (feel free to use the template below). If you haven't heard back in 5-7 days, follow up with a second email. It's not uncommon for email addresses to be filtered, and your initial message may have been lost. You can also stop by the faculty member's office (if you're on campus).

Dear Dr. [Last Name],

I am a recently admitted graduate student to [PROGRAM]. I am intrigued by your work in [AREA] and am seeking mentorship because your research interests align with my [PROFESSIONAL GOALS]. I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to connect with you.

Would you perhaps be available in the next two weeks to meet with me? I have the following availability: [INSERT DATES & TIMES during normal business hours]

Thank you for your time! I look forward to connecting with you.

Regards,

[NAME]

Quick Tips:

- Address your potential mentor appropriately: Use titles like Dr., Professor, or Judge. Faculty members in the Graduate School have the terminal degree in their discipline.
- Do not write your email as if it were a text. This is a professional communication and a first impression. Make it count!
- Remember that your mentor in a graduate program is meant to help with **professional development**, and they are busy! Use your meeting time with your mentor/advisor wisely by preparing questions before your meeting.
- Arrive to scheduled appointments ahead of time.
- Bring a notebook or device to take notes. Share your notes with your mentor/advisor after your meetings to make sure your research goals or objectives align. (People hear things differently!). Add timelines to goals if appropriate.
- If this is your first meeting with a mentor, be sure to ask them about their communication preferences.
- Get to know your mentor as a person, if possible! Think about one or two icebreaker questions to ask your mentor/advisor at each meeting so that you get to know them as a person. Research shows that mentoring relationships that are guided by **shared values** are stronger and more fulfilling to the mentee and mentor.



University of Colorado
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Professional Icebreaker Questions:

1. What brought you to UCCS?
2. What excites you about your research and teaching roles?
3. What is one goal that you have for your own professional development?
4. How do you maintain work-life balance?
5. What did you value about your own mentor/mentee relationships from your own training?
6. What do value about mentoring?
7. What advice do you have for mentees that you wish you had heard when you were a student?
8. What do former students from your research group do now? Do you keep in touch?