

Writing a Letter to Your MORE Mentor

In this assignment you will be writing your first letter to your assigned, graduate student mentor.

BEFORE you complete this assignment you should have reviewed the following- [Writing an Effective Email to Your Mentor](#)



You should follow the following guidelines for your letter:

1. **Begin with a formal (or informal) address-** Mr. Smith, or Dear Mr. Smith
2. **Introduce yourself-**
 - Include your school, enrollment in SIRs (explained), and your academic background (year in school science class, etc.).
 - Also add other things about yourself that might be useful to your mentor (I went to the science fair last year with my freshman biology project.).
 - Finally include one personal interest item-
e.g. One of my hobbies is playing the cello. I have been playing the cello since I was 7 years old.
3. **Visit the NU website of your assigned mentor.** Go back to the original mentor list to find his or her lab. Get to know what they are working on this this lab. It is important to show that you are as interested in your mentor as you want them to be interested in you. For some of you visiting this site will clearly reveal why you were matched with this particular mentor. In that case say so.

For example *I am excited to see that you are working on C. elegans since I too, want to work with them in my research.*

For others of you, the reasons for us matching you with this mentor are not quite as clear. In this case you need to say something like:

I was really interesting in the fact that your lab works with nanoparticles. I had read about these before but never understood what they are all about. I hope by working with you I will understand more about these particles and how they can be used in research.

If you go to the website of your matched mentor, and you are not at all excited by the research being done there let your teacher know as soon as possible. We can discuss this together and work it out.

4. **State your current testable question/area of research.** Try to be as clear and specific as you can with this. You can also add your current thoughts or ideas based on what you have currently read (tertiary, primary).

If you do not have a testable question, but have been matched with a MORE (Northwestern U) mentor, your instructions will appear in red.

5. **Relate your current, specific, thoughts/plans followed by questions about your topic-**
 - Explain to your mentor, in a few sentences, what you are currently “thinking” about your topic.
(i.e. I have read about the unique structure of woodpecker skulls. I have also found a local forest

preserve where woodpeckers feed. My idea is to construct a feeding stand with sensors to measure the force of impact during woodpecker feeding).

- Do not ask things that you can just *easily* look up! This might include asking about how you might specifically get measurable results, ask for *clarification* on an idea you read.
- Sometimes it will help the mentor to share a primary article you are referencing in your email.
- You may include ideas you, yourself, are currently working on, as well as questions you want to discuss/get feedback with your mentor.

If you do not have a project idea here are your options:

- As you look over the website of your mentor you may begin to have ideas and possible testable questions that come to mind. If that is the case follow the example above, but let the mentor know that you got your idea specifically from looking at what they are doing in his/her lab.
- If you cannot come up with a testable question by looking at the website of your mentor then you should let the mentor know what excited you about their research and ask the mentor if he/she has any suggestions for what you could specifically do in relation to that research. Perhaps they have an idea that they never had time to actually look at or develop and you could do that. Ask them to specifically help guide you to your testable question.
- Be sure to touch base with your teacher about your thoughts and ideas after looking over their research. It might be that the mentor gave some additional background information when he or she signed up to be a mentor.

6. **Close the letter-** Regards, Sincerely, etc. Include your name and contact information (email and cell phone, as appropriate).

Do NOT send the letter (yet!).

7. **PRINT your email and have one peer read it and edit it/make suggestions.**
You may do this more than once if you would like.

8. **Check your re-revised draft with your teacher before sending.**

9. **Send the email to your mentor. Submit your final email in Google Classroom.**