Emailing a research supervisor

Sending that first email to a potential research supervisor is a crucial step to getting your foot in the door to conducting undergraduate research. Though it may seem intimidating at first, the more you practice, research, and take the leap to connecting with faculty members, the easier it'll become.

Make every sentence count
- The subject line of the email should succinctly describe why you're contacting the faculty member.
- Short and specific is key. Faculty members don't have the time to read long emails, so every sentence you include in the email should have a purpose.
- Don't be repetitive. Some students may feel the need to re-emphasize certain points but try to resist.

Professionalism and email etiquette are key
- Always include a greeting. Professional greetings include: *Good morning*, *Good afternoon*, or *Dear*.
- Faculty members should always be addressed as "Dr." or "Prof." until the faculty member states otherwise. Always double check if a faculty member holds a PhD. While many do hold a doctorate, you do not want to make a false assumption and address someone as "Dr." when they should be addressed as "Prof.".
- Use your UCalgary email address. Other email addresses often get caught in the spam filter.
- Double check all spelling and grammar.
- Always sign off the email with your name, degree and expected graduation year. Professional sign offs include: *Regards*, *Kind Regards*, or *Sincerely*.

One size does not fit all
- Some faculties have different expectations when students connect with supervisors. You may be asked to provide a resume or CV, take part in an interview, or just have a coffee chat. Be prepared for multiple scenarios.

Example

Subject Line: Undergraduate Interested in Communications and Food Culture Research

Good morning Dr. ProfessorName,

My name is Undergraduate Student and I am currently in my third year of a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communications Studies. Having taken several courses where I've learned about the research process and methodologies within the communications discipline, I am looking for opportunities to expand my experience in conducting research.

I am particularly interested in the portrayal of family archetypes in food and culture television shows, such as Samin Nosrat's *Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat* or the Netflix programme, *Chef's Table*. I read your recent paper, *Gender Roles in Food Network Television*, and am fascinated by the exploration of how narratives can shift dramatically depending on a subject's gender despite similar backgrounds and achievements. After reviewing several of your other publications, I am very interested in both learning more about the intersections of food and culture and how I can contribute to that area of research.

If you are available, I would love to meet to further discuss your research and if there is opportunity for undergraduate students to participate. I hope to apply for the PURE awards program for a 16-week term during the spring and summer of 20xx, but am also open to considering other opportunities.

I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Regards,
Undergraduate Student
Major/Minor, Class of 20xx

Keep the subject line succinct and clear on why you are emailing the faculty member.

Professionalism is key. Include a professional salutation, and always use "Dr." or "Prof." when addressing a faculty member.

Clearly state your degree and any relevant background information. This is valuable for the faculty member to determine if you may be a good fit for their research.

Show that you've done research ahead of time. This is a good indicator for the faculty member that you are able to take initiative.

Ask for a meeting in the initial email. This is important to facilitating the next steps of determining whether a faculty member may be able to supervise your research.

Identifying what you hope to accomplish is important for the faculty member, but keep your options and your mind open in case the faculty member has other suggestions!

Always include a thank you, but keep it short.