

POTENTIAL ADVISOR FIRST CONTACT TEMPLATES

Contacting prospective advisors can be intimidating. If you are worried that you'll say the wrong thing or are not sure where to start, we understand.

That's why we've drafted these first contact templates. You can use them as a starting place to customize your own letter and make contacting that prospective advisor as painless as possible.

Prospective advisors do not expect you to be perfect or to have read every paper they've ever written. They just want to know that you've done your due diligence before reaching out.

So, read a couple of papers, then use these templates to get started. Mix and match, edit, and personalize these templates to work for you.



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POTENTIAL ADVISOR FIRST CONTACT TEMPLATES

Example Letter



Subject: Your research on the use of SCUBA in underwater basket weaving

Dear Dr. Smith,

I am in the final semester of my B.A. in sociology and am considering the Sociology of Technology Ph.D. program at Odd University. Ultimately, my research interests are on the effects of sudden technological introductions on insular communities. As I am considering which sociology programs would be a good fit to apply to, I have been reading about your work with the Lost Boy Tribes of Neverland.

Your recent paper on the introduction of SCUBA to the Underwater Basket Weavers of Neverland made me wonder about the implications of increasing their functional working hours on family life. I wonder if their strong familial orientation and insular nature would guard against the overwork culture common in developed nations. Is that something you were considering researching further?

If you have time, I would love to learn more about your research and about the program in general.

Thanks for your time.

Sincerely, Alex Doe

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MEETING REQUEST TEMPLATE

This template takes the perspective of a current student requesting a meeting to discuss the program and potential research opportunities.



Subject: [PROGRAM NAME] and your research into [TOPIC]

Dear Dr. [POTENTIAL ADVISOR],

I am a senior at [UNIVERSITY], earning my degree in [MAJOR]. As graduation approaches, I've decided to pursue a [DEGREE] in [FIELD] with the goal of becoming [CAREER GOAL].

I have been considering which [DEGREE] programs would be a good fit, when I read your paper on [PAPER TOPIC]. It caught my attention because of its alignment with my research interest into [research interests], particularly with regard to [INTERESTING DETAIL FROM PAPER].

I would like to talk with you more about working in [FIELD] and the [PROGRAM] in general. Would you be willing to meeting with me?

Thanks for considering this.
Yours Truly, [NAME]

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DIRECT APPROACH TEMPLATE

This template takes the perspective of a current student directly asking about research opportunities.



Subject: Research into [TOPIC] at [UNIVERSITY], potential applicant.

Dear Dr. [POTENTIAL ADVISOR],

I am a senior at [UNIVERSITY], earning a degree in [MAJOR] with a plan to earn a [DEGREE] in [FIELD] so that I can [CAREER GOAL].

The [PROGRAM] at [UNIVERSITY] seems like it would be a good match for my goals and, given my interest in [RESEARCH TOPIC], I thought I would reach out to you to learn more about your work in particular and potential research opportunities in your lab.

I read your paper on [PAPER TOPIC] and was surprised that [INTERESTING DETAIL]. I saw that you identified [DETAILS FROM PAPER] as next steps and was curious to learn if your research was continuing along those lines. If so, do you foresee any opportunities for new students applying to [PROGRAM] opening up in your research lab?

Sincerely, [NAME]

MULTIPLE POTENTIAL ADVISORS TEMPLATE

This template takes the perspective of someone contacting multiple potential advisors in the same program. Its goal is to ascertain program culture and open a dialog. Be sure to heavily customize this template so that each recipient gets a unique message.



Subject: Your research into [TOPIC] at [PROGRAM]

Dear Dr. [PROSPECTIVE ADVISOR],

I'm a student at [UNIVERSITY], earning a degree in [MAJOR]. After graduation, I plan to earn a [DEGREE] in [FIELD], so that I can [CAREER GOAL].

I know that alignment of research interests is a vital component when completing a [DEGREE] and have been reading papers and looking at different programs that are conducting ongoing research in [RESEARCH AREA].

I know from your recent publications that both you and Dr. [OTHER POTENTIAL ADVISOR] do research on [TOPIC], which has prompted me to look closely at the [PROGRAM].

When reading your papers, particularly [PAPER 1 and PAPER 2], I was interested to learn that [INTERESTING FINDINGS]. Will your future research continue along those lines? Do you and [OTHER POTENTIAL ADVISOR] collaborate often?

It can be difficult to get a feel for the research culture within a program from its website and faculty publications and I would value your perspective and any advice you might have for a prospective student.

Sincerely, [NAME]



EARLY CONTACT TEMPLATE

This template takes the perspective of a returning student contacting a potential research advisor early.



Subject: Your work on [TOPIC]

Dear Dr. [POTENTIAL ADVISOR],

I'm writing regarding your work on [TOPIC], which I discovered while looking into [FIELD] programs. I have earned a [DEGREE] from [UNIVERSITY] and am considering returning to school to earn a [DEGREE] so that I can [CAREER GOAL].

It's still early days, but I am particularly interested in your research into [RESEARCH TOPIC]. I read your paper on [PAPER TOPIC] and thought I'd reach out to you for more information and perhaps advice.

I found it interesting that you found [INTERESTING RESULT], when you [STUDY DETAIL]. It made me wonder about [INSIGHT INTO TOPIC]. I also read your paper on [TOPIC] and was wondering if anyone has looked into [POSSIBLE RESEARCH QUESTION].

I would love to know more in general about your ongoing and future research plans and would welcome any advice on preparing and applying to graduate school or working in the field in general.

Thanks for your time.

Sincerely,