

Email Template for Prospective Grad Students to PI

This is a template for an initial email to a prospective adviser in E3B. It is intentionally vague because we recognize that applicants have a variety of backgrounds, and initial emails look quite different depending on the background. For example, emails from current undergraduates will look different from someone who has been working as a tech for a few years, is in a Masters program, or has been working outside of academia. All of these paths (and more!) have led to successful applications to PhD programs. You may therefore select only the parts of the template below that apply to your individual situation.

Note: If you are not certain about pursuing a Ph.D., or are having difficulty articulating why you want to work with this professor, consider holding off on sending this initial email. A good first step is to reach out to current and former graduate students (emails can usually be found on the professor's lab website). Former students may be able to offer a more holistic perspective on their experience, and talk through post-Ph.D. career options.

A. Some key things to keep in mind

- **Be clear.** State why you are writing and what you hope to accomplish with the email. Clearly explain your background, your interests, and why you want to get a Ph.D. (both in general, and with this specific Professor). The ability to write clearly is paramount in a successful Ph.D.
- **Be concise.** Professors read a ton of emails.
- **Be specific.** Emails with vague statements or form letters (e.g., “Dear Professor” without using the professor's name or “I am interested in your school” without using the school's name) are not as strong as ones with specifics tailored to the recipient.
 - Part of being specific may include actually citing one or two recent publications out of the lab (can be easily found on the lab website). What the professor is publishing tells you a lot about their work, so reading these papers will be very helpful to you as well!
- **Proofread.** emailz w/ typos dont Make a good, impression

B. Template

The following template is not meant to be a “fill in the blank.” It's fine to be creative, to embellish, to add a section that isn't there, etc., within the bounds of the bolded guidelines above.

Dear Prof. <last name>,

1. Statement indicating purpose of email:

E.g., “My name is <name> and I am interested in talking with you about PhD opportunities in your lab.”

2. Brief description of your background

E.g., “I recently graduated/will soon graduate <institution>(<list degree(s), major(s), graduation year(s)>). At <institution> I completed an honors thesis with Dr. <advisor name> examining <whatever you researched/found>.” (If you want to add a lot of detail, it is fine to include additional text below your signature or an attachment.)

3. Brief description of why you are interested in this lab group

E.g., “I am interested in your lab because of a strong curiosity for many of the topics you study, particularly <insert topics>.” Here, you should also mention papers that you have read by the professor or from their lab that you like and that you think are consistent with your research interests/goals.

4. Request for a chat

E.g., “Are you available to talk via phone or video conference within the next month? I would like to ask some questions about your research and the future directions of your lab. The ideal time for me is XXX, although other times could work as well.”

For advice on what this chat will look like (what questions they will ask, what questions you should ask, how to prepare), see our [Guide to Applying and Deciding on a PhD Program](#).

5. Attach CV

I am attaching my CV. I look forward to hearing back from you. Thank you for your time!

Best,

<your name>