

1.5 Cold Email Template

How to Get into University Labs

1. **Find the right PI:** Search Google Scholar or university department pages for professors whose work overlaps yours. Labs that publish frequently are more open to students.
2. **Write about specific research:** Mention a paper or result by name. Show you actually read it.
3. **State your credentials:** Mention past projects, relevant skills, and science fair wins, because it shows that you are capable of work.
4. **Make ONE specific ask:** Do not ask for a general "mentorship," but ask for a 15-minute Zoom call regarding their work.

The Email Template

Subject: High School Student Research Question regarding [Insert Their Specific Research Topic]

Dear Dr. [Last Name],

My name is [Your Name], a rising [Grade Level] from [City, State], very passionate about [Your Broad Field]. I came across your lab's work at the intersection of [Topic 1, Topic 2, and Topic 3], and found it really fascinating. Your lab's mission to [state their specific mission/goal] is exactly the direction I want to pursue in [Your Target Major/Field].

(Stating your credentials)

This past year, I developed [Project Name], a [Brief 1-sentence description of project] that [Your Highest Award, e.g., the Grand Award at ISEF]. I specifically conducted [Specific technical task] and designed [Specific technical task 2], which gave me a real appreciation for [Concept relevant to the professor's work]. It made me want to go beyond just building devices and actually understand [Professor's specific research focus], which is what drew me to your work.

I also recently [mention secondary experience, e.g., spent the summer at X / completed an independent study on Y], where I supported work with [Specific hard skills, e.g., Python-based data pipelines / CAD modeling]. That experience pushed me to realize how much more there is to learn in a real lab setting, and is what's driving me to reach out.

If there is any room in your lab this summer, I would love the chance to contribute as a

volunteer and discuss your work. I am available [Timeframe, e.g., full-time June through August] and have attached my CV and [engineering portfolio / GitHub link].

Thank you for your time.

Best,

[Your Name]

[Link to Portfolio/Website]

Instead of just telling a professor you are capable, you need to show them. Include these to prove you have the technical skills to survive in their lab:

- **Digital Portfolio / Personal Website:** A clean site showcasing your past research, science fair boards, and technical skills.
- **Personal Projects:** A link to a Google Drive folder or document showing photos of hardware you built, 3D CAD models, or video demos of prototypes.
- **GitHub Repository:** Crucial for computational or machine learning projects. Shows your actual code, commit history, and software capabilities.
- **1-Page CV:** A highly focused resume detailing your lab techniques, programming languages, past awards, and relevant coursework.