

Undergraduate students often ask me how to find research opportunities.

The most common question: "Is it hard/competitive to find an undergraduate research position?"

A better question: "what can *I* do to get involved in research that interests me?"

Having assisted hundreds of students at UC Berkeley, I'm a firm believer in that any student can do so with enough persistence.

Where do you start?

Here's my take on how to start getting involved in the exciting world of cutting-edge research.

1 Apply to University Research Programs

University research programs are designed to connect students to labs with open projects.

These programs often provide units or funding.

Look for these research programs on your university research office's website.

Note. For more details, see my resources on research programs at UC Berkeley and USC on my blog.

2 Cold Email

2.1 How to Compose a Cold Email

Send a professor and their graduate students an email inquiring about open positions at their lab.

Professors can get hundreds of emails a day, making it difficult for them to respond to every one.

This reason is why I suggest reaching out to the graduate students in the labs as well.

See this [Professional Emailing resource](#).

This document includes writing tips and some examples of successful emails.

2.2 Where to Find Research Websites

1. Department faculty pages

Note. Explore outside your major's department if interdisciplinary research interests you

2. University research centers and labs
3. University press research articles

4. Nearby research institutions

Example. UC Berkeley Research Links

- [Faculty Finder Database](#)
- [OURS Discovery Opportunities Database](#)
- [EECS Dept Centers and Labs](#)
- Nearby institutions: [UCSF](#) and [Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory](#)

Example. USC Research Links

- [CS Dept Areas and Labs](#)
- Nearby institutions: [Information Sciences Institute](#) and [Institute for Creative Technologies](#)

3 Connect with People

Chat with faculty, graduate students, and peers about their ongoing research.

Follow up with them about any open positions in their projects.

3.1 In Classes

You found some material in a course fascinating and want to dive deeper into understanding it?

Try talking to the course staff (professor and the teaching assistants) about their research.

3.2 At Seminars

Do you have a short gap in between classes and don't know what to do during that time?

Consider attending a department seminar to learn about current research at your university and other institutions.

These seminars are usually open to everyone.

To find your department's event schedule, try searching for "[your school name] [your department's name] seminar schedule or event calendar" on your favorite search engine.

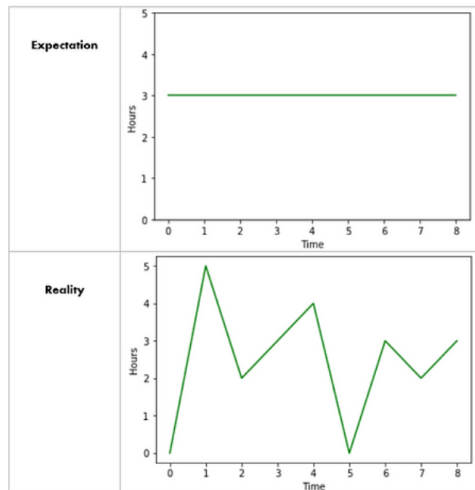
Consider signing up for their mailing lists if you'd like regular updates on upcoming events.

Example. Some schedules that I follow(ed)

- [EECS Dept](#), UC Berkeley
- [Redwood Center for Theoretical Neuroscience](#), UC Berkeley
- [MCB Dept](#), UC Berkeley
- [BIDS](#), UC Berkeley
- [CS Dept](#), USC
- [Communication & Journalism](#), USC

4 Final Thoughts

Time Spend on Research Across a Semester



Sometimes research has its downtime like during exam week.

Weeks when it is super busy like during onboarding.

It is normal for the time put in per week to fluctuate.

Make sure to communicate changes with your research mentors.

Research can be very challenging at times.

It may not be for everyone.

But you don't know if you don't try.

Just go for it!