

Research in Psychology

Updated: March 2025

Smith Psychology Club

Why pursue research as an undergraduate?

Volunteering in a research lab as an undergraduate is a fantastic work experience, even for those who do not intend to pursue a career in academia. As a research assistant, you'll learn to work with real datasets using analysis software, developing hard skills that will set you apart for future jobs. You'll also learn how to read, gather, and present on pre existing literature— a skill that will prepare you to succeed in upper level coursework. Working in research also allows you to develop a strong professional network with your professors.



Why pursue research as an undergraduate?

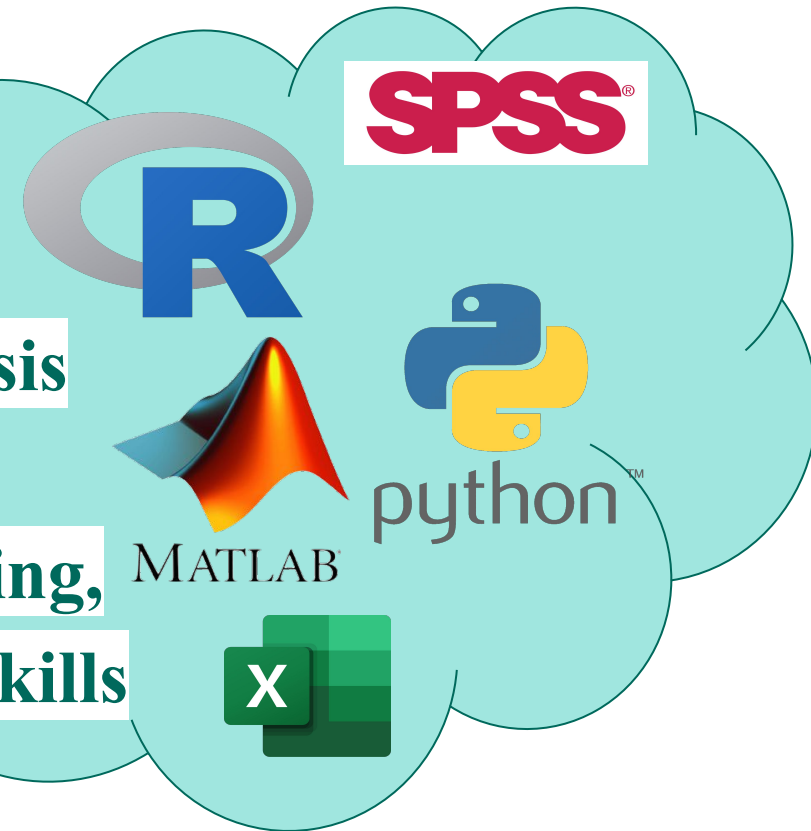
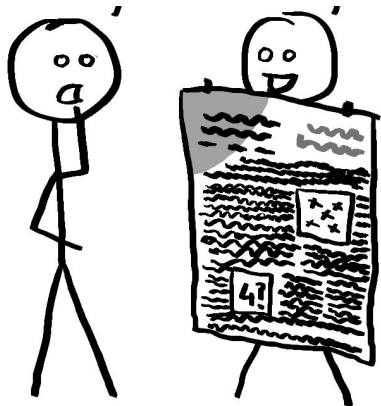
What skills might you learn...?

qualtrics^{XM}

Data collection and
survey management

Data analysis
software,
programming,
computer skills

Creating and sharing
original research (posters,
papers, etc.)



What does research for undergraduates even look like?

Research can occur in many settings, often at colleges and universities. Most faculty will be engaged in ongoing research projects, though not all professors have formal “labs.”

You can typically see which faculty members have official research labs by going to the official college website and reading faculty bios.

Research volunteer positions for undergrads are never advertised in a central location (unlike other campus jobs, you don't apply through a portal). **Most positions require that you seek out the opportunity yourself, either by emailing the professor to ask if they take student volunteers, looking at their lab's website for an application, etc.**

Just because a professor does not run a lab does not mean that they don't do research! If a faculty member's specialty area interests you, then you should reach out and say that. You don't have to make it a formal job application, just say you'd like to talk more about their research and go from there.

What does research for undergraduates even look like?

Students can also pursue research outside of their college! Often pursued through summer internships, many students will work at another institution to gain research experience.

For clinical psychology, some research happens at medical institutions and hospitals rather than small liberal arts colleges.

It is not required to pursue research on or off your campus, and neither opportunity is “better” than the other. This is all to say, there are many ways to explore research as an undergraduate.

What does research for recent graduates look like?

Recent graduates looking for jobs in psychology research will often work in what are called **post-bacc research jobs**. In these roles, many students work as research assistants, lab managers, etc. for around 2-3 years before applying to graduate school or moving into a long-term job.

These jobs are a great introduction to what it might be like to attend a graduate school program that is focused around research.

How to find jobs and internships in psychology research

Talk to your professors

Take advantage of the greatest resource around you— book office hours appointments with faculty in your department!

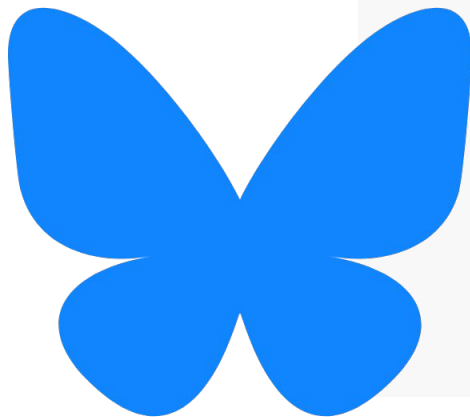
Prepare an agenda for your meeting beforehand: consider what type of a research internship or job you're looking for (i.e. clinical, social psych, etc.), where you'd like to be geographically (do you need to be at home? on campus?), what type of funding situation you'll be in (can you work an unpaid volunteer position, apply for funding support), and what kinds of projects you'd want to work on.

Your professors cannot *get* you jobs or internships, but if you provide enough information about your expectations for the position, they could help you locate several opportunities to apply for.

Networking online

Websites like LinkedIn, Handshake and the Smith Alumni Network (both of the latter for Smith students) can connect you with possible internship opportunities. In academia, LinkedIn is not as commonly used as other fields.

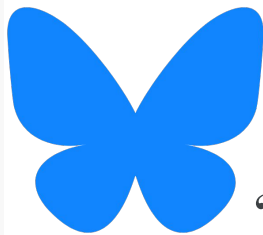
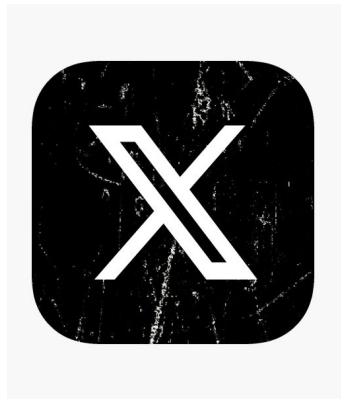
Uncommonly shared info: Most researchers who network online and post internship or job opportunities are on **X/Twitter** or **BlueSky** (an alternative to X). Many research labs have accounts on these sites and will post or repost research opportunities.



Networking online

How would I even get started networking online???

LinkedIn: Create your page by adding any relevant information. Look through the page for your college and see who else is currently a student there—you should start to network with your peers and build from there! You can follow institutions like the APA, NIMH, NSF, etc. who post about things relevant to psychology research.



X or BlueSky: Make a professional profile if you intend to network with people in your field by following them. Find researches whose work interests you, labs that you might want to work in, etc. and see if they repost anything regarding jobs or internships. Some accounts like “Clinically Psyched” create communities for early career professionals and students to connect and find resources!

Peer networking

Find out what your classmates or recent alums have done with their psychology majors! Chances are, if an internship or job site has recently had someone from your college work for them, they may be open accepting another student.

Sometimes a little bit of internet sleuthing can go a long way: look into some recent alums on various professional networking sites (LinkedIn, X) and figure out what they do!

Ask around among your peers and learn what others have done during their summers or are applying to for future jobs.

Professional networking

Many professional organizations have “**special interest groups**” or various divisions that offer membership to students and early career professionals.

*Example: American Psychological Association (general psychology),
Association for Cognitive and Behavioral Therapies (clinical psychology)*

Special interest groups, otherwise known as “SIGs,” can be specific to students. Many of these groups have email lists where post-bacc research jobs and internships are shared (membership fees range, some are free).

You can also follow them on sites like X (without having to pay any membership fee) and see similar content regarding professional opportunities for networking.