

The best email scripts for cold-emailing

By [Benjamin Todd](#) · Published June 2016

Here's a collection of the most useful email scripts we've found for asking for introductions and small favours from people you don't know. It's a work in progress. Send suggestions on what to include to ben@80000hours.org.

How to ask for an introduction

A basic script from the Muse

Hi [name],

I hope all is well with you. As you know, I've been [context: looking for a new job, raising capital, working in sales at XYZ company]. I noticed that you're connected to [target name] and was hoping that you could introduce us for [reason] if you feel comfortable doing so.

I've included an easy-to-copy blurb below, to provide context, but let me know if there's any other information I can provide. I appreciate your help!

[Your name]

[SOURCE](#)

Scott Britton

Britton is a successful tech entrepreneur. [Here's his advice.](#)

How to set up an informational interview

Ramit Sethi

An informational interview is an opportunity to meet someone who works in a position or industry you'd like to work in, where you can ask them questions about their job and get the inside scoop.

Never, ever directly ask for a job in an informational interview. That's a big no-no. You can turn an informational interview into a potential job opportunity, but only if you approach it wisely. Here's the first step of that process: The email introduction for an informational interview.

By the way, the best place to get informational interviews is via your alumni association. People who went to the same college have a bond with each other, even decades later.

To: Jane

From: Samantha

Subject: Michigan State grad — would love to chat about your work at Deloitte

Hi Jane,

My name is Samantha Kerritt. I'm a '04 grad from Michigan State (I know you were a few years before me) and I came across your name on our alumni site. [TELL THEM HOW YOU CAME ACROSS THEIR NAME SO YOU DON'T SEEM LIKE A CREEP]

I'd love to get your career advice for 15-20 minutes. I'm currently working at Acme Tech Company, but many of my friends work in consulting and each time they tell me how much they love their job, I get more interested. [THE FIRST SENTENCE SAYS WHAT SHE WANTS. MOST PEOPLE ARE FLATTERED THAT PEOPLE WANT/VALUE THEIR ADVICE.]

Most of them have told me that if I'm interested in consulting, I have to talk to someone at Deloitte. Do you think I could pick your brain on your job and what motivated you to choose Deloitte? I'd especially love to know how you made your choices after graduating from Michigan State. [THE PHRASE "PICK YOUR BRAIN" IS ONE OF THE BEST WAYS TO ASK FOR ADVICE AND FLATTER, AND "MICHIGAN STATE" REINFORCES SHARED BOND]

I can meet you for coffee or at your office...or wherever it's convenient. I can work around you! [THE BUSY PERSON IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN YOU. TREAT THEM ACCORDINGLY.]

Would it be possible for us to meet? [A BUSY PERSON CAN SIMPLY REPLY TO THIS WITH A "YES" — PERFECT. NOTE THAT I DIDN'T ASK FOR THE TIME/LOCATION AS THAT'S TOO MUCH INFORMATION IN THE FIRST EMAIL.]

Thanks,

-Samantha

[LINK](#)

Scott Britton

[More advice](#)

Questions to ask in informational interviews

Ramit Sethi

[Suggested questions](#)

Cultivated culture

You will not and should not mention anything about the opening at their company. People innately enjoy helping others and if you follow the steps above, they will bring this up naturally. You will want to prepare a list of questions that gets them to open up about themselves and the company. I like to ask them several softballs to get things warmed up and then hit them with a few questions they are guaranteed to remember.

Here is a quick set that I've had success with in the past (I've found the last one really seems to stick):

- I saw you worked at [Previous Companies]. How did you end up going from [First Industry] to becoming interested in [Current Company]?
- You hear a lot about [Current Company] in the news, but I'd love to hear more about why you love working there. What's your favorite part?
- What is one totally unexpected lesson you've learned from working at [Current Company]?

The "Million Dollar" Question

Regardless of the questions you choose, there is one that you must always be sure to ask:

- “What is the biggest challenge your team is facing right now?”

Really dig in here, get them to be specific. This information is going to be critical in helping you land a referral from this person, as well as getting the offer further down the road.

[LINK](#)

An extra tip

Ask about *exceptions*. Who landed a job in this area without the normal background? Who landed a job with much less experience than people normally have? How did they do it?

This can help you identify more effective ways of entering the position.

How to ask for recommendations for people to talk to

Ramit Sethi

Hello John,

Hope all is well.

If you recall, we spoke a few months ago when I was exploring new career opportunities in information security (I was your student at the time). Thanks again for agreeing to be my reference! [REMIND THE BUSY PERSON HOW YOU KNOW EACH OTHER]

I was browsing the the Acme Career site the other day and the Research Scientist role caught my eye. I think it'd be perfect for me considering my work on insider threat-related projects at Current Company. [NOTE THAT THE FOCUS OF THIS EMAIL IS ASKING FOR RECOMMENDATIONS, NOT DIRECTLY ASKING FOR A JOB. JOHN UNDERSTANDS YOU'RE LOOKING FOR WORK AND DOESN'T WANT TO BE PUT ON THE SPOT. IF HE WANTS TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT THE POSITION, HE WILL.]

From what I remember, it sounds pretty similar to the work you do at Acme. By any chance, do you know of anyone there that you think I should chat with? I'd love to learn more about the role so I can see if it's the right fit for me.

If not, no problem — just wanted to keep you in the loop. Thanks again for all your help!

Take care,

Roger

[LINK](#)

How to ask an important person for a favor

Adam Grant's advice

[Link](#)

Tim Ferriss

[Link](#)

Ramit Sethi

I want to share a private email with you that I wrote to NYT Bestselling Author Ben Casnocha when I wanted him to help me with my 10 More Little Life Experiments ebook. My comments are in brackets:

Hey Ben,

I'm putting together a short free ebook with fascinating/actionable test results (e.g., material on marketing, business, lifestyle design, social dynamics, career hacks, etc). [Quickly introduce what I'm doing and get them excited about it. Note how I skip over introductions because I already know Ben. If I didn't, it would be important to introduce who I am and why he should read this email.]

I'd love to have you contribute, and wanted to see if you'd be interested. I already have a great idea of what your test result could be. [VIPs expect you to want something from them. Get to the point. Again, this is not the approach I would take with everyone, but it works here because Ben is (1) insanely busy and (2) a friend.]

I'll be putting IWT's marketing muscle behind it — we'll be sharing it with our list of 200,000+ and we expect to have at least 500,000 other emails going out. The emails will have links to your site. [Benefit. Why should he care? Note that almost anyone would love to get this kind of exposure. (And note the meta lesson of me promoting Ben in this very email. His blog is awesome and you should read it.)]

All I would need from you is ONE great test/result that you've run. For example, one of the following list:

1. How I started waking up earlier (lifestyle)
2. One phrase I always use when I meet someone new (social dynamics)
3. How I got more people to join my email list (business/marketing) [Anticipate the needs of the reader. As he reads, he's saying, "Hmm...so what would this require?" BOOM — proactively hit him with specific examples.]

(For you, I'm thinking about conversational techniques you used to become more interested/interesting...or how you elicit people to become more open by being transparent yourself. Also, you had that AWESOME tip about speaking, where you take a mid-talk break and tell them 5 books to write down, and everyone wakes up. People love that.) [Personalize it. I personalized every email I sent and got a tremendous response rate of over 90%. Use my motto — "Don't make the busy person do your work for you" — and suggest ideas to them. There's more to this principle that I outline in my ebook on writing winning emails (see below).]

We'll include ~300-word case study about a successful test you've run. Here's a previous ebook we did with examples from people like BJ Fogg, Mark Sisson, and Josh Kaufman: [Include a finished result, if possible. This also shows him big names I worked with in the past, so he can see this will be a gathering of renowned contributors]

[LINK TO FINISHED RESULT](#)

Our deadline is Wednesday, September 18th. What do you think?

-Ramit

P.S. If you're interested but not sure what you'd contribute, let me know and I can give you a quick call to share some ideas. [VIPs get swamped with emails. Sometimes, I prefer to hop on a 5-minute call while I'm in between errands. So I offer that option here.]

What are the takeaways?

- **Be brief.** VIPs are busy and do not want to read your tortured expository essay on your life history, food allergies, and the mole on your back
- **Focus on what's in it for THEM.** Benefit-driven, focused on benefit to THEM ("putting the full IWT muscle behind it")

- **Offer a clear CTA (call to action).** You wouldn't believe how many people end their emails to me with "Yeah, so...wow, I wrote more than I thought" DELETE
- **Anticipate every objection and counter it before they can consciously voice it.** Who's going to be in this? Oh, here are past people I worked with. I don't have any ideas. Oh, let's get on a call and I'll help you come up with some. Etc.
- **Break the rules.** I routinely break every rule in this list (but that depends on the recipient and the message). I talk more about this below.