

Advice for e-mailing about research assistant and honours thesis positions

When you reach out to faculty about research assistant (RA) or honours thesis positions, I think that a three-paragraph template is a good place to start—you don't want the e-mail to be too brief or too long. Here's what I would recommend.

Paragraph 1 (2-3 sentences)

Introduce yourself and note your year (e.g., 1B, 3A) and major. Express the type of position that you are interested in filling (e.g., volunteer RA; co-op RA; honours thesis).

Paragraph 2 (3-4 sentences)

Talk about why you want to join this particular lab—you *do not* want to be generic here! Find the researcher's lab page and poke around. Read any research summaries they have, or the abstracts of 1-2 recent papers, and express that you find this stuff interesting. Write a couple sentences about what you find interesting. (*Note: If you are applying for an honours thesis, write one more sentence about a potential research idea. You probably won't end up actually pursuing this idea, but it shows thoughtfulness.*)

Note that the lab does not have to align perfectly with your long-term goals (for example, there are not enough clinical psychology lab positions to hold everyone who wants to go into clinical psychology), but you should at least be fairly interested in what the lab does. This is as much for you as it is for them; being in a research lab where you are totally uninterested in the work is a major drag.

Paragraph 3 (2 sentences)

Very simple here. I would just say "*I have attached my transcript and resume for your consideration*" or something like that in one sentence, then something like "*Thank you for your time and I hope to hear from you.*" Then sign off and you're done!