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Professional Communication (or, how to write an email to a professor so it gets a positive response)
What is the ideal mentor-advisee relationship?
How do you make it happen?
What’s worked for you?
Our agenda

• Overarching rules of thumb
• How to find a mentor (establishing new relationships)
• Nurturing and maintaining the relationship
Overarching rules

1. Better too formal than too informal
2. Better too polite than not polite enough
3. No typos
Overarching rules, cont.

1. Clear subject heading; say what you need, politely
2. Keep it short (2 paragraphs max); use bolding or formatting to make clear the “action items”
3. Summarize in the email; attach or link supplemental information
4. OK to resend after a few days (“you may have missed this”, “sorry to bother you” etc.); after that, follow up in person.
Finding a mentor: 3 routes

• Apprenticeship programs

• Through classes:
  • go to office hours
  • mobilize contacts

• “Strategic doorknocking”
“strategic doorknocking”: 5 steps

1) Find faculty with interests close to yours
2) Check the “grapevine” – what is s/he like to work with?
3) Read an article
4) Meet with top candidates (and establish your credibility)
5) Pop the question!
6) Using email as part of this method
“strategic doorknocking”

1. Find faculty with interests close to yours
   - web search (departments, Research Centers)
   - networking (faculty, GSIs, other undergrads)
   - faculty expertise DB
“strategic doorknocking”

2) Check the “grapevine” – what is s/he like to work with?

What kind of mentor will work best for you?

What to do if this mentor has a different style?
“strategic doorknocking”

3) Read an article

• From library
• From professor’s web page
• Think of a couple of interesting questions
4) Meet with top candidates

Agenda:

• **Apprenticeship**: ask about *their* work

• **Independent**: solicit feedback on *your* idea

• **Both**: establish your credibility: resume, recommendations/reference, transcript

“strategic doorknocking”
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4) Meet with top candidates

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