



# University of Pittsburgh

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## **Q: “How Can I Find a Neuroscience Research Home?”**

### **A: *Some General Advice:***

1. Be sure that you're ready, willing, and able to make the commitment. Research takes time and effort, and you reap what you sow. It should be a priority for you that is at least as important as your most important academic courses.
2. Complete “Introduction to Neuroscience” and/or “Brain and Behavior” first. This isn't a requirement, of course, but it's quite useful to help you define your research interests.
3. Look beyond the relatively small number of faculty in the Dept. of Neuroscience . . . there is a much larger Neuroscience community on campus, scattered across many departments, within both A&S and the School of Medicine. To see all your choices (comprising more than 90 faculty), visit the Center for Neuroscience (CNUP) website:

<http://cnup.neurobio.pitt.edu/>

Under “People”, select “Training Faculty”, and look through the broad, diverse research interests that are represented on campus. If you click on each name, you will open up a new page with more details for each faculty member.

4. Narrow your list to 8-10 faculty you want to contact. That sounds like a lot, but half of them may be “dead ends”, for various reasons (see #6, below). Before you contact a faculty member, read one of his or her recent published research papers (a few are listed on each faculty member's web page). You may not understand much of the paper, but it will give you a good idea of the general questions asked and technical approaches used in that lab.

5. Send a personalized, separate email to each of the faculty you want to meet. Keep it brief and to-the-point. Proof read carefully! No text message slang or abbreviations. Introduce yourself (year, major; no long resumes, no C.V.), and state your interest in their research program (easier if you've read one of their papers). Ask to arrange a meeting with them to discuss their research. Suggest 2-3 days and time slots that you're available for such a meeting in this initial email contact.

- a. NOTE: At this point, you don't need to indicate that you're looking for a research position. . . they likely will assume so, but you should meet with them personally before YOU decide if their lab is a good fit for your interests. Keep your options open! They'll also want to meet with you before they commit to anything.

6. Don't get discouraged if your first attempts are not successful. Some laboratories NEVER take undergrad researchers. Some faculty may have labs that already are full, or they may be too busy at this time. Be persistent! Every qualified student who is committed to finding a research opportunity will be able to find one.

7. Still need help? Contact Dr. Steve Meriney ([meriney@pitt.edu](mailto:meriney@pitt.edu)) or Dr. Susan Sesack ([sesack@pitt.edu](mailto:sesack@pitt.edu)).