

HOW TO BE A SUCCESSFUL RESEARCH ASSISTANT

Every student undertaking research with a faculty mentor wants to be a successful research assistant, but not everyone is aware, when they begin, how to accomplish this. Here are some tips to assist you that are based on former students' research experiences.

A successful research assistant has the following attributes:

- (1) The RA has the courses and skills necessary to understand and contribute to his/her mentor's project.
- (2) The RA is dependable and can be relied upon to arrive on time for his/her scheduled appointments and to put in the required number of research hours each week.
- (3) The RA is enthusiastic and eager to learn. This means that you:
 - a) Come prepared to your meetings with your mentor.
 - b) Complete the research assignments on time.
 - c) If given a paper to read, read it thoroughly and are prepared to discuss it.
 - d) Ask a lot of questions. Your questions form the basis of much of your discussion with your mentor. Questions are a sign of an active and intelligent mind.
 - e) Share your own ideas, or related information, or concepts from other courses you have taken that are related to the research topic.
- (4) The RA displays great intellectual involvement in the research topic. This means that you:
 - a) Do additional readings on your own on topics related to your research project. Share your thoughts and ideas with your mentor.
 - b) Bring relevant articles you have located to your mentor's attention.
 - c) Creatively analyze the data you are collecting. Come up with ways to solve any difficulties you encounter with the project or suggest hypotheses to explain patterns in the data you have collected.
 - d) Display initiative. Don't wait for your mentor to always suggest the next step. Go to your weekly meetings with your mentor prepared with your own ideas.