

Asking for College and Career Advice

Duty/Concept Area

Developing Communication and Interpersonal Skills

Scenario

You aren't sure which direction to take your college search or the next steps in your career. Fortunately, there's a person (or people) in your network who can provide solid guidance. Though you know the person is busy, you want to ask for his or her advice.

Big Question

What's the smartest way to reach out for advice?

Focused Questions

1. How do we contact new people to ask for help?
2. What is the best way to structure an email so it is professional?
3. How do we value and show appreciation for someone's time?
4. Why is an email more appropriate in business correspondence than a text message or social media message?

Project-Based Assessment

- Identify someone in your own network who you might go to for advice (e.g., teacher, coach, relative, family friend).
- Identify what kind of advice you need (e.g., college recommendation, careers to explore).
- Read the guides on pages 78–80 from author Danny Rubin's book of writing templates called *Wait, How Do I Write This Email?* Identify key words and phrases that make the samples sound professional and make them strong.
- Using the template below, write your email. Do not copy entire sentences directly from the text; instead, use the key words that you identified earlier. With the career advice email, it's important to seek someone's good counsel and not ask for a job.

Resources

Template from *Wait, How Do I Write This Email?*, provided below

When writing someone you know

Subject line: Career questions, could use your advice

Hi _____,

I hope everything is going well at _____.

I'm at a crossroads with my career right now and could use your guidance. [Then, provide detail in one or two lines about why you need help; for instance, "I'm working right now at a research lab but think I might want to go back to school for a PhD. I would value your perspective before I make any big moves."]

NOTE: "Value your perspective" — that line will make the other person feel like a million bucks.

Please let me know if we can get together over the next week and talk for a bit.

Thanks so much,

Your first name

Email signature

When writing someone you don't know very well

Subject line: Career questions, could use your advice

Hi _____,

My name is _____, and I [put yourself in context and how you came upon this person; for instance, "found your name in the alumni directory for Big State University"]. I hope you're doing well.

I'm at a crossroads with my career right now and could use your guidance. [Then explain in one to two lines why you need help; for instance, "I'm working right now at a research lab but think I might want to go back to school for a PhD. I would value your perspective before I make any big moves."]

[Then, since the person is a relative stranger, explain why you would "value" the person's perspective; for instance, "As someone who went through the PhD program, I hope you can help me understand the pros and cons of the decision."]

Please let me know if we can get together over the next week and talk for a bit.

Thanks so much,

Your first name

Email signature