

## **Tips for finding a lab/mentor**

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The 'perfect' mentor should be:

- someone who works in an area of which you are passionate.
- well-funded, well-published and renowned in their field.
- motivated to continue making an impact in their field, despite previous successes (this is especially important for older mentors).
- well-respected by faculty, students and staff.
- available to you.
- willing to spend a significant amount of time mentoring and teaching you.
- someone who has a personality that is compatible with yours.
- someone whose lab environment appeals to you.
- someone who is likely to remain at the university for the duration of your education.

But how do you know if they're all of these things?

1. Read up on their research. This can be as simple as examining their website and reading the abstracts of their most recent papers.
2. Examine their publication record. Do they publish often and in 'good' journals? Can you find reports, news stories or write-ups about their work online?
3. Examine the publication records of their students. It is great if your mentor publishes a lot, but if their students do not it does not bode well for you.
4. Ask about their current funding situation and history of funding. This should not offend potential mentors, but also maybe shouldn't be the very first question you ask either.
5. Talk to the members of the lab group without the mentor around to try to gauge their honest opinion. Also talk candidly with the other graduate students in the GSBS about their impressions of different faculty members.
6. Some things to consider asking lab members and other students:
  - a. How 'hands-on' is the mentor? On the scale of 'micromanager' to 'I never see them' where do they fall? Note: some very independent, self-motivated students do well with little oversight, while some need much more frequent attention.
  - b. Do they get to travel and present at conferences?
  - c. What is the average 'time to graduation' for students in the lab?
  - d. How much do they collaborate with other labs, both inside the same institution, and abroad?
  - e. What is the leadership situation like? Are there post-docs, or lab-techs? Are these individuals available for mentorship and assistance? Who gets most of the workload?
7. Evaluate the lab environment. Is it congenial, isolating, too-crowded, do people appear happy? Does there appear to be enough resources to go around or are people fighting for space or equipment? Do the lab members socialize outside work? Is the lab organized and clean? Depending on your personality, these things may matter a lot or a little.