

# How to Succeed as an Undergraduate Science Researcher at Brandeis University

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The information below was written by the [Brandeis Science Communication Lab](#).  
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- **Put in the time and plan to work effectively**
  - Identify the purpose of your project and what you need to do to carry it through to completion
  - Break up the project into incremental goals with deadlines.
  - Prepare effectively for the time in lab – read background papers, write protocols, make solutions, start making crosses or strains, do online training if you can, etc.
  - Identify a feedback mechanism to help you evaluate your performance in the lab.
  - If you are paid to do research during summer, achieving your goals for your project might require a schedule outside a typical 9-to-5 workday and only limited vacation time.
  - Your hours are noticed even when you think no one does.
- **Expand your understanding of your research field**
  - Read at least one academic paper related to your field per month. Discuss its implications and limitations with peers, near peers and mentors.
  - Engage in research exploration during the summer for skill development.
  - Engage in research more aligned to your major during the semesters on campus.
- **Cultivate your professional community**
  - Get to know everyone in the lab and in your program.
  - Update your LinkedIn account and CV with your research and coursework experience. Include the PI's name, a brief research description, presentations, and expectations.
  - Identify mentors who will support you and your success. Then, nurture those relationships with thank you notes, scheduled meetings and free coffee/tea/cookies/lunch (yes, you pay).
- **Have strong letters of recommendation written about you**
  - Make a point of getting to know your science professors so that when you ask them to write a letter of rec, they know you better than "so-and-so got a 93.5% in my large-lecture class." Go to their office hours and ask them about their research, ask them for advice, ask them about grad school. Become interested in them, and they will be interested in you.
  - When you ask someone to write a letter for you, consider sending the recommender your personal statement, resume and transcript. Remind them why you are awesome and how your next step connects with your academic or professional goals.
- **Gain skills in science communication**
  - Identify role models in science communication. What do you like about their presentation? How can you incorporate more of that? What don't you like? Why?
  - Talk one-on-one and in group settings about science.
  - Present at group/lab meeting.
  - Present posters at events or conferences such SciFest (even if you worked off campus during the summer); it is a valuable experience.
  - Write abstracts.
  - [Make an appointment with the Science Communication Lab](#) and have your poster or abstract reviewed by a CommLab fellow.