

## **How to find a BA-level Research Assistant position (i.e., after graduation, before grad school)**

*Compiled by Prof Karen J Mitchell (last updated 8/17)*

### **General Tips:**

- (1) Get some RA experience as an undergrad BEFORE you graduate. The principle investigators of labs (PIs, the faculty who run the lab) get lots of applications for every position. ANY experience you can offer will be to your advantage (even if it's not exactly what the PI does, it is general research experience).
- (2) Start early. Labs tend to mostly hire new BA-level RAs to start first thing in the Fall (Aug-Sept). Labs often start placing ads for these positions in the Spring or even earlier. (I go to a cognitive conference in November, and it is not unusual for faculty to already be interviewing students for RA positions for the following fall!). So, if you want a job next fall, start looking this fall. This is not always the case. There will be postings straight through summer right up through Aug/Sept, because sometimes a lab PI gets a new grant, an RA quits unexpectedly, etc. But, to give yourself the best chance, start early. The real rush of ads tends to be around April 15, as current RAs find out they did (or did not) get into grad school and a PI knows what their needs will be.
- (3) Be persistent. These jobs are precious, so you will have to do quite a bit of leg work (well, internet surfing) and send out lots of applications. But, remember, you want to be an RA---persistence is critical! Show your research skills by sleuthing on the internet to ferret out positions (see below for some ways to start).
- (4) Be as flexible as you can afford to be. Some of our graduates have landed really good full-time RA positions after volunteering for a semester or taking a part-time position. When more money opened up, they easily slid into the full-time gig. Also, remember that ANY research experience is good research experience. You may have to take a position somewhat removed from your central interests. As long as you will be gaining skills you can apply later, it is worth it!
- (5) Be sure to let your advisor and other profs know your plan to find an RA position after graduation. They might be able to help.

### **Some Specific Leads to get you started:**

- (1) Search on the websites of professional—i.e., psychology--organizations (you can even target specific organizations if you are interested in a particular branch of psychology).

For example, the first two websites below are primarily for positions in cognitive or cognitive neuroscience labs. They are sponsored by the Psychonomic Society and Cognitive Neuroscience Society, respectively:

<http://www.psychonomic.org/jobs>

Scroll all the way to the bottom for RA positions:

<http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs174/1111483570604/archive/1118096540871.html>

But, you can find websites for other areas of psychology, as well. So, for example, if you are interested in social psychology, there is a site sponsored by the Society for Personality and Social Psychology that has several BA-level RA positions listed at any given time.

<http://www.spsp.org/forums/ForumSearchResults.aspx?id=4de21a96-2b4d-46ae-b855-63bfb36def44&hhSearchTerms=research+assistant>

Although this site says "clinical", it actually posts all kinds of research positions:

<http://clinicalpsychgradschool.org/pbacc.php>

(2) There are general job search engines that tend to be popular with research labs (and more often university Human Resource departments [HR]) and they will list Bachelor-level RA positions on these more general job sites. For example:

If you go to <http://www.indeed.com> and use the search term "research assistant psychology" you are likely to get some hits (depending on the time of year). You can constrain your search by area, as well (e.g., PA or West Chester PA). In my previous lab we often posted our positions here.

Simply Hired is another general website that tends to carry RA type listings:

<http://www.simplyhired.com/k-psychology-research-assistant-jobs.html>

Psychoneuroxy sounds like a hokey name for a job site, but it lists US and international research positions, including research assistant: <http://www.psychoneuroxy.com/>

Or, you could even try just typing "BA-level research assistant in psychology" into Google

(3) Another approach is to find a school/city/region where you'd like to work (or any cities that have Universities) and search on individual University's HR websites. I know that at my last place, we were required to post our BA-level RA positions on the HR website for a month before we could hire anyone. So, let's say you really want to move to Boston to be near family, or maybe you know there is a professor at Boston College you would really, really like to work with in grad school some day (so it would be cool to be her RA first). Just find all the Unis in Boston (e.g., Boston College, Harvard, MIT, Boston University), or just go straight to Boston College in particular if you have a program or Prof already in mind, and go to the HR website and search for RA positions.

You can also use this approach if you already have some kind of idea of what type of program you might like to apply to for grad school (cognitive, clinical, developmental, memory, language, etc.), or if you have some Profs already in mind that you might want to work with in grad school. Go find individual Prof's websites and see if they are advertising for an RA. Some Profs use this approach, that is of posting the RA position on their own website, because they want to hire people who are already looking at them and are interested in their work. (PS: You should be doing this anyway in preparation for applying to grad school. Check out the Prof's online presence, their website, read their papers, see what their lab is up to, etc.)

(4) You should also make sure all your professors/advisor know you are looking. I sometimes get emails from colleagues asking if I know of a good undergrad looking for an RA position for the next year. Or, someone might raise it over dinner at a conference. I can't recommend anyone if I don't know which students are looking!

It will take some searching and some determination, but this should help you get a leg up on it.