



## Basic rules of form and etiquette for students requesting information from professional organizations

- Always be respectful of people’s time and the help they’re giving you. Remember to say thank you, make requests instead of demands, and follow up with a thank you email. Remember that you are asking someone for a favor: to interrupt their work day to share their expertise with you. Sometimes, it just isn’t possible for someone to make time for you.
- Keep your initial request brief but polite, informative and grammatically correct. Explain who you are, why you believe they have the specific information you are looking for, and what you wish to find out. If you start by saying, “I’d love your help,” or “I hope you’ll be able to help me out...” your chances of getting a positive response go up significantly. However, if you receive a “no” then simply respond with a polite “thank you” and move on to pursue other resources. In other words, always communicate and respond in a mature and professional manner – as you will need to do in your future work life (and of course makes good common sense in any human communications).
- Make sure you have done your research prior to making contact. Read the website and learn about the mission and work of the organization you are contacting, and make sure your questions are relevant. Questions that are too open-ended are generally not very workable.
- Do not ask someone to email long answers to you. This makes it seem like you are asking them to write your paper for you.
- Do ask to obtain permission in writing to quote the respondent, or to cut-and-paste e-mail responses they write, or to use a tape-recorder during the session if you will be doing any of these activities. You can type up and mail a form for them to sign, or bring it with you to the interview for their signature. For example:

"I [respondent's name] hereby give my permission for [student's name] to interview me and quote my responses in a scholarly research paper. I understand that this research paper will be submitted to a professor at the University of ---. I understand that I waive any claim to copyright to this material should the student ever publish it in a scholarly journal or in electronic format online. I understand that the author [will / will not] maintain my anonymity as a part of this interview. I hereby give my permission in the form of my signature below." Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*This information was compiled from multiple resources including themuse.com*

**Please also refer to our FAQ page for suggested resources and links. Make sure you do your research before you contact people or organizations with your questions.**