

# How to Get Help or Ask for Software

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RIS Course Week

## Mantra:

*“How can I get my problem solved as quickly and efficiently as possible?”*

Where to Get Help

How to Request Software

How to Ask for Help

In General

Abel and Colossus

# Where to Get Help

- ▶ Documentation:
  - ▶ <https://www.uio.no/english/services/it/research/hpc/>
- ▶ Software Requests:
  - ▶ <https://nettskjema.uio.no/answer/66866.html>
- ▶ Help contact points:
  - ▶ Abel: [hpc-drift@usit.uio.no](mailto:hpc-drift@usit.uio.no)
  - ▶ Notur: [support-uio@notur.no](mailto:support-uio@notur.no)
  - ▶ Colossus: [tsd-drift@usit.uio.no](mailto:tsd-drift@usit.uio.no)

# How to Request Software

- ▶ Complete and submit the form  
<https://nettskjema.uio.no/answer/66866.html>
- ▶ Requests will be handled on a weekly basis, in some cases directly (esp. wrt. upgrades).

## Guiding question:

*“How can I get them to understand my problem as quickly as possible?”*

## Before Sending the Mail

- ▶ Do some research first
  - ▶ Read any relevant documentation (user guide, FAQ, Howto, etc.)
  - ▶ For general software problems, try searching the Net
- ▶ Use one of the official contact points

## Style and Form

- ▶ Use a specific, informative Subject:  
*“Please help!”*, *“error”* or *“Software”* are not very informative.  
These are much better:  
*“matplotlib is failing to connect to X rad/abel server for its GTK display”*  
*“sh: /cluster/bin/module\_load: No such file or directory”*
- ▶ Try to use clear, correctly-spelled language.
- ▶ Try to be precise, especially wrt. technical terms.
- ▶ Be polite. Remember that “the receiving end” are people, and that their main task might not even be support.
- ▶ Don't yell. UPPERCASE TEXT “sounds” like yelling. The same does a lot of exclamation marks!!!!



## Contents of the Mail

- ▶ Send separate emails for separate problems/questions.
- ▶ Be specific. Include “all” details. (But **never** your password!)
- ▶ Use cut'n'paste, if possible.
- ▶ Show what you did instead of describing it, i.e. show the exact commands that you used.
- ▶ Describe the symptoms, not your guesses, i.e. show the exact errors or other output you got.
- ▶ If possible, create a reproducible example.
- ▶ If you are trying to do something, but don't know how: Describe the goal, not just the steps.

## Responding to Replies

- ▶ Read replies carefully, and answer all questions they contain.  
*If not, the helper might not be able to understand or solve your problem.*
  
- ▶ Try the suggestions you get, and report whether they worked or not.  
*If not, the helper will not know if it works or you still have a problem.*

# Problems Logging In

**Never send us your password!**

Tell us

- ▶ When it happened
- ▶ Which machine you were trying to log in *from*
- ▶ Which machine and username you were trying to log in *to*
- ▶ Which program/command you were using
- ▶ The error message you got

## Problems with Jobs

- ▶ If you have problems submitting a job, show us the command you used, and the error message you got.
- ▶ If there are problems with a submitted job, include the job id.
- ▶ Include the whole error message in the email
- ▶ Tell us where the job script and log file is (Colossus: include them, because we cannot see your files.)

# Problems Installing or Testing Software

- ▶ Show us the commands you used
- ▶ Include the whole error message.
- ▶ Tip: use `script` to catch all commands and output
- ▶ Tell us where the files are