

PHD SURVIVAL SKILLS

GRAD COHORT HIGHLIGHTS



Graduate school is a challenge, but with the right resources, you can make graduate school seem manageable. Use advice from past Grad Cohort speakers to survive Graduate School.

SURVIVAL SKILLS FOR GRADUATE SCHOOL

- ❖ As a Graduate student you have new things expected of you, and sometimes it is not obvious what they are.
- ❖ When you are in Graduate school, everyone in your program is talented! But not everyone is good at everything; don't constantly compare yourself to your peers.
- ❖ Most of what you will learn will come from your fellow students, not the faculty.
- ❖ Utilize the resources in your academic community, this will allow you to grow technically and avoid personal isolation.
- ❖ Allow others to get to know you through technical and professional opportunities and recommendations.
- ❖ Two ways to stand out is by asking questions and showing initiative.

THE DO'S AND DON'TS TO HAVING BALANCE IN YOUR LIFE

Do's:

- Put a cap on the amount of schoolwork you take on.
- Develop and maintain your other interests.
- Take breaks that allow you to relax and clear your mind.

Don'ts:

- Don't assume more time spent means more work accomplished.
- Don't derive total self worth from your graduate school experience (including what your advisor says)

BEING A TEACHER'S ASSISTANT

There are multiple benefits to being a TA:

- ❖ It forces you to really understand the material.
- ❖ It will allow you to get to know another faculty member or allow your advisor to know you better.
- ❖ It gives you public speaking experience.

There are a few things you should think about before you decide to be a TA:

- ❖ You should decide which topic to TA.
- ❖ Take the “How to be a Good TA” course.
- ❖ Approach teaching as a challenging subject that can be mastered.

Teaching tips for TAs:

- ❖ Teach your students HOW to read a problem.
 - Underline, plan, and identify the concepts.
- ❖ Have your students work in teams.
- ❖ Start with easy/simple problems and expand to more complex ones.
 - Stop and ask for the next step.
 - Make intentional mistakes (tell them you may do so) and encourage them to correct you.
- ❖ Don't just lecture and explain! Challenge your students, encourage them to learn effectively.
- ❖ Before your discussion section, attend class and figure out what students are struggling with.
- ❖ During your discussion section, start with a student group activity, plan the explanation, and bring out key ideas.
- ❖ Use the board effectively, by working left to right. Make sure to organize and label, and erase in sections.

MASTER VS. PhD

If you are deciding between a Master and a PhD, there are some things you should consider:

- The only way you know if you like research is to try it.
- PhD doesn't only lead to an academic job & lifestyle.
- Pursuing a doctorate gives you flexibility in your future career.



THE SUCCESS OF FAILING

If you fail a course or an exam it isn't the end of the world! Figure out what went wrong, so you can change it.

If things are not working with your advisor or your advisor leaves, find a mentor to talk with. It is ok to switch advisors, and it isn't uncommon, but make sure to shop around first.

If you lose confidence, this is not uncommon among other graduate students. Set small achievable goals to help you mark your progress. Don't be reluctant to get support from friends.