

Thirty Ways to Flourish in Graduate School

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1. Write the best dissertation you can in the shortest possible period of time. Do not be a graduate student longer than necessary.
2. Recognize your actual intellectual strengths, which may differ from those currently fashionable or possessed by other people.
3. Decide upon the scholarly contribution you want to make.
4. Determine your ambition and willingness to work at the level it requires.
5. Wake up every morning and love being a scholar. Find another career if you discover your heart is no longer in it.
6. Concede the fact that everyone has bad days.
7. Find the time of day (or night) that is best for your reading and writing and jealously protect it.
8. Treat your colleagues (teachers, fellow students, support staff) well.
9. Learn to give and receive criticism.
10. Accept rejection gracefully.
11. Acknowledge and cite the ideas and assistance of others with total scrupulousness.
12. Share ideas freely.
13. Avoid appearing arrogant or being needlessly argumentative.
14. Leverage being a student to the maximum by asking questions and requesting help.
15. Do not forget about your family, friends, hobbies, and outside interests.

16. Eschew work habits and schedules injurious to your physical and psychological well being and seek out those best suited to the long haul.

17. Master all of the technologies necessary to accomplish your research but recognize that technology is never a substitute for thinking.

18. Perfect your skills in at least two foreign languages well enough to conduct research, exchange ideas, and make friends in them.

19. Read in periods, areas, and disciplines unrelated to your primary research and seek out people who work in them.

20. Thank everyone who ever has helped you with your research through direct contact and in written acknowledgments in your work.

21. Pay careful attention to meeting deadlines and following schedules.

22. Distinguish between uncertainty and vagueness. Strive for maximum clarity, even while you are still forming your ideas.

23. Make sure that you can present your research and its importance in a sentence, a paragraph, a page, a twenty-minute conference paper, an article, and your dissertation.

24. Take the significance of your dissertation as seriously as you wish others to regard it.

25. Develop sensitivity to the cultures of the institutions in which you work. Always be yourself yet remain mindful of local norms and conditions.

26. Write grants.

27. Attend conferences and present your dissertation project.

28. Publish your work.

29. Avoid criticizing senior scholars in print early in your career.

30. Conceptualize the process of writing seminar papers, proposals, and your dissertation as a continuous one.

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