TRANSITIONING FROM LAFAYETTE TO GRADUATE SCHOOL
FOR THE CLASS OF 2016

An Introduction

This booklet provides important information on a variety of topics to help you make the transition from undergraduate to graduate student, and to understand some of the changes you will face in your new environment. You will find articles to help you adjust to your new role and workload, focusing on time management and organizational skills. There are articles dedicated to the topic of networking, because even when you are not looking for employment it is always important to continuously build your professional network. The packet also includes two articles related to managing your finances, including managing student loans and budgeting as a graduate student. Finally, this selection concludes with an article dedicated to helping you reestablish personal connections within and beyond your graduate school community.

We hope you take the time to read this booklet and that you will find them useful. We wish you all of the very best in your endeavors after Lafayette. Don’t forget that Lafayette provides you with life-time Career Services; we are always here to help!

The Career Services Staff

LAFAYETTE
CAREER SERVICES
TRANSITIONING FROM LAFAYETTE TO GRADUATE SCHOOL
A Selection of Articles to Help You as You Make Your Way “Off the Hill”

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Part 1: Making the Transition to Graduate Student
Three Tips for New Graduate Students
By Tara Kuther, Ph.D., About.com Guide

Most students intuitively know that graduate school is different from undergrad. But most cannot articulate how graduate school differs from college and, more importantly, are not prepared to successfully transition to graduate school. Pay attention to these three tips and you will start graduate school on the right foot and set yourself up for long term success.

Be Your Own Guide
Undergraduate students receive a lot of hand-holding. Before they register they must visit an advisor who helps them select classes, informs them of requirements, and signs off on their course schedule, permitting the student to register for classes. Most rules and policies are spelled out for the student. Graduate school is different. Yes, students attend orientation sessions, but policies often are not discussed in detail. There isn't a lot of guidance. Students who rely on others to inform them of policies and assess their progress towards completing their degree may be disappointed when they miss important deadlines or find that they have not completed required experiences. "I didn't know" or "No one told me" aren't good enough excuses and will not help you in the long run. Read up on policies, ask questions, and develop relationships with faculty but also with other graduate students.

Instead, successful students take their education into their own hands. They seek information about requirements, course scheduling, how to obtain practical and applied experiences, and policies regarding selecting a dissertation committee and submitting the dissertation. Likewise, successful students keep track of required courses and periodically evaluate their own progress towards the degree. Remember that no one cares as much about your success as you do. You're the best person - and often the only person - who will ensure that you are making consistent progress towards completing your degree.

Protect Your Time
Graduate students use their time in different ways than do undergraduate students. Less time is spent in class and more time is spent on academic activities that take place outside the classroom, such as attending colloquia and invited lectures, reading, and research. Graduate students tend to have a flexible schedule, but lots of work that needs to be completed in that time. Keep track of your responsibilities by using an academic calendar and to-do list. Many students find that it is easy to let work take precedence over their personal lives. Everyone, even graduate students, needs some play time, so be sure to schedule in some rest and relaxation as well as social time to maintain your mental health, but also your physical health.

Take Initiative and Be Tenacious
Much of the work you do as a graduate student will be solitary in nature -- reading, writing, and analyzing data, for example. Initiative and motivation are essential. Successful graduate students not only have good ideas but they take initiative and carry them out. They also take the initiative in asking for help, when needed. Finally, successful students are tenacious - they don't give up. Set backs are inevitable - experiments run awry, files are lost, and other accidents occur. Successful graduate students plan well, work through problems, and don't waste time and energy complaining. Instead, they determine what went wrong, seek assistance if necessary, and start over.
Surviving Graduate School (and even enjoying it, too!)
by Jennifer Bobrow Burns, author of the book Career Opportunities in the Nonprofit Sector

You did it! Not only did you make it through your undergraduate degree with flying colors, but you also worked your way through graduate school's required hardships, like the grueling application process, entrance exams, ascertaining letters of recommendation and more. And now the road to your career is welcoming you like a red carpet, and it seems as if the hard part is over. Or has it only just begun?

The hoops you need to jump through to get into grad school can distract you from the reality of the hard work ahead. But graduate school doesn't have to be intimidating. Remember when you thought college was scary? Now, as a seasoned student, you are ready to tackle a new challenge with ease. Relax and you might even enjoy yourself. Here are some tips to make the most of your new venture and smooth the transition from undergrad to graduate school.

Get Involved
Graduate school is about more than just academics. In order to feel connected and part of your campus, explore the different extracurricular activities that interest you. There are a vast number of choices, ranging from groups that are university-wide to those for graduate students only. Join a mountain biking club, participate in a pre-professional society or run for student government. These experiences will help you to meet other graduate students while doing things that you enjoy. And they won't hurt your resume either.

Keep Your Eye on the Prize
Making new friends is part of what graduate school is all about. Meeting people and socializing is not only a great way to unwind, but it also helps you forge relationships like those you will have with future colleagues. However, while everyone loves a party, make sure that your social life doesn't affect your grades. Your courses should always be your number one priority. Don't pick up the bad habits of skipping class, oversleeping, or turning in late assignments. Reward yourself with fun outings after all your homework and studying is complete.

Create a Time and Money Budget
It's easy to get overwhelmed by so many conflicting demands. As a graduate student, you may face more personal and professional responsibilities than you had as an undergraduate, such as work or family. Make a schedule and calculate your available hours per week, including school as well as outside obligations. Then divide up these hours for study, rest, entertainment, etc. Once you've laid out your schedule on paper, it will be easier to see where your time is going and how you can use it more efficiently. Additionally, money might be more of an issue now, especially if you have taken out loans to finance your education. Similar to the time schedule, listing your monthly expenses will also help you to be aware of your spending habits and highlight areas where you can possibly cut costs.

Forge Your Career Path With Experience
Graduate school is a time for you to solidify your career goals, and your courses are more specific to your field of study than they were in your undergrad years. Whether you are already clear about your ultimate goals or not, explore your interests through electives and internships. If your program doesn't have required fieldwork built in, create your own opportunities. Get to know your professors and the career services staff. Many campuses offer services such as career fairs, recruiting programs and counseling appointments. Visit the career center early to make sure you don't miss out on anything. Join professional associations in order to network within your industry. Take advantage of the resource you have in your classmates as well. Many of them may be working professionals who are attending school part time or have worked for several years before going back to school. Their valuable industry insight and contacts can help you to get your foot in the door.
Be Confident
Receiving your bachelor's degree proves you can be a successful student. Don't doubt your abilities in graduate school even if the work seems more difficult and the expectations higher. Remember, the students around you are all in the same boat, facing the same fears, whether they are fresh out of college or returning to school after working. It is helpful to form study groups and to attend help sessions. Don't be afraid to enlist tutoring if necessary. Make a list of your accomplishments and post it above your desk to remind yourself of how far you've come and how much you can accomplish.

Don't Forget to Have Fun!
Before entering the so-called "real world," reap the benefits of student life. At what other time in your life will you have exposure to a world-class learning environment, as well as a pool of people roughly your own age with similar interests? So sign up for that extra course, spend a few more minutes playing ultimate Frisbee on a sunny afternoon, and give yourself a break. You've worked hard and you deserve it!
Carol Williams-Nickelson, Ph.D., former associate executive director of the American Psychological Association of Graduate Students and co-editor of *Internships in Psychology: The APAGS Workbook for Writing Successful Applications and Finding the Right Fit*, hears the words “surviving grad school” a lot.

But she wants prospective and current students to know that while grad school is an intense and challenging experience, it’s also a rewarding one. “Grad school was one of the best times of my life,” she said.

Grad school also is a unique experience. It’s unlike college, where classes are of chief importance, cramming the night before leads to decent grades and there’s plenty of time for play and extracurricular activities. Being a graduate student is a full-time job that requires you to sharpen a variety of skills — and learn some new ones.

Williams-Nickelson, along with Tara Kuther, Ph.D, professor at the Department of Psychology at Western Connecticut State University, share their insights on how students can better prepare themselves for the demands of grad school, overcome common obstacles and succeed!

Acing Academic & Other Demands

1. **Know how you work.**

   There’s no doubt about it: Grad school is a lot of work. And in order to keep up with the demands, you need to know how you truly work, according to Kuther, who believes that this is key for succeeding in grad school. Learn “when you’re most productive and when you aren’t.”

2. **Read smarter, not harder.**

   “In grad school, reading is a whole skill unto itself,” said Kuther, who’s also an About.com guide to graduate school. Like most students, it’s likely that you read beginning from end and don’t think about why you’re reading the text ‘til later, she said. But this is actually unhelpful.

   Rather, you need to “read with purpose,” she said. This involves looking at the organization of a piece, the headers, chapter headings and bullet points. Also, think about why you’re reading the article, how it fits into your course or research and what you should be getting out of it, Kuther said. Try to determine if it supports your argument and if there’s any surprising information.

   Also, when reading anything for your own research, “if it doesn’t fit your paper at all, stop reading.” “A lot of students will still read,” Kuther said, and this just wastes your time.

3. **Focus less on grades and more on learning.**

   Clinical programs accept the cream of the crop so it’s safe to say that you’ve spent your college years worrying a lot about your grades. In grad school, though, it’s less about acing the test and more about truly retaining the information.
When she was in grad school, Williams-Nickelson was on the verge of receiving a B, and she panicked. But it was actually her professor who said that a B is a good grade and stands for “balance.” That’s in part because grad school involves more than just taking classes.

Remember that this program is training you to become a professional, to understand people and to work with others, which Williams-Nickelson said, “is just as important as academic knowledge or assessment skills.” You’re also developing relationships with individuals who will become lifetime colleagues and even friends, she said. Plus, many programs require students to conduct research. You want to make sure you’re doing more than studying for the next exam.

4. Pick opportunities wisely.
There are many different ways of doing psychology, Williams-Nickelson said, but “to be successful in grad school, you really have to choose opportunities wisely…Get a taste of the different specializations and areas but recognize there’s no way you can be exposed to everything in that [short] period of time.”

5. Consult others.
Ask other students how they approach their work. Also, talk with students who are more advanced, post-doctoral fellows or junior faculty, Kuther suggested. Junior faculty in particular “often have a great perspective and aren’t far away from being grad students themselves.”

6. Manage your time well.
“The single most important skill to develop to successfully navigate graduate school is to learn how to budget your time efficiently,” according to Mitch Prinstein, Ph.D, director of clinical psychology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and also co-editor of Internships in Psychology.

But “There is no one way to manage your time,” Kuther said. Everyone has a different approach, which also may change over time. Still, most models have the basics in common: you have to know “where you need to be when and what to do when.”

From there, Kuther said that it’s a matter of making to-do lists for your grad school career, and each semester. Then, you can break it down month by month and day by day. “The critical piece is not to feel overwhelmed but to mark down all the details on paper.” Do this for assignments, too. It’s important to “allocate time for everything.”

Take advantage of organizational tools, such as Google Calendar and good old paper planners. “You have to play with it and figure out what works for you,” Kuther said.

Importantly, “Learn how long it takes you to complete a specific task, and try not to spend much more time on that task,” Prinstein said. But be sure you’re setting a realistic estimate, because there’s a saying in grad school that everything will take three times longer than you think, Williams-Nickelson said.

Always keep the big picture in mind. When you don’t, “you get tangled up in one task,” Kuther said. For instance, it’s easy to spend all weekend writing and editing one paper and neglect other tasks. But this inevitably leaves less time for the rest of your to-do list and becomes a big stressor.
“Take a realistic look and decide if you have to drop something and if you have to allocate less time for something.” The same goes for the entire program. As Williams-Nickelson said, if you need an extra year to finish the program, “and you can maintain your sanity and leave as a less stressed and better balanced person,” so be it. “People try to cram a lot in and feel pressured to complete in a short period of time. I think the end result is probably not worth the stress that’s endured for that.”

Finally, “Don’t let unhealthy perfectionism keep you from attending to all of the demands of graduate school,” Prinstein said.

7. Don’t see grad school as the end of the road.
The goal of grad school is to give you a “baseline of knowledge,” so regardless of where you’re going — academia or private practice, for instance — “you have some minimum level of knowledge to get you started in the right direction,” Williams-Nickelson said. After grad school, there’s still a lot of learning to be done. “Learning is a lifetime endeavor.”

Mastering the Masters Thesis & Dissertation
When it comes to writing up your thesis or dissertation, the topic and even the outcome are less important, Williams-Nickelson said. “What is absolutely important is the academic exercise of learning how to conduct a thesis or dissertation really well.”

8. Keep a file of everything that interests you.
If you just started grad school, you might be stumped about what subject to select for your thesis. Kuther suggested starting early by keeping a file of anything and everything that interests you. Over time, you might find a theme around what you’ve been collecting.

However, remember that your topic doesn’t need to be revolutionary. Trying to pick an earth-shattering subject only prolongs the process. What also can stall the process is a longitudinal design, Williams-Nickelson said, so try to avoid conducting long-term research as your project.

9. Be thoughtful when choosing your committee members.
“Who you select to be on your committee is exceedingly important,” Williams-Nickelson said. Consider their work style, expectations and philosophy about the thesis or dissertation, she said. Some professors do push their students to come up with groundbreaking research. Others make your project even more complicated, “introducing all sorts of other research questions.” Instead, “consider asking a different professor who believes in the process and will help you learn how to do research…who wants to see you succeed and complete it” in an efficient manner.

To get a good idea of where professors stand, Williams-Nickelson suggested having “exploratory conversations with potential committee members.” If your advisor recommends a certain professor that doesn’t mean that you have to choose them. You could say “You know that’s a great idea, but here’s someone else I was thinking of and here’s why,” Williams-Nickelson said.

10. Write it your way.
Just as students do with reading, they assume that you have to start at the very beginning when writing a thesis or dissertation. “If you believe that, it’ll take you forever,” Kuther said. Rather, “Write whatever you can whenever you can.” She said to start with “whatever points make sense to you.” Remember that you’ll make multiple drafts, and it’s easier to edit than it is to write.
Got a mental block against writing? “Sometimes students find it easier to talk about the material” instead of doing traditional academic writing, Kuther said. If that’s the case, just “write as you’re talking” and forget the fancy words until you have your thoughts typed out. Or use speech recognition software like Dragon, which types as you talk.

Kuther suggested pacing yourself, working slowly and steadily each day and writing two to four hours tops. This prevents students from burning out and then abandoning the writing for days. However, this may not work for everyone.

For Williams-Nickelson marathon writing days worked best. She’d spend several 12-hour days writing and reading, and then take one or two weeks off. She felt that plugging away for about 20 minutes per day didn’t give her enough time to do substantive work. But the longer spurts helped her “get more done that way” and made her feel “more productive and more fulfilled.”

So figure out your learning and working style and apply that to successfully complete your thesis, dissertation or other projects, Williams-Nickelson said.

**Having a Life Outside of Graduate School**

11. **Have a life outside of school.**
While it might be “difficult to have a full life outside of school,” time away from school is key to your well-being. Your free time might include going out with friends, going to the gym or joining an on-campus club.

This also means practicing good self-care. Many students think that once they finish the program, their schedule will free up, demands will decrease and challenges will ease up. But as Williams-Nickelson said, “this just isn’t the case.”

Even though you won’t have large pockets of time, still carve out small blocks for self-care. For instance, spend 15 minutes a day exercising or 30 minutes walking on the beach. Participate in “whatever makes you happy and healthy and stay grounded.”

12. **Keep your family in the loop.**
Keep your family up to date on what you’re working on and how they can support you, whether that’s cooking dinner or leaving you alone, Williams-Nickelson said. It’s hard for people outside the program to automatically understand the demands and expectations. Let loved ones know when you’re going to be less available and why. Have “open conversations in advance and throughout the process.”

Overall, grad school is “a very enjoyable experience,” Williams-Nickelson said. While there are tough times and many demands, realize that it’s “time-limited,” and “take advantage of the opportunity to learn.” You’re participating in a unique experience, which less than one percent of the population has the opportunity to do, she said.
Part 2: Time Management, Organization, & Study Tips
Tips for Making the Transition to Graduate School

By Chris Dick (www.helium.com)

Although obtaining a graduate degree can seem unbelievably daunting, if you enter graduate school with the right attitude, preparation, and information you will find that it is nowhere near as hard as you thought it would be.

The first important thing that one must understand about graduate school is that you must have the right attitude. That is, most of the burden for success in graduate school is put on the students shoulders. There are very few assignments, and only a small number of deadlines. This is in fact why many people do not survive their first few years of graduate school, or fail to complete their masters thesis or doctoral dissertation. If you go into graduate school seeing it as an undergraduate does, where the only thing you get from your classes are grades, you are destined to fail. Graduate school is about pushing oneself to become an expert in a select few areas of your discipline, and a good amount of this work is done outside of formal classes.

Another important attribute of a successful graduate student is preparation. There are two skills that are absolutely necessary for success in graduate school: speed reading/skimming and time management. These two things go hand in hand, but it is important to understand the necessity of both. First, knowing how to speed read and how and when to skim is a key attribute of a successful graduate student. The amount of reading in most graduate programs (particularly in the social sciences which I know most about) is basically impossible to attain if you want to both have a life outside of school and also be able to accomplish other necessary tasks in your graduate education. The key is to understand what you need to get out of a reading. You do not need every detail of everything you read, you simply need to understand the main point of the article or book and how they tested their assertions. This will allow you to both summarize and critique both the theoretical and empirical contributions of a given paper. Second, you need to be able to manage your time wisely. Not only do you have large amounts of readings to do, but there are also class projects, outside projects, and (if you are lucky enough to be on fellowship) TA or RA responsibilities. Learning to juggle all of these responsibilities is what separates very successful and less successful or unsuccessful graduate students.

Finally, you need the correct information and an understanding of what you want to get out of graduate school. There are several paths that one can take within graduate school that will be more beneficial for one of many different career pathways both inside and outside academia. The key is understanding which career path interests you and how to mold your graduate studies to fit this option. One of the key ways to do this is through a mentoring relationship with one or several of your professors. If asked what I thought was the most important thing for successful graduate studies, my answer would definitively point to the mentoring relationship. The key is to find someone that has similar interests and working styles as yourself. If you are looking for a career outside of academia, seek out people who have followed similar career paths to the one you envision for yourself. You would be surprised at how many people want to help you out if you only ask. Finally, get to know and understand the bureaucratic rules of the department, college, and university that you are in. Know all of the paperwork that you need to do, and get it all done before the deadline so that you are never stressed out about having to cut through some bureaucratic red tape while also trying to do a dozen other things.

By way of conclusion I would just say this. In graduate school, perhaps even more than in other occupations, the key to success is planning and organization. If you know what you want to do and how you plan on doing it, not only will you have a better chance of achieving your goals, but you will also be shown more respect from potential mentors, important faculty members, and possible collaborators.
Time Management Tips for Graduate Students

By Tara Kuther, Ph.D., About.com Guide

So much to do and so little time. It's easy to feel overwhelmed during those first few months of graduate school. Who am I kidding? It's easy to feel overwhelmed throughout much of graduate school! How do you find time for all of the work? The best advice for avoiding burnout and getting bogged down is to keep track of your time: record your days and maintain daily progress towards your goals. Time management is essential to your success in grad school. Learn how to manage your time with these tips for time management.

Use a Calendar System

By now, you probably use a calendar to keep track of weekly appointments and meetings. Grad school requires taking a long term perspective on time. Use a yearly, monthly, and weekly calendar.

- **Year Scale.** It's difficult to keep track of today and remember what needs to be done in 6 months. Long term deadlines for financial aid, conference submission, and grant proposals creep up quickly! Plan at least 2 years ahead with a yearly calendar, divided into months. Add all long term deadlines on this calendar.

- **Month Scale.** Your monthly calendar should include all paper deadlines, test dates, and appointments so that you can plan ahead. Add self-imposed deadlines for completing long term projects like papers.

- **Week Scale.** Most academic planners use a weekly scale of measurement. Your weekly calendar includes your day-to-day appointments and deadlines. Have a study group on Thursday afternoon? Record it here. Carry your weekly calendar everywhere.

Use a To-Do List

Your daily to-do list will keep you moving towards your goals on a daily basis. Take 10 minutes every night and make a to-do list for the next day. Look over your calendar for the next couple of weeks to remember tasks that need to be planned in advance: searching for literature for that term paper, buying and sending birthday cards, and preparing submissions to conferences and grants. Your to-do list is your friend; never leave home without it.

- Prioritize your to-do list. Rank each item by importance and attack your list accordingly so that you don't waste time on nonessential tasks.

- Schedule time to work on classes and research each day, even if it is just a few 20 minute blocks. Think you can't get much done in 20 minutes? You'd be surprised. What's more important is that the material will stay fresh in your mind, enabling you to reflect on it at unexpected times (like on your ride to school or walk to the library).

- Be flexible. Allow time for interruptions and distractions. Plan just 50 percent or less of your time so that you'll have the flexibility to handle unexpected interruptions. When you're interrupted, ask yourself, "What is the most important thing I can do right now? What's most urgent?" Use your answer to plan your time and get back on track.
Organization Tips for New Graduate Students

By Tara Kuther, Ph.D., About.com Guide

Are you organized? Graduate education provides students with the opportunity to develop and hone a host of essential scholarly skills. However, graduate students receive little training in the most important skill of all, the skill that will make or break their graduate student careers: organization. Lose the clutter and get a handle on your academic career by getting organized. This article provides important tips to help new graduate students get organized and transition to graduate school.

Now you're probably wondering, "how will organization make or break my career?" Think about it. Being unorganized is a time waster. The unorganized student spends precious time searching for papers, files, notes, wondering which pile to check first. She forgets and misses meetings or arrives late, repeatedly. He finds it hard to focus on the task at hand because his mind is swimming what the details of what must be done next or what should have been done yesterday.

Face it. An unorganized office is a sign of a cluttered mind. Cluttered minds are inefficient for scholarly productivity. So how do you get organized? Try these tips:

• Use a to-do list to free your mind for the work at hand

• Set up a filing system. Don't skimp on file folders or you'll find yourself doubling up on files and lose track of your most important papers. Maintain files for:
  ✔ research/thesis ideas
  ✔ thesis references (probably divided up into additional files for each topic)
  ✔ exam material; as you prepare for comps, will have copies of old exams, study materials
  ✔ professional credentials - vita, sample cover letter, research statement etc.
  ✔ reprints and professional articles - organized by topic
  ✔ life (bills, taxes, etc.)
  ✔ teaching materials (organized by topic)

• Organize your study space. It should be free of distractions, well lit, and have all supplies and files nearby.

• Splurge on office supplies. Though supplies can be expensive, it's easier to get organized when you've got the right tools. Purchase a quality stapler, paper clips, binder clips, stick on notes in several sizes, sticky flags for marking important pages in texts, etc. Go to a supply store and purchase office supplies in bulk to maximize savings and to be sure that you don't run out of supplied unexpectedly.

• Use binders to organize class notes, with dividers to separate your notes from assigned readings, handouts, and other materials.
6 Essential Study Tips for the PhD Student by Julio Peironcely of NextScientist.com
http://www.topuniversities.com/blog/6-essential-study-tips-phd-student

A PhD is definitely not a walk in the park. I know; I had my fair share of struggles as a PhD student. Productivity, motivation or coming up with scientifically sound ideas, you name it.

Luckily I had good mentors and I read inspiring books. I got good advice and study tips from both of these sources, and I would like to share some of the most useful advice I came across. These PhD tips are based on my own experience. Some I learned early on during my struggle as a PhD student, and others I wish had learned earlier. I hope they can help you.

PhD study tip #1: Write early and write often
Obviously the more papers you write the better – but that’s not what I mean. I mean write as often as possible, even if you don’t have a paper on the horizon.

Start writing as early as possible in your PhD, and write regularly. Some people write daily, others once a week. The goal is to consistently document your progress, what you did, how, and the obstacles you encountered.

Writing early will help you to develop and maintain your writing skills for when the time comes to write a full-fledged paper. By writing often you will accumulate content that you can reuse when you need to write abstracts, papers or proposals.

I didn’t follow this PhD study tip myself and I regret it. I think I could have written my papers in half the time if I had. Not only this, their quality would have been much higher.

PhD study tip #2: Read lots of papers
At the beginning of your PhD you have to read lots of papers. The goal is that you get a clear overview of your research field. You must understand all the important research already done. This is what people call the "state of the art".

Once you know the state of the art in your field, you can see where your PhD fits in. How are you going to contribute and expand the scope of research? It also gives you a roadmap to avoid duplicating existing research and reinventing the wheel.

Once you have done most of the reading, you will need to keep track of new developments in your field, by reading new papers and speaking to others about what research is underway.

PhD study tip #3: Read other things
PhD students don’t just encounter academic problems; they also face challenges in time management, motivation or creativity. Reading papers may help you in some of these areas – but not always. That’s why you need to read other types of material.

Productivity, personal skills and business books can help you grow as a PhD student. They provide practical advice, including study tips and also general guidance on how to develop essential skills applicable in all kinds of roles.

Following blogs such as Thesis Whisperer, Next Scientist or TopUniversities.com can also help you boost your motivation and show you inspiring stories from other PhD students.
Remember that you must think creatively, and reading only one type of content (scientific papers in your specific field) may narrow your thoughts.

**PhD study tip #4: Work in short sprints**

Another study tip that boosted my productivity came from the world of software development. Some people call this agile development, others talk about fast prototyping, short sprints, or ‘ship it fast and get feedback’.

Have you ever waited a long time to show something until you felt it was perfect, only to find that, well, the other person disagreed?

That waste of time is what you want to avoid. The idea here is to work very fast to produce something that is just good enough, show it, get feedback and improve it in another sprint. And iterate on and on.

One great time management technique based on the idea of working in short sprints is the **Pomodoro Technique**.

**PhD study tip #5: Focus on small signs of progress**

Halfway through my PhD I lost motivation because I felt I hadn’t produced anything substantial. My mistake was to bind my satisfaction to having reached important milestones like publishing a paper.

Wrong. Those things take too long. I needed some small doses of sweet PhD love along the way.

Once I started focusing on smaller signs of progress, everything started to look brighter. I knew that if on a given day I finished three small tasks then I was on the right track, I was making enough progress.

Instead of thinking “Am I there yet?” you should ask yourself, “Am I closer than I was three months ago?”

**PhD study tip #6: Don’t cut corners**

So far we’ve focused on productivity study tips for the PhD student. These allow you to skip unnecessary tasks and focus on what really matters for your PhD. But there is one area where you cannot find shortcuts. That’s in your reputation.

During your PhD you may be tempted to do things that seem like a benefit in the short term, but that could harm your reputation in the long term. These shortcuts involve your credibility, your thoroughness and your accountability.

Imagine: after six months of preparing your paper, you are almost there. You find there’s a little mistake in the data, but you don’t think it will harm the overall outcome. So why waste your time fixing it? Or why cite all the relevant papers when a few will do? Even worse, why not use somebody else’s method but not acknowledge that, so it looks like it was your own creation?

This sloppiness will eventually come back to haunt you. Sooner or later people won’t trust you. They will not want to collaborate with you. They will not cite your papers. So, even if it means extra work, stay away from cutting corners!
Part 3: Building a Network
The Dire Need to Network While In Grad School or Academia [Excerpt] by Ryan Raver
http://thegradstudentway.com/blog/?p=548

It’s Not What You Know It’s Who You Know That Matters

Why is networking so important? Well, the short answer is that it all depends on what your objectives are. For example, some people network to expand one’s resources, learn about potential opportunities and collaborations, answer questions, discuss current research topics, build relationships, learn from other people’s failures or experiences, establish yourself as an expert in your field, add value to others (I’ll explain this later), and/or other personal reasons such as business or entrepreneurial ventures.

Those who are in academia and choose to network with those in industry, may even help bridge the gap between academia and industry which has many added benefits. The bottom line is that networking is extremely valuable and you never know what opportunities might arise.

A common misconception is that networking only serves one purpose: finding employment. This will be covered more in detail in my Ebook or Part 2 of this series. However, a survey conducted by the Science Advisory Board (www.scienceboard.net) revealed that networking is by far the most successful means of finding employment. Networking is responsible for 90% or more of finding employment, whereas cold resume submission has been reported as low as only 4-10%.

If that 90% isn’t a good incentive for you to step out of your comfort zone, then this is your wake up call.

Some working professionals who already have an established career stop networking because they no longer see the need. No matter what situation you are in, you should NEVER stop networking. You never know when it will pay off.

Graduate School “Tunnel Vision”

For graduate students in particular, the need to network becomes even more obvious. As a graduate student, not only did you make the decision to go get an advanced degree, but you made a decision to increase your chances of landing a better job. Without networking this chance is dramatically diminished.

For example, a lot of PhDs in the sciences will spend five to six years on average working in a research lab. During that time, the majority typically network very little. Many are afraid to step out of their comfort zone or they lack confidence. Some find themselves caught up in fear or making the excuse that it takes too much time.

Another excuse is that one’s particular field doesn’t require networking or good communication skills. One major downside of graduate school is that a graduate student may get “tunnel vision.” Tunnel vision is when a graduate student gets so overly-focused on his or her thesis topic that he or she doesn’t devote any time to other things other than finishing the degree.

Although the end-goal is to graduate in the fastest possible time, it is meaningless if you are unemployed and with a degree that you aren’t even putting into good use. You finally got your
degree yet you don’t even know how you’re going to use it. Next comes the traditional post-doc. Or does it?

10 Ways To Effectively Network

1. **Talk to your professors.** Chances are they know people (or have past lab members) within and outside of academia. Preferably talk to the professors (ie the ones who run their own company) who are well connected and can introduce you to those people in industry that have transitioned away from academia. Get the names of those individuals. Email or call them and set up a time to meet. Then, do an informational interview (#4) with that key contact. From there, ask to be introduced to other people that they might know and it will spider web and create an endless network.

2. **Attend live networking events or “happy hours”.**

3. Go to scientific conferences.

4. Start doing more informational interviews via introductions through LinkedIn or branching out from your existing network (the higher you aim position-wise, the better your chances will be for establishing a network that branches out).

5. Attend career fairs, product shows, recruitment events, seminars, etc.

6. Connect with someone who is established or is much better at networking than you and who can connect you with working professionals. Or better yet, connect with someone who can teach you effective ways to network.

7. Audit classes on campus. If you are a science person, then take a business class and start networking with business professors and MBA students. If not business, find a secondary interest and step out of your comfort zone.

8. **Talk to those interested in entrepreneurship and possibly starting their own company.** Chances are you will learn about what drives you, others, and you may just come up with the right idea that could lead to a successful business.

9. If you can’t do face-to-face interviews, connect with that distant (interesting) person over the phone. Chances are they may be in your area on business sometime in the near future and they will contact you to meet face-to-face. This also expands your network beyond your own local area.

10. Give presentations, be a guest speaker, and put yourself out there. The more you step out of your comfort zone the more you will find new networking opportunities! And this can lead to yet even more opportunities!

Some Key Things To Remember

Understanding what networking is NOT is just as important as knowing why you should be networking.

- Networking is **NOT about selling your products or services.** Your objective is to build a relationship or connection with that person. Ease up about having to sell yourself, and make sure you keep an open mind. You never know who might be a potential business partner, referral, or your future employer.
- Networking is **NOT about selling you.** This doesn’t mean that you shouldn’t prepare for a quick introduction for the common question “So.. What do you do?”, but it shouldn’t be rehearsed or over-practiced. Do not dominate the conversation and bore the person with only talking about yourself. Show sincerity and focus on adding value.
- Networking is **NOT about just finding employment.** Remember it’s all about adding VALUE to others. If it just so happens you do end up finding employment, then great. But this

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should not be your main objective. This means you have started networking for the wrong reasons: To only add value to yourself and no one else.

So what SHOULD you do?

1. Get comfortable talking about what you do (you should be able to sum this up in no more than 30 seconds) and with speaking to a total stranger. That means practice your elevator pitch.
2. Have a casual conversation that adds value to that person.
3. Make a definitive plan with at least 3 people to have a follow-up meeting. That means having lunch, coffee, or seeing them at the next meeting or event (you can even invite them ahead of time if you’re going).
4. Get to know the organizers and those who plan events.
5. Ask be to a presenter or speaker at a future meeting (such as Biotech Happy Hour) or on-campus event.
6. Position yourself as an expert in your niche.
7. Seek out potential business or academic partnerships.
8. Expand your network! Ask to be introduced to other key contacts this particular person might know (LinkedIn works great for introductions). The network is endless and you can go as far as you like.
The Benefits of Joining a Professional Association

Information compiled by the GradSchools.com team - last updated August 2010

No matter what your chosen field of study, as a graduate student you want to remain in the mainstream of your desired field. Of course there are numerous ways that this could be accomplished - networking, trade and professional journals, etc. However, one great way to draw on all of those resources is to join a professional association.

Professional organizations are available for almost any career field. You may join while enrolled in school or after graduation. However, fees are greatly reduced for students who are still in college. In addition to providing information about your chosen field, professional organizations enhance your professional development and provide endless networking opportunities. Associations may also provide monetary returns such as tuition assistance through private grants and fellowships.

Thanks to ever-growing digital technologies, information abounds. But sometimes sifting through the tons of information available can be mind-boggling, not to mention time consuming. Professional associations publish journals, newsletters, and websites with invaluable information on up-to-date issues and developments in your specific field of interest. Professional associations frequently also coordinate professional development conferences replete with industry related trade shows and facilitated networking opportunities.

Further, prospective employers seek out individuals whose field knowledge is not solely dependent on college studies; therefore, association memberships are excellent supplements for your resume. Memberships convey to an employer that you are dedicated to your field of study, just as your savoir-faire during an interview will have you shining above other applicants. Your membership could also open doors of opportunity as you are provided with greater exposure to the job market - many organizations provide "members only" job listings in their publications.

Professional organizations are easy to find if you know where to look. Your career center and campus library can normally provide you with resources for on-campus and local chapters. One resource you may want to ask them for is the National Trade & Professional Associations Directory (published by Columbia Books). The latest 2010 edition presents detailed contact and background information on over 7,800 trade associations, professional societies, technical organizations, and labor unions in the United States.

Recalling the adage "knowledge is power," even membership in professional associations tangential to your field may be beneficial. Case in point: One organization with which GradSchools.com has developed a professional relationship is The National Association of Graduate Admissions Professionals (NAGAP). NAGAP is committed to serving the needs and interests of graduate admissions professionals; the symbiotic nature of the relationship is fairly obvious.

A teeny sampling of prominent professional associations will show you the breadth, and possible overlaps, available:

- American Medical Association
- American Physical Therapy Association (APTA)
- American Psychological Association
- American Marketing Association
- The American Institute of Architects
- American Society of Mechanical Engineers
- Society of Women Engineers
- Society of Automotive Engineers
- American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics

And there are international professional associations as well…

Another helpful resource for identifying professional associations:

Weddle’s Association Directory (http://www.weddles.com/associations/index.cfm)
Part 4: Keeping Your Finances in Check
Five Tips for Good Financial Habits

Courtesy of Access Group, Inc., a nonprofit student loan provider specializing in loans for graduate and professional students.

1. Identify and document your goals

It's important to identify and document your long-term personal, professional, and financial goals so that you can gauge your progress in achieving them. Answering the following questions can help you establish and achieve your goals.

- What do I want to accomplish in my career?
- Will I have to go back to school?
- Where do I want to work and live?
- What kind of lifestyle do I want?
- What hopes do I have regarding a family?
- When do I want to retire?
- How much will I need to earn to achieve my goals?

You should review your goals from time to time so that you can update them as your circumstances change. For example, if you get married, you may want to re-examine your goals so that you can be certain they are consistent with those of your spouse.

2: Make well-informed choices

The cost of your education really is up to you. How much you "spend" getting your degree is a result of the choices or decisions you make. For example, the cost of tuition depends on the school you choose, the cost of housing depends on where you choose to live and whether you live alone or with one or more other people who can share costs with you, the cost of food depends on your eating habits and where you choose to eat. Once you make a choice, you must pay the required cost.

You are responsible for the choices you make - not your parents, not your friends, not your siblings, not your financial aid administrator, not your faculty advisor, and so forth. Think carefully about what you'll have to give up once you're working in order to pay back the debt you incurred because of the choices you made as a student. Be certain you'll be willing to make these sacrifices before you spend your borrowed funds while in school.

3: Borrow the minimum amount you need to achieve your goals

The key to borrowing the minimum amount you need to achieve your objectives is to make sure you're sticking to an affordable in-school budget plan. Your budget should include your available financial resources, your planned education expenses, and the financial commitments you made before entering school that will continue while you're in school.

Once you've developed your in-school budget plan, you should be able to determine how much you will need to borrow. But will you be able to afford to repay this amount once you graduate?

Answering this question can be an effective motivator in helping you minimize your in-school borrowing. As long as your future income is sufficient to pay for your future lifestyle, including repaying your student loans, then you probably can afford what you plan to borrow. If not, you should carefully consider making some adjustments to your in-school budget so that you can reduce what you'll have to borrow (and ultimately need to repay).
4: Maintain accurate financial records

You should keep copies of all documents relating to your financial activities. For example, at a minimum you should retain the following items:

- Loan documents (e.g., applications, promissory notes, disbursement and disclosure statements, loan transfer notices, lender correspondence)
- Receipts for major purchases (e.g., computer hardware and software, appliances, furniture, cars, any items with warranties)
- Income tax returns and all the documentation used to prepare those returns (federal, state, and local, as applicable)
- Estate planning documents including your will

It's important to save all of your student loan documents and correspondence so you know exactly what you've agreed to, what's expected from you as a borrower, and how much you've borrowed. It may not seem important at the beginning of the student loan process, but when you're closer to repayment, you may need to refer to some or all of these documents. Keep all student loan related documents and correspondence until all education loans have been fully repaid.

You also should keep a log or journal of all conversations with the lender(s) and servicer(s) of any loans you borrow. Include the date and time you called, the reason for the call, any expected follow-up, and the full name of the person with whom you spoke. This log may come in handy if there is a dispute about the conversation at some later date.

5: Establish & maintain a strong credit history

Your credit report is a summary of your credit history. Just as your academic transcript is a history of the courses you've taken and how you've performed in those courses, your credit report can be viewed as your credit transcript because it lists the credit you have obtained (by individual account) and how you've managed that credit.

Never underestimate the value of good credit. You must demonstrate a good credit history to be approved for most private student loans as well as other forms of credit including home mortgages, auto loans, and business loans. You have a credit history if you have at least one credit card, consumer loans such as auto loans, student loans, or any other form of personal credit. The fundamental issue for the lender is your "willingness to repay the loan," that is, the likelihood that you'll repay the loan based on your past credit performance.

The following credit tips can help you maintain a strong credit history:

- Pay all your bills on time.
- Minimize your credit card debt; keep credit card balances to no more than one-third of your available credit limit.
- Avoid charging more than you can afford to repay.
- Check your credit report (and credit score) at least once a year from each of the three national credit reporting agencies; promptly correct any errors that you find on your reports.
- Limit the number of credit card accounts you maintain.
- Be careful about opening new credit card accounts and closing older ones; it is beneficial to have the longest possible history regarding the age of your credit card accounts.
- Notify your creditors immediately whenever your address changes.

These five habits are important to your financial future. Develop these habits early and use them to realize your dreams. Making practical, common sense decisions using the best possible information should allow you to achieve your goals without sacrificing your financial future.
Financial Advice for Graduate Students

Information compiled by the GradSchools.com team - last updated August 2010

Money is a major issue for graduate students, and good financial habits are essential to cutting costs, managing money, and making funds last. More than a few grad students enter postgraduate education with undergraduate debt, and financial management becomes of paramount importance.

The necessities

Good financial habits in grad school depend upon the student's ability to identify which costs are necessary and which can be avoided, put off, or rationalized away. When standing in the aisle of the store, ask yourself questions about the product in your hand, such as: Do I need to buy this now? Can I find less-expensive options? Can I live without this? Much of cutting grad school costs involves differentiating between what you need, and what you want. You may feel like you really want something, but if you don't purchase it, will you seriously miss it a few weeks down the road? It can be helpful to make a list of direct and indirect graduate school expenses.

Direct expenses include: tuition, fees, transportation, books, supplies, and loans. While you will definitely need that textbook for your biology course, you may be able to avoid paying full price by getting it at a used bookstore or searching on a site like Half.com.

Indirect expenses include: living expenses, personal expenses, and child care. While many of the indirect expenses may prove to be necessities, they are the best place to look for expenses that may be on the frivolous side. Just see if you can't find a way to rationalize why buying the newest video game or DVD might not be the wisest choice.

Budgeting in graduate school

If you want to establish good financial habits while in school, you must create an expense budget. If you've never been the budget-type-of-person; you need to change that. Write down a list of the necessities and figure out what you will need on a weekly and monthly basis. Factor in: rent, bills, school supplies, meals, transportation, entertainment (cable costs, movie tickets, concerts...) and any other expenses that you will incur. It can also be helpful to set dollar limits for your expenses, that way, if you're having an expensive month, you know that you just cannot afford to get pretzel bites and a large Coke when you go to see the next "Die Hard" film.

You must think ahead and come to grips with the fact that you may experience a loss of income while you're a graduate student. Budgeting can be made easier if you can pre-pay for things like rent and utilities; contact your landlord and utility companies to see if this is possible. Set up a plan to pay bills, and dedicate yourself to following that plan. You can also purchase pre-paid phone cards to keep those bills under control.

Effective budgeting involves a great deal of organization when it comes to record-keeping; it also involves planning to some extent for the unexpected. Having a little wiggle-room in your budget each month, if possible, can really reduce your worries. What if your pants split 20 minutes before you're scheduled to defend your dissertation? You'll be glad you left yourself some emergency money.

Banking in graduate school

Good financial habits in graduate school also depend on establishing excellent banking practices. It is advisable to transfer your financial aid from your savings to a checking account in monthly increments. Managing your bank account responsibly involves opting for low and no-fee checking accounts, as well as recording all transactions.

Graduate students should plan out ATM withdrawals by taking out what they need for a specific period of time and putting the ATM card away. Direct deposit for paychecks can be of great help and students should look into
direct deposit for their bills. Each month, compare your checkbook with your monthly bank statement to ensure you are balanced, and to spot the occasional banking mistake.

Credit cards are the source of many graduate students' money troubles, as well as their debt. These cards should be used with extreme care. Students should be sure to make their monthly payments on time, and to pay more than the minimum required payment. Choose a credit card with a low or no-annual fee plan and read the fine print. Be alert for the traps set by special credit card offers. Don't choose a card based on that free cell phone - you will pay for it in the end through poor credit card rates.

**Cutting costs in graduate school**

As a graduate student, any chance you get to cut costs should be examined and taken. Check for resources and freebies provided through your school. Look for part-time jobs, work-study assignments, or tutoring jobs to bring in more money. Shop around for the best deals when buying just about anything, but particularly textbooks. Most college bookstores offer a certain number of used texts, websites such as Amazon.com provide customers with discounts as well as used texts, and many college towns have bookstores that specialize in textbooks purchased from students at the close of previous semesters.

If you are really having trouble with living expenses, consider taking in a roommate. Students can also choose to live at home with their parents if possible, and bearable. Rather than buying a new car, buy a used one or opt for public transportation. Clip coupons and keep your eye out for student discounts. If you pay for your own utilities, turn lights off when you leave a room and turn your thermostat down when you're going to be away for hours; It's estimated that you save about 5 percent off your electric bill for every degree you lower your thermostat. Instead of eating out, stay home and cook. You might also share home-cooked meals with your graduate student friends, as a way for all of you to save some money.

Your days as a graduate student may not be prosperous - and you may get devastatingly sick of Ramen Noodles - but it's only for a few years. Remember, graduate school is supposed to ultimately increase your earning potential; the last thing you want is to be repaying student loans long after graduation, and to that point, every dollar counts. Even if you have to budget, even if you have to slum it for a while, in the long run, it's worth it.
Personal Finance in Grad School from Inside Higher Ed by Ashley Sanders, April 17, 2014
https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/gradhacker/personal-finance-grad-school

Living on a grad student stipend is tough, but we often make it harder on ourselves if we don’t know where the money is going. By tracking our spending habits, we can get a better sense of what we value, our motivations for spending, and areas where we can save a few dollars or even a few hundred dollars. Although our schedules our tight, making time to track spending and create a practical budget will pay huge dividends in the long run. Read on for budgeting and money-saving tips!

**Figure out where your money is going.** Track your spending for at least one month (3 months yields better results) and categorize the expenses. This will give you clues about where you can save money (more on this below). Using Excel is an easy way to track income and expenses, but if you prefer to use apps, here are few to try:

- **Android:** [My Budget Book](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.sandersonsoftware.mybudgetbook) ($2.59) This app allows you to set up your own categories and subcategories of spending, add recurring monthly bills, and export your monthly expense reports to html, cdv, or back it up in the cloud.
- **iOS:** [Mint](https://www.mint.com) (Free) This app allows you to link bank and credit card accounts to track both income and expenses, draw up a budget, and even set alerts when you’re over your allotted spending or a bill is due. This app is also available as a [free website](https://www.mint.com).
- [Spendee](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.raynico.spendee) is available on both platforms ($1.99): It’s easy to use and colorful charts help you see quickly and easily where your money is going.

**Divide expenditures into wants versus needs.** Just a note of caution here - don’t give up everything on your want list, otherwise, you’ll never stick to your budget. If you enjoy drinking wine and don’t want to give it up, consider doing tasting experiments with $5 and under wines at Trader Joe’s (one of my current projects). You’ll be surprised how many wonderful wines you can find that won’t hurt your budget!

**Identify categories that are unnecessarily draining funds.** For example, can you cut out your daily $5 coffee purchases, make your own at home, and bring it along in a thermos? Can you purchase an inexpensive coffee maker for the grad student office? This can save you $100 or more a month!

**Consider your purchasing motivations.** Do you turn to shopping (in stores or online) to relieve stress? While things are tight, can you replace this habit with something less expensive, such as going for a walk or calling a friend?

**Reduce your bills.** Do you need a data-heavy cell phone plan or can you cut back on this and rely on wifi? Consider getting rid of cable or satellite TV for a while or trimming down the package. Check out [Lifehacker’s Bill-by-Bill guide](https://lifehacker.com/5829925/how-to-cut-the-cord-and-save-money) to see where you can save money on other common expenses. Liz Homan’s recent GradHacker article on [meal planning](https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/gradhacker/meal-planning) offers advice to make your money go farther and still eat well. **Housing** is probably one of your biggest expenses. Consider looking for a roommate, subletting, or alternative housing options, such as graduate student housing on or near campus.

**Learn to do things yourself** or find out what skills your friends and colleagues have and offer to swap work with each other. Not the best mechanic? Offer to edit and provide feedback on conference papers and articles they’re working on or babysit their children for a couple of hours.
**Negotiate.** There are many things you can negotiate, such as rent and even interest on your credit card. Don’t be afraid to ask about these things.

**Avoid debt,** especially credit card debt and loans from private agencies. Talk with your financial aid office to create a plan to get on top of any debt you currently have and avoid taking on more. Look into the various options to pay off current debts, including SponsorChange to pay off student loans with volunteer work.

Lastly, **draw up your budget** based on your tracked expenses and the above considerations. Be reasonable and don’t cut out all of the fun. Look at this time in life as an opportunity to be creative, still do some of the things you’d like to do, and know that it won’t last forever.
Part 5: Getting Personal
Life after graduation is an exciting time, filled with new opportunities and often new locations. If moving to a new place after Lafayette, you are probably eager to get yourself situated in your new community. While exciting, it can also be challenging as you begin your new life away from friends, family, and the things you know best. Below is a list of suggestions to help you establish a new network of people, and a sense of belonging to your new community.

1. Attend Lafayette College chapter events in your area to connect with local alumni.

2. Work with Career Services or Alumni Relations to identify alumni in your area, and reach out to them to establish new relationships.

3. Volunteer at a local community organization to gain a sense of belonging to your new community.

4. Join a gym and attend regularly to help establish a steady schedule. Attend a fitness class to see familiar people and to develop new relationships.

5. Join a local young professionals club to network and meet people your age, who are doing interesting things.

6. Join a club related to your interests. It could be a book club, an intramural sports league, a cooking club, an arts group, or perhaps a fantasy sports group.

7. Get to know your peers and give your peers a chance to get to know you. Chat with your colleagues over lunch; attend social gatherings hosted by your university.

8. Take a class in something you’re passionate about. Maybe it’s a music, dance, or photography class. Maybe it’s a class on financial theory. Whatever your choice, this is a great way to interact regularly with people who have similar interests.

9. Join your local religious center. Attending services, holiday events, and social mixers can be a great way to join your new community.

10. Ask for suggestions. Ask faculty members for suggestions on good places to eat, local organizations to join, and attractions to see in your new location.

Don’t forget all of this relationship building can help you in developing your professional network as well!