

Description

Graduate school is an exciting time but it can also be a stressful time, with students facing many new challenges. Here are some of the typical challenges along with pointers on how to cope with them.

Inefficient Time Management

Courses, teaching, research, literature surveys, preparing seminars—there is a lot to do and it can all seem overwhelming. A daily “to-do list” is helpful, and an even better option is an appointment planning guide.

Difficulty in Starting your Research

Starting any new endeavor such as a research program may sometimes require a nudge to get initiated. Find a simple avenue of attack which will get you started with carrying out research, using analytical equipment, ordering supplies, etc.

Lack of Communication with Advisor

A university professor is a busy person, sometimes too busy to spend time with you. In the first year, it is important to have guidance in a research project. If you aren’t getting enough guidance, arrange to meet your advisor privately and explain the situation.

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A regularly scheduled meeting to discuss research, perhaps monthly or quarterly, would be one way to work around an advisor’s busy schedule.

Absence of Advisor

An advisor who is physically absent is a difficult problem. These days we have email and Skype which

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can give you something resembling a face to face contact.

Micromanaging Advisor

Some advisors, often new and inexperienced, try to run every aspect of the research. This wastes a good bit of time and defeats one of the purposes of grad school—to develop the ability to think independently. In this case, it is better to tactfully discuss the problem and suggest compromises, weekly updates. If that doesn't work, consider talking to other members of the faculty, members of your committee, preferably, to see if they might mediate the problem.

Difficulty in Keeping Up with the Teaching Job

Most graduate students teach classes to help pay their way. This can be a terrifying experience for someone who has never done it before. Thoroughly preparing for classes and rehearsing beforehand will help.

Colleague Friction

Does it drive you crazy when another group member uses your favorite piece of equipment and leaves it a mess? Keep your cool. Learn to be professional in your relations with your colleagues.

Category

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