

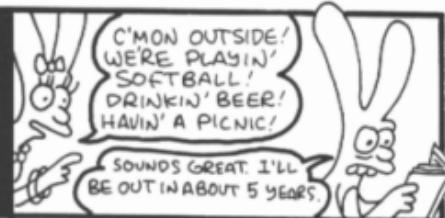
How to prepare
and what to do
once you're
there!

Grad School Info Session

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SCHOOL IS HELL BUT IT BEATS WORKING

LESSON 19: GRAD SCHOOL— SOME PEOPLE NEVER LEARN



SHOULD YOU GO TO GRAD SCHOOL? A WEE TEST

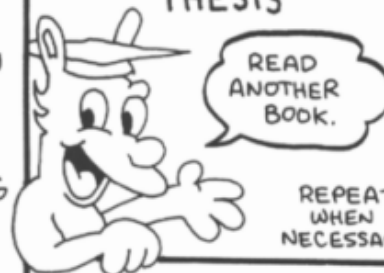
- T F
- ☐ ☐ I AM A COMPULSIVE NEUROTIC.
- ☐ ☐ I LIKE MY IMAGINATION CRUSHED INTO DUST.
- ☐ ☐ I ENJOY BEING A PROFESSOR'S SLAVE.
- ☐ ☐ MY IDEA OF A GOOD TIME IS USING JARGON AND CITING AUTHORITIES.
- ☐ ☐ I FEEL A DEEP NEED TO CONTINUE THE PROCESS OF AVOIDING LIFE.

THE 5 SECRETS OF GRAD SCHOOL SUCCESS



1. DO NOT ANNOY THE PROFESSOR.
2. BE CONSISTENTLY MEDIOCRE.
3. AVOID ANYTHING SMACKING OF ORIGINALITY.
4. DO EXACTLY WHAT YOU ARE TOLD.
5. STOP READING THIS CARTOON RIGHT NOW AND GET BACK TO WORK.

THE SIMPLE WAY TO AVOID THE STOMACH- CHURNING AGONY OF HAVING TO FINISH YOUR THESIS



WILL YOUR RESEARCH MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE?



MEET THE BITTEREST PERSON IN THE WORLD THE GRAD SCHOOL DROPOUT



CONGRATULATIONS!! YOU DID IT!!! YOU FINALLY FINISHED YOUR DISSERTATION!!!

EH? SPEAK UP, SONNY.



Freshman & Sophomore Year

- Work on your core-classes and maintain a high GPA
- Begin working on your upper level psychology courses
- Go to office hours in psychology classes! Even if you are making an “A,” you want professors to know your face and remember you. Ask questions during class. These are the people who could write you a letter of recommendation, but they have to know who you are!
- Join the Psychology Club, Neuroscience Club, and Psi Chi (the International Honor Society in Psychology) as soon as you are eligible

Junior Year

- If you haven't already, consider a research internship in a lab
- Volunteer; get involved doing relevant psychology or neuroscience-related activities
- Continue making and maintaining relationships with professors, especially if you are doing research with them.
- Continue working on your upper-level courses
- Think about your senior project, and start making plans with potential advisors

Getting involved in research

- Contact professors to see if they are accepting research interns for future quarters
 - Could enroll in a class taught by the professor who you'd like to work with, and express interest in his/her research
- Work hard in your lab, even if the tasks are less than exciting.
 - Not only are you gaining valuable experience, but this will go on your CV, and the professor you're working with will likely write one of your letters of recommendation.
- Try to present a poster at a regional or national conference, even if you aren't first author.
 - **Read the Department Weekly News! There are a lot of relevant opportunities posted there!**

Choosing what to do after Cal Poly

- Grad school?
 - Master's (MA or MS*) (*for information on the MFT or other programs, seek relevant website: e.g., Cal Poly's program offers the MFT license)
 - Generally 2 years
 - Expensive, but good for gaining research experience
 - Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD)
 - Almost all are fully-funded (aka give a graduate stipend)
 - You need to be interested in research, and also have research experience
 - Highly competitive
 - Doctorate of Psychology (PsyD)
 - Less research-oriented than the PhD
 - Could be an option if you're interested in being a practicing psychologist and have little interest in teaching/research
 - Less selective than PhD programs, but some might argue these are less respected (depending on what you want to do)
- Research assistant/lab manager positions
 - Great opportunity to gain research experience WHILE making money!
 - Very, very common to do prior to entering a PhD program

What kinds of programs are there?

- Clinical
 - Counseling
 - Health
 - Experimental
 - Industrial/ Organizational
 - Developmental
 - Behavioral Analysis
 - Child psychology
 - Social
 - Cognitive
 - Educational
 - Forensic
 - Marriage and Family
 - Learning
 - Neuropsychology
 - Neuroscience
 - Pediatric
 - School
- Choose what interests you and what you would be happy working in possibly for the next 20+ years.
 - Luckily, psychology areas overlap a lot, so if you are trained in one specialty, you can sometimes switch...or gain experience in a post-doc.

Summer before you apply

- Take the GRE. This allows you to take it again if you need to in October, giving you more than enough time to get your scores sent to your schools.
- Decide which professors you are going to ask for letters of recommendation and ask them if they would be willing and able to write a good letter for you. Make sure to do this as early as possible in order to give the professor enough time to put together a well-written letter.
- Make a final decision on which degree you want to pursue, what schools you are going to apply to, and identify potential mentors/advisors .
- Continue doing research.
- Increase your GPA and make sure you do well in ALL of your psychology courses.
- Begin thinking about your personal statement.

Choosing a school & mentor

- Choosing mentor/advisor is more important than choosing a school
- Start by finding the research you're interested in, and find where those professors are.
- Once you've found some potential options for grad schools & people you'd like to work with, send the professors an email showing your interest and also ask if they're accepting graduate students next year.
- From that point forward, play it by ear. Sometimes professors write back and ask you to stay in touch and tell them a little bit more about yourself. Other times, they just politely answer your question and leave it at that. Above all, respect professors' limited time, and only write them repeated emails if they have encouraged you to do so.

GRE

- Verbal, quantitative, and writing sections
- Psychology SAT II subject test (optional, but highly recommended)
- Computer test
- Take *practice tests* through Princeton Review, Kaplan, etc.
- Get a book
- Make flash cards
- Study!



Ways to raise your GRE score

1. Study for it. Winging the GRE is a terrible waste of time, money, and self-esteem.
2. Learn the directions for each section of the GRE ahead of time. Because of the adaptive nature of this computerized test, the first five questions in each section are the most important for that section's score.
3. On the GRE-General, always guess rather than trying to find a way to skip a question. There is always a chance that you will guess right (and there's no guess penalty).
4. Find and study high-frequency word lists.
5. In the reading comprehension section, read for structure/organization, not details.
6. If a problem-solving math question stumps you, work backwards from the answers.
7. If you encounter logical reasoning questions, start by finding the conclusion and work backward while examining the premises

Letters of Recommendation

- Be careful who you select. You want someone (and you need at least three letters) who knows you *well* and who will write you a strong letter of recommendation.
- It is best to ask professors for letters in person (i.e., offer to set up a meeting via email), but make sure you also provide them with relevant information electronically
- Provide EVERYTHING the professor will need, at least 4 weeks in advance:
 - A list of all the schools and programs you are applying to
 - Brief & clear instructions for each school
 - Copy of your transcripts (highlight the class you took with them)
 - Personal Statement
 - Resume
 - Any additional information you think they would need

Personal Statement (for PhD programs)

- Plan on spending a **lot** of time on this essay. This will probably be the most difficult 1-2 page essay you've ever written.
- You want to stand out, but you don't want it to be too long or overly personal.
- Never say, "I want to get into psychology because I like to help people"
- Let others read over it – parents, graduate students, professors, friends, etc.
- Make it at least somewhat personal to each school. You can have a generic outline, but make it individual to every school & advisor (e.g., write a specific paragraph at the end about why that particular school & advisor attracts you).

Personal Statement tips (PhD programs)

1. Your beginning can be original, but don't make it ridiculous.
2. Your first paragraph might address any themes you can identify in your life that have pointed you toward your interests in psychology. (**Caution:** talking about your own mental health problems is almost never a good idea.)
3. College experiences that are relevant to your intended career.
4. Talk about your research/field experiences (mandatory if you're applying to a PhD program). Mention the kind of responsibilities you had, who you worked for, what you learned through this experience, etc.
5. Talk about how you think your past research (or work) experience is specifically relevant to the field you are interested in for graduate school.
6. Talk about your research interests (critical)
7. Then talk about your goals in graduate school and what you hope to learn and gain while you're there. Express confidence in your ability to be successful in graduate school, but be careful not to sound egotistical.
8. Why the program you're applying to is a good choice for your career goals (fit).

Curriculum Vitae (CV)

- An academic resume – it summarizes your academic and employment history as it pertains to your career in psychology/neuroscience
- Topics included:
 - educational history
 - relevant coursework
 - research & teaching experience
 - honors and awards
 - memberships in professional organizations, publications & presentations
 - Clinical experiences, such as practicum experience and volunteer experience
 - GPA or GRE scores
- Make sure it looks professional
- Will be included with your application and also given to your letter writers

The final spring

- Most PhD applications are due December-January and Masters programs are due shortly after that, so make sure EVERYTHING is turned in on time.
- Keep doing everything you're doing. You don't want to have to explain in your interview why you suddenly just stopped doing research.
- You will be traveling to interviews (anytime in February & March), and will be notified of your acceptance or rejection before April 15th. You must accept or reject an offer, in writing, by or on April 15th.

Going for interviews (PhD programs)

- Many programs may also ask you for a pre- or post-admission interview (to either see if you make the cut, or to wine & dine you!)
- Ask them about their program
 - How do faculty support students? How many students make it through? What special benefits do students gain (mentoring, research opportunities, publications, presentations, internships, funding, etc.) during their stay? What is the intellectual community like?
 - Will mostly be discussing yourself & your research interests
- Talk with current students
- In interviews with faculty members (usually 3), they'll ask you about:
 - Your interests, experiences, influences
 - Your research interests
 - Your goals
 - It's a good idea to have prepped for this by thinking about how your experience or goals relates to work that each professor does, so read their papers & think about all these tough questions!

Once you're in grad school...

- Potential topics to discuss
 - Relationship with your advisor
 - Balancing research with TAing responsibilities
 - Managing time in general/daily life
- Requirements for PhD programs (fairly similar across schools)
 - Research, research, research!
 - 1st year – Applying for graduate fellowships
 - 2nd year – Master's thesis or comprehensive exam
 - 3rd year – Starting or continuing to publish
 - 4th year – Defending your dissertation proposal
 - 5th year – Defend your dissertation!
- Afterward...Post-doc? Faculty position? Industry?

Q&A

You have

Questions

We have

Answers