

# How to Survive Graduate School in 10 Easy Steps

---

You can't do all these things every day. You can, however, make sure that you do all of them regularly. They really, truly make a difference in your state of mind while you're in grad school!

1. **Get sleep.** Get enough sleep. Really. This is serious. Don't pull all-nighters unless absolutely necessary. Don't live on caffeine. And if you notice that you can't sleep, or that you're sleeping way too much, talk to someone about it — sleep disturbances may be a sign of a growing depression or a medical problem that's easily treated. Remember that physical exhaustion can feel the same as depression, and don't get so tired you're completely burned out!
2. **Get exercise.** You don't have to train for the Boston marathon; you just have to move, and it's better if moving is fun. At the very least, leave the lab for breaks and walk up and down the stairs, or down Longwood for a cup of coffee with a friend. Take a Zumba class! Try extreme Frisbee! Take a trapeze class at the Circus Arts Center in Somerville!
3. **Get outside.** Boston isn't known for a lot of sunshine and daylight in the winter; make sure you get as much as you can. Seasonal Affect Disorder is a real issue. And for the rest of the year ... it's beautiful around here! Get outside every day and enjoy it. Observe animals and plants, even if it's just the spider on your windowsill or the fish skeleton on the beach. Remind yourself what made you curious about biology in the first place.
4. **Get involved.** Helping others is a terrific way of keeping things in perspective and reminding you that you're not the only person with stress and problems. Volunteer formally with a group like HPREP or Science in the News. Or come up with a way to "volunteer" informally — go out of your way to ask people how they're doing, so that they don't feel isolated or alone.
5. **Get a hobby.** Sure, you don't have any free time ... but it pays to have a hobby or activity that has nothing to do with science. Even if you only get to do it every three months, it'll remind you that there's more to life than lab experiments. Try knitting. Try making your own beer. Find a group of people to play board games with. Have fun!
6. **Get curious.** Challenge yourself to learn new things, even if they don't seem immediately related to your project — even if they aren't related to science at all. Learning new things reminds you that your brain is powerful and the world is full of wonder.
7. **Get informed.** Read papers and attend seminars unrelated to your project. It keeps things in perspective, and it might help you make a leap of intuition that other people (in your lab or in your field) might not be making.
8. **Get support.** Keep in touch with old friends, even if they're not scientists; keep in touch with new friends from PiN as they defend and move away. Scientists are gypsies, and it's easy to lose touch with people as they move to a different city. If you hold on to good friends, you can be a life-long support system for each other. And if you're struggling during your grad school experience, reach out and talk to people; there's no reason to suffer in silence. Let the people around you help you find solutions!
9. **Get away from screens.** Constantly staring into smartphones, tablets and computer screens can wreak havoc with your mental health and suck up all of your free time before you know it. Look up — look at the real world. Don't take a photo of the moment — enjoy it instead, at least for a little while. Don't text if you can talk face-to-face.
10. **Get a sense of perspective.** Remember that doing science is a privilege, even when it's a pain in the neck. Scientists are paid to learn things and investigate whatever makes them curious. People are paying you for you to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard; revel in it! You're earning a degree that will keep you employable for the rest of your life (whether or not you believe it right now). Make the most of this incredible opportunity.