

How To *ENJOY* Your Ph.D. Program



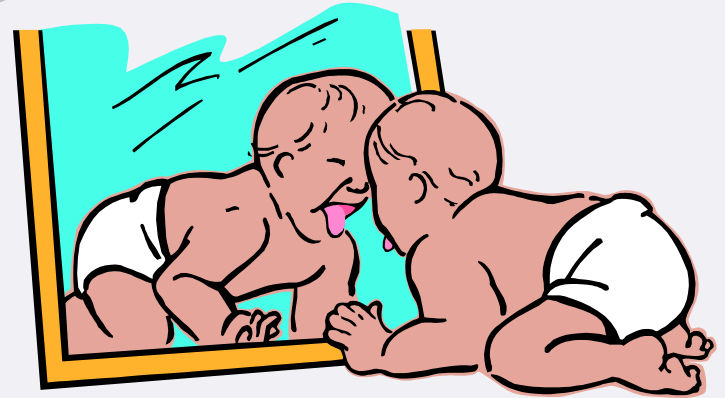
Caveat

- No one recipe for success
- A lot of things depend on you
- Some things end up being beyond your control
- Each program will have unique aspects you need to figure out



Know Thyself

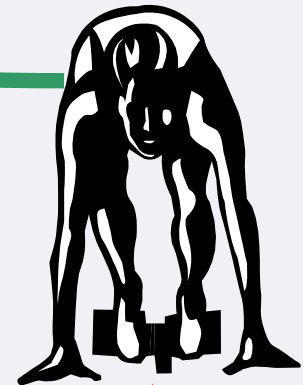
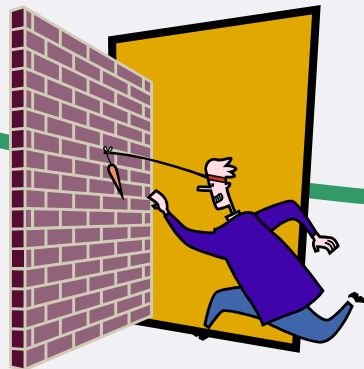
- What are your goals?
- What makes you happy?
- What types of personalities do you get along with?
- What sort of life do you want to lead for the next “n” years?
- What constraints are important to you?
- What is your plan for the future?



The Game



It's not a sprint
It's a marathon!



Learn The Rules

- Have a plan – keep revising it!
(see next slide)
- Don't depend on your advisor to keep you on track
- Get qualifiers done in time
- Ask questions
- Build realistic expectations
- Find out who is in charge of your program
- There are often many wise/friendly folk around – find them!



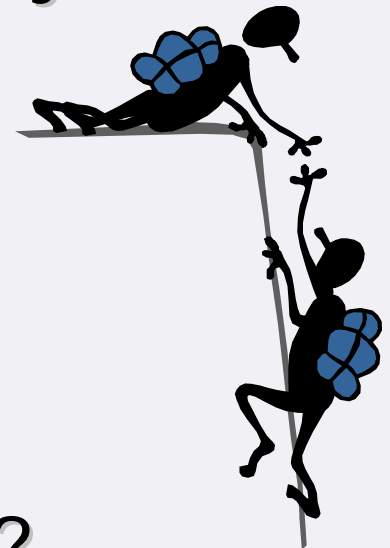
What's In The Plan?

- Courses
- Qualifiers
- Internships
- Vacation/Travel
- Publications
- Thesis Proposal
- Defense
- Job
- Visas – for foreign nationals
- Other considerations important to YOU



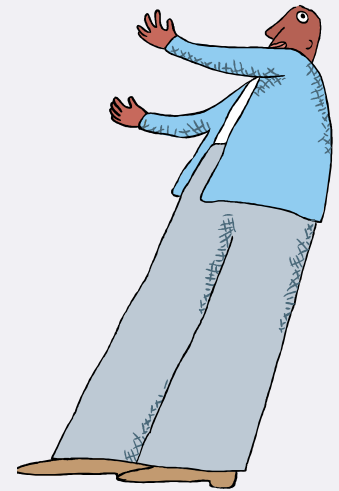
Picking Advisors

- What level of guidance are you looking for?
- Consider research topics
- Consider working style and personality
- Consider funding situation
- Consider the entire research group
- Consider your future aspirations
- Consider funding sources – do you want to be funded by NASA? DARPA?



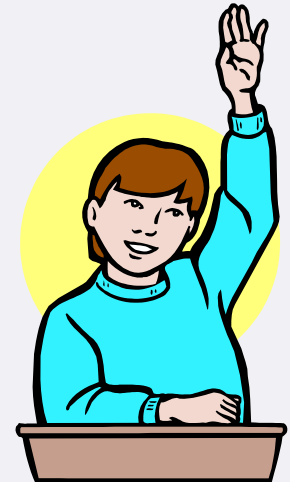
Picking Advisors

- Consider working hours, weekend and holiday availability, family commitments, etc.
- Talk to senior students in the group – ask them difficult questions (see next slide)
- Attend the advisor-advice meeting
- Pick the minimum number of advisors
- Remember you can change your mind in most programs



Asking The Right Questions

- Research, demos, publications, and travel to conferences
- Average time to graduate students in the group
- Other mentors in the group
- Expectations – time you spend on research vs. classes
- Funding sources and security
- Past students – where they are now
- Things that are important to you!



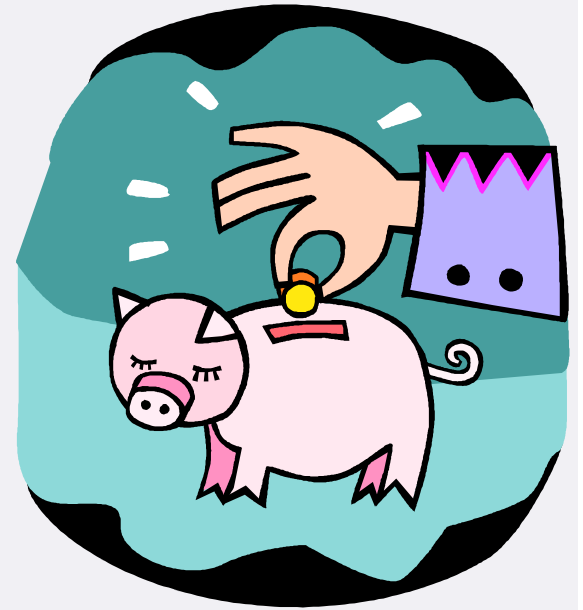
Interacting With Advisors

- Talk to your advisor!
- Prepare for meetings with your advisor
- Keep track of your qualifiers and other requirements
- Your advisor is very busy, doesn't know everything, and is human
- Don't promise what you can't deliver
- Be responsible about taking vacation, but take it
- Don't count on your advisor for everything – find other mentors



Funding

- You may have to write grant proposals
- You may have to work on demos
- Your project can run out of funding
- Your advisor can run out of funding
- You should win external scholarships if you can
- Funding can be restricted for foreign nationals



Community

- Be an active member of the community
- Organize and participate in community events
- Use your talents, ideas, and energy to make your community a better place



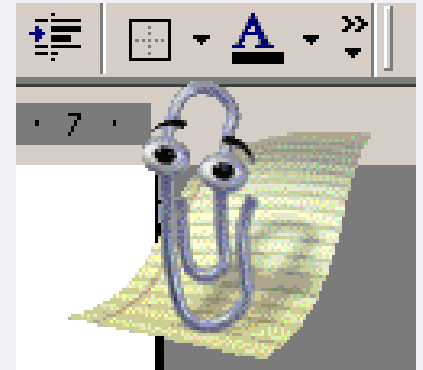
Your Life Outside School

- Many cool things probably happen in the surrounding area
- Get away from time to time
- You are allowed some vacation – nobody will make you take it
- Find friends, hobbies, activities, and places outside of school that you enjoy
- Don't forget these are some of the best years of your life – enjoy them
- You are going to be in your graduate program for a while – enjoy it 😊



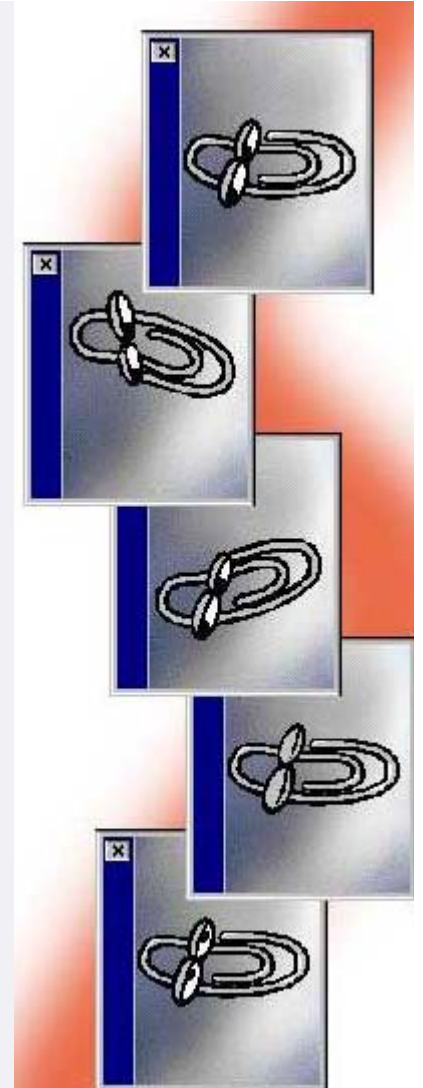
“Helpful Hints”

- Work with your classmates
- Find faculty mentors (other than your advisor)
- Take time off regularly
- Don't try to get involved with too many different projects
- Have a plan for what you want to do in the future
- Take time picking your advisor
- Work with people you like



“Helpful Hints”

- Find activities and friends outside of school and make time for them
- You don't NEED to publish in your first year
- Take your first year to explore different topics and figure out what you are interested in
- You will need to work hard but it is ok to take some time off
- Get to know as many faculty, staff, and students as you can outside your group



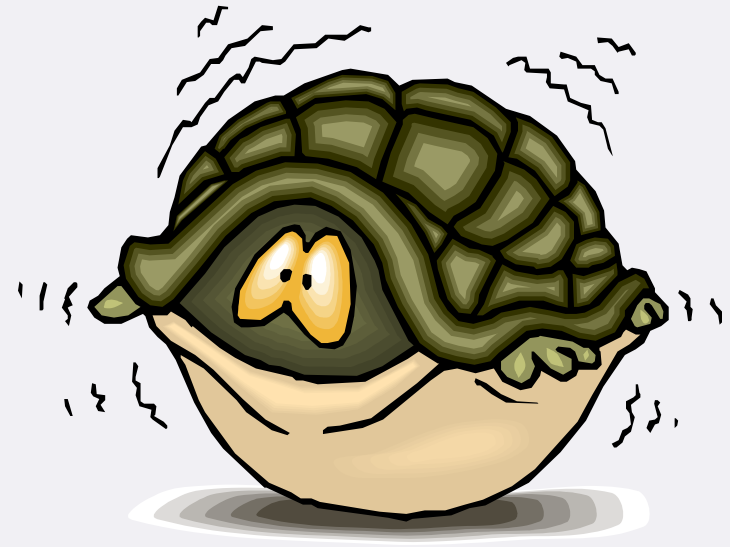
“Helpful Hints”

- Find a research area you love
- READ! Pick a few really important papers and learn them inside out
- Learn the basics: Don't reinvent the wheel.
- Don't worry about mistakes
- Be lavish in your acknowledgments and praise.
- Keep your eye on the prize



Common Fears

- Imposter syndrome
- Oops! I made a mistake
- That meeting with my advisor didn't go well...
- I am not publishing enough...
- Everyone else is doing so much better than I am
- I'll never graduate...



Things To Remember

- You were admitted for a good reason
- Nobody will do your Ph.D. for you
- Have a plan and run your own race
- Get to know as many people as you can
- Don't forget you have a life outside school
- Use all the resources on offer
- Have fun and do great research 😊

