



+ Playing Politics in Graduate School: How to Win

What I Wish I Knew Before Going to Graduate School

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+ You need help

- Graduate school is not just about being smart, everyone there is smart
- Graduate school is not just about being hard working, everyone there is hard working

+ You need help

- Your success = Your effort x The effort of others + a little luck
- Point: You need to have other's invested in your success

+ Getting others involved

- Politics: “Management or control of private affairs and interests, esp. as regards status or position” (OED online).
- How you present your self is key, as noted long ago by Goffman (1959) in *The presentation of self in everyday life*.

+ Image building

- On the first day of class, the faculty love you
- Your classmates will need to be convinced
- Your job: Make sure the faculty's love affair with you continues
- Win over your classmates (you will need them later)

+ Image building for faculty

- Everything you do in regards to faculty will have an impact on them
- Make sure it is ALL positive
- Keep this in mind: Every moment you are in graduate school, faculty members are judging you
- They ARE paying attention
- They WILL talk to each other about you

+ Image building for faculty: Do's

- Be early for everything
 - Get there before them
- Stay late
 - Leave after them
- Sit in front
- Ask intelligent questions
- Pay attention
- Dress professionally

+ Image building for faculty: Do's

- Offer to help with anything
- Go to *ALL* invited events
 - If at their house, bring wine, flowers etc.
- Make an effort to talk to professors
- Always be positive, cheerful, and respectful and enthusiastic
- Faculty love what they do, if you want them to like you, you'd better too
- Put your maximum effort into everything they see from you

+ Image building for faculty: Don'ts

- Do not become known for your politics and religious views
- Do not complain (med example)
- Do not bring your personal “issues” to their attention,
- Do not say anything negative about a faculty member to ANYONE unless you have a specific justifiable grievance
- Do not agree with other’s negative comments about faculty:
Say nothing, or remove yourself from the situation

+ Image building for classmates: Do's

- Realize your classmates are important
- Realize relationships can be tricky because of competition
- Be friendly
- Be helpful, it comes back to you
- Go to parties and other events with them (within reason)
- Be respectful
- Celebrate their achievements

+ Image building for classmates: Do's

- Join or form study groups, you will make friends this way
- Join student committees and leadership groups, other students will begin to see you as a leader (and so will faculty)
- Do try to make friends outside of your discipline

+ Image building for classmates: Don'ts

- Do not say negative things about your classmates to *ANYONE*
- Do not openly compete with your classmates
- Do not brag
- Do not tell people your GRE scores
- Do not be afraid to ask them for help once in a while

+ Image building for classmates: Don'ts

- Do not ever put less than your maximum effort into group projects

- Do not forget that one day soon your classmates will be in a position to help or hurt your career

+ Support Staff

- Support staff are the most important people in the department: You need to treat them that way
- For a superstar professor, their staff person may write your letter of recommendation
- They may decide which TA assignments you get



Support Staff

- They are privy to your grades
- They will handle all paper work concerned with you
 - Piss them off and you won't even know why your life suddenly got much harder
- Professors talk to them, often about you
- They talk to professors, often about you
- Their opinions are respected by the professors



Support Staff

- They may tell you of a grant opportunity tailored just for you--or not
- They often are on awards committees
- They can make you privy to “inside information” that can help your career
- They are hardworking, dedicated, and proud professionals, you need to treat them that way.

+ Take home message

- When you step onto campus on the first day, you have made your entrance on the academic stage. Your audience is all around you, your classmates, your professors, the staff. They will decide if your story is a success or a failure. Keep this in mind and you will be fine: You are not paranoid, they ARE watching.