What You Can Do

• Make your expectations clear.
• Ask for advice and help when you need it.
• Communicate your ideas, problems, and goals so your advisor has a basis for giving feedback.
• Know what you need and what style of interaction you prefer.
  – Self-directed vs. “spoon-fed.”
  – E-mail vs. in-person meetings.
  – Frequent contact vs. occasional meetings.
  – Lots of random ideas vs. a few focused suggestions.
  – Established research project vs. independent effort.
• Other issues:
  – Multiple mentors.
  – (Avoiding) harassment.
  – Changing advisors.
  – Getting (and giving) feedback.
  – Being your own advisor.
Ideal Advisor’s Functions

• Track your progress: help you to set and achieve realistic short- and long-term goals.

• Provide references, pointers to people doing related research.

• Help you find (realistic, useful) research topics.

• Encourage your own interests, rather than promoting their own.

• Give you advice on the direction of your thesis and career.

• Find resources: financial, equipment, office space, psychological support.

• Introduce you to people; get you involved with the research community.

• Encourage you to publish and present your ideas publicly.

• Give constructive feedback on written and verbal presentations.

• Help you to find a job.

• Help you to **finish** graduate school.
Finding an Advisor

- Read research summaries, published papers.
- Go to talks, classes.
- Talk to other advisees and graduates.
- Introduce yourself, tell them about your interests.
- Look for TA/RA positions.
- Get involved in ongoing research projects.
- Average time for students to finish?
- Number of students graduated?
Time Management

- Divide and Conquer: make a list of tasks and refine them until they’re doable.
- Do *something* every day: have easy tasks and hard tasks prepared.
- Set weekly goals: review with advisor or “research buddy.”
- Deadlines (even artificial ones) help some people to create structure.
- Make time for other important activities:
  - “Community service:” committees, helping other students, reviewing papers
  - Extracurricular activities
  - Gaining a broader understanding of related fields
  - Exercise
  - Socializing
- Keep a journal: helpful for jotting down stray thoughts and reviewing to assess your progress.
Graduate School Research

- Unstructured environment.
- Few landmarks or milestones.
- Have to balance:
  - Reading
  - Thinking
  - Sketching out ideas
  - Talking to colleagues, advisor
  - Implementing/building systems
  - Empirical evaluation
  - Theoretical analysis
  - Writing
HOW TO DO GRADUATE RESEARCH

Marie desJardins
WICSE Series on Thriving as a Graduate Student
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