

1. **Make grad school your job.** Grad school is a trade school. Your trade is to write papers and publish them in peer-reviewed journals. Your task in school is to learn how to do this. You have four years and three months. Like most jobs, this job is best done continuously. Fifty weeks per year and forty hours of actual work per week is more than enough.
2. **Build a foundation.** The first year courses are very important, as you will develop the common language we use in the trade to talk with each other. Take them seriously. Attend research seminars for at least three fields. Learn what good research looks like (you'll usually learn this by counterexample). Also, learn how researchers in different fields talk to each other. Think about the ideal environment for you (e.g., do you like picking fights?, do you like when people use data?).
3. **Become an apprentice.** Faculty are where they are because they know how to do research. Find several profs and offer to work with or for them on projects. Seek out coauthorship if possible. Then, observe carefully how they approach the task.
4. **Write everything down.** Document everything you do and all thoughts that emerge. These notes will be extremely helpful when you are writing and when you meet with people. Organize your notes and your code so that you can re-discover ideas years later, when things you dropped suddenly become relevant again.
5. **Prepare for meetings.** Try to put something written in front of your advisers when you show up. Include the main questions you want to ask and what you've done since the last meeting. After the meeting, write down what the feedback was and turn it into task lists. If people know that you'll take their advice seriously, then they will give serious advice.
6. **Develop a self-enrichment habit.** When courses aren't going on, read books that fill in the gaps. These include both technical books (e.g., statistics, theory, advanced math) and softer books (e.g., economic history, old textbooks). This will make you a more "interesting" researcher.
7. **Find collaborators.** Use the first year to figure out who in your class and the classes around you would be good to work with. Your peers will be your coauthors. Pick people with complementary skills (e.g., if you're a theorist, find a good applied person) and with agreeable personalities. These people will become your friends (or "work spouses").
8. **Start N projects, where N is large. Then kill N-2 and close the other 2.** To develop a sense of smell, you need to practice doing research. A lot. Knowing when to drop a project is a skill you must develop. The trick is to only drop it when you know why it doesn't work; otherwise, write the draft. Become a closer for projects you can't kill—finishing is the hardest skill you absolutely must learn. *Coffee is for closers.*
9. **Start one independent project by end of G2. Write one full draft by end of G3.** You need to learn how to develop ideas and pursue them and close them. This takes a lot of practice. Take at least two field courses for credit and consider auditing up to four more. Use them to come up with ideas. Learn how every field operates.
10. **Seek new data.** Having new data is invaluable for research. But, there is a long lag and considerable uncertainty in the acquisition process. Think about what data your interests might line up with and start applying for it in the fall of G3 (or earlier).
11. **Become an entertainer.** Presenting is a critical part of what we do, not an afterthought. Have a first draft of slides one week before your talk. Practice at least three times out loud. Present once in G2, twice in G3 to different fields, and at least twice in G4.
12. **Draft in May.** This is the secret. It means having your data by November of G4 and the first core result by February. This matters because showing drafts to people concentrates the feedback immeasurably and you need time to execute on every piece of feedback.
- 13* **Enjoy yourself.** Ask yourself continually, "Am I having fun or will I soon?" This profession is not for most people. If you're not having fun, consider a different one. But, try to finish the task. It will certainly help you with whatever you do.