

Building a Productive Relationship with Your Advisor and Other Professors

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Useful Resources

- **How to Get the Mentoring You Want:**
<http://www.rackham.umich.edu/downloads/publications/mentoring.pdf>
- **Professor/Grad Relationships: Maximizing the Mentoring Potential**
http://www.gradresources.org/articles/prof_grad.shtml
- **How to be a Good Graduate Student**
<http://www.cs.indiana.edu/how.2b/how.2b.html>
- **So Long, and Thanks for the Ph.D.!**
<http://www.cs.unc.edu/~azuma/hitch4.html>
- **Tomorrow's Professor Listserv**
<http://ctl.stanford.edu/Tomprof/index.shtml>

What is an advisor?



What is an advisor?

ad•vis•er |əd'vīzər| (also ad•vi•sor)

noun

a person who gives advice, typically someone who is expert in a particular field : *the*

- Teacher
- Coach
- Guide
- Mentor
- Resource

How do you choose an advisor?

- This is one of the most important decisions you will make as a graduate student



How *not* to choose an advisor...

- Don't leave it to chance!
- Don't pick someone only because they are available, or because they're the only one who works on your preferred area of interest
- Don't pick someone whose "style" doesn't match your needs



Some questions to ask a prospective advisor

- How many students do you presently have?
- How are your students supported financially (research grants, teaching assistants, no support)? What do you expect in return?
- How is your research group structured?
- How many of your students have graduated, and how long did it take on average?
- What are your former students doing now?

How do you find out more?

- Talk directly to faculty members with whom you might like to work; get a sense of how they interact
- Talk to other graduate students in your department (they always know things...)
- Talk to other professors (they don't always know things...)
- Look up publications, citations, funding history, indications of standing in field

What can an advisor do for you?

- Teach you about the field
- Guide you in choosing a reasonable and interesting project
- Help you past the obstacles
- Provide you with resources & feedback
- Tailor your experiences to your career goals
- Promote your work to others in the field
- Help you get a job! (recommendations)

What can an advisor *not* do for you?

- The work! (and the commitment)
- Decide what interests you
(choose your passion, drive the bus)
- Write your thesis/dissertation
- Think for you (your goal is to become an independent researcher)

Advisors are busy people...



- They likely have many other responsibilities, like administrative work, teaching, grant writing, other research
- They may have other students as well
- There are many demands on their time

... but not too busy for you!



- A good advisor will always make time for you when you ask... **SO ASK!**
- Use your time wisely, come prepared to every meeting with your advisor
- Keep your advisor informed of your progress
- Don't "disappear"

What about other faculty?

- You will interact with them in classes and in informal settings
- Their impressions are also important
- They can provide useful feedback and insights from another perspective
- They are also potential mentors (you can never have too many!)
- Don't think of questions as attacks - rather, think of them as opportunities or expressions of interest

Other advice

- **Take every opportunity to present and talk about your work, and to get feedback**
 - **If you can explain it to others, especially non-specialists, you begin finally to understand it yourself.**
 - **Oral presentations and talks in classes**
 - **Conference presentations (oral or poster)**
 - **Conversation with visiting researchers**
 - **Talking with other graduate students**
 - **Tell your Mom! your Dad! your Grandmother! your neighbor! your mail carrier! (you get the picture...)**

Summary Points

- **Communicate, communicate, communicate**
- **Don't disappear or hide out**
- **Show initiative, work hard**
- **Be self-motivated - "Drive the bus"**
- **Make time for research every day**
- **Ask for help when you get stuck**
- **Take advantage of informal interactions**
- **Learn about process as well as content**
- **Interact, present, conferences, network**
- **Keep your "eyes on the prize"**



Questions or
Comments?