

Ten simple rules for finishing your PhD

Melanie I Stefan

CFP Lunch Seminar

4 November 2014

Coming soon . . .

Digital Tools for Literature and Lab: Evernote, Mendeley, Papers and more

Kevin Bonham, PhD

Tuesday, 2 Dec 2014
Countway Library, Ware Room 5th floor

Also coming soon . . .

Ten simple rules for finishing your Ph.D.

Jacopo Marino^{1*}, Melanie I. Stefan² and Sarah Blackford³

¹Department of Chemistry, University of Zurich, Switzerland.

²Curriculum Fellows Program and Department of Neurobiology, Harvard Medical School, Boston, USA.

³Head of Education & Public Affairs, Society for Experimental Biology (SEB), Lancaster University, UK.

*Corresponding author: jacopo.marino@chem.uzh.ch

PLoS Computational Biology, *in press*

Disclaimer 1: I am not from here



Image copyright: Peter Church

Disclaimer 2: I had a happy PhD

All happy PhDs are alike;
each unhappy PhD is unhappy in its own way.



Choose your own adventure

- 1 Plan your last year ahead
- 2 Make your priorities clear
- 3 The truth can wait
- 4 Enlist support
- 5 Get familiar with the software
- 6 Know your university's procedures and regulations
- 7 Exploit synergies
- 8 Pay attention to your career
- 9 Network
- 10 Leave on good terms

Vote at <http://tinyurl.com/cfp-lunch-phd>

1. Plan your last year ahead

How do I know it's my last year?

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How do I know it's my last year?

Compute

$$t = \text{date}_{\text{submission}} - \text{date}_{\text{today}}$$

If $t \leq 365$, this is your last year.

1. Plan your last year ahead

How do I know it's my last year?

Compute

$$t = \text{date}_{\text{submission}} - \text{date}_{\text{today}}$$

If $t \leq 365$, this is your last year.

Activity 1.1: Set a submission date

If you want a PhD:

- Set a date for submission of your PhD
- Mark it in your calendar

If you have a PhD:

- Think about what factors influenced your submission date
- Offer advice to the person next to you

1. Plan your last year ahead

Activity 1.2

What do you need to plan for?

1. Plan your last year ahead

Activity 1.2

What do you need to plan for?

Some things to think about

- Experiments that need to be done/completed
- Thesis write-up
- Publications and conferences
- Holidays/travel schedules
- Funding situation, job search
- Handover
- Contingency plans

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2. Make your priorities clear

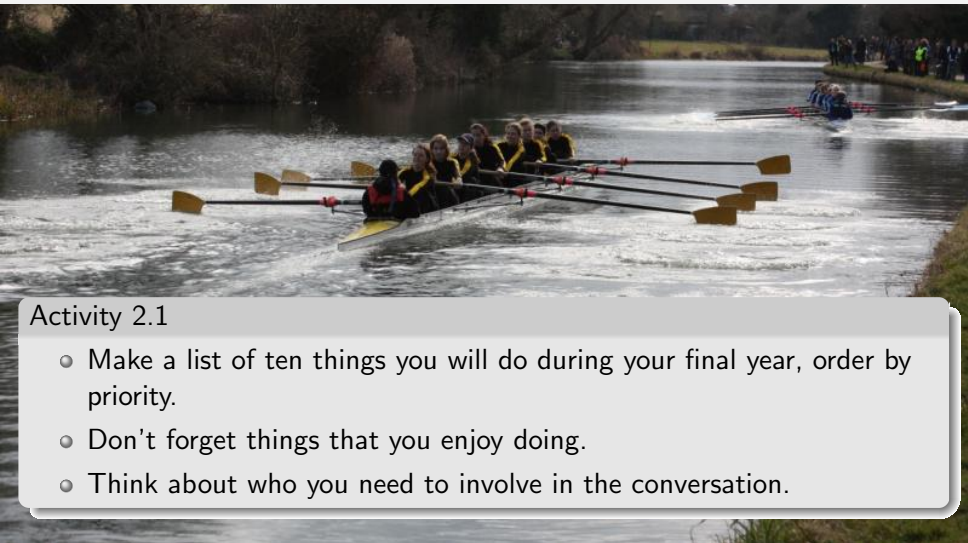
Things going on during the last year of your PhD

2. Make your priorities clear

Things going on during the last year of your PhD

- Applying for grants
- Doing follow-up experiments
- Finishing experiments/data analysis
- Going to conferences
- Sleeping and eating
- Training junior students
- Working on a collaboration
- Writing up papers
- Writing the thesis
- ...

2. Make your priorities clear



Activity 2.1

- Make a list of ten things you will do during your final year, order by priority.
- Don't forget things that you enjoy doing.
- Think about who you need to involve in the conversation.

3. “The Truth Can Wait”



The
Truth
Can
Wait

3. “The Truth Can Wait”

How will I know when I'm done?

3. “The Truth Can Wait”

How will I know when I’m done?

Activity 3.1

If you want a PhD:

- At what point would you be ready to submit?
- What is sufficient for a thesis?
- Can I do further work as a postdoc?

If you have a PhD:

- Share your experience with the person next to you.

4. Enlist support

Who is your support network?

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Who is your support network?

“So long, and thanks for all the fish.”
(Douglas Adams)

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4. Enlist support

Activity 4.1

Start with the acknowledgements



5. Get familiar with the software

Activity 5.1

What (kind of) software do you need for finishing your PhD? What tasks do you need software for?

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Uses for software while writing up

- Text editing/typesetting
- Data analysis
- Managing your bibliography
- Creating images
- Version control
- **Backups**

5. Get familiar with the software

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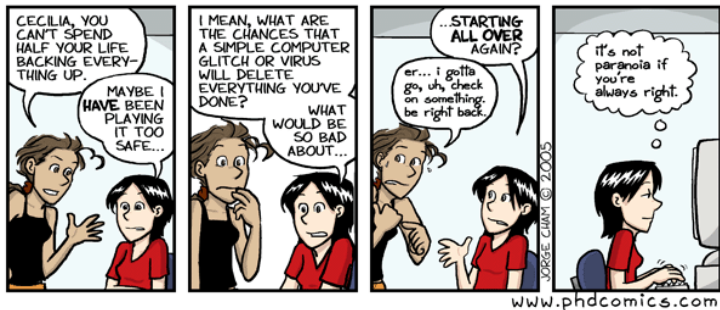
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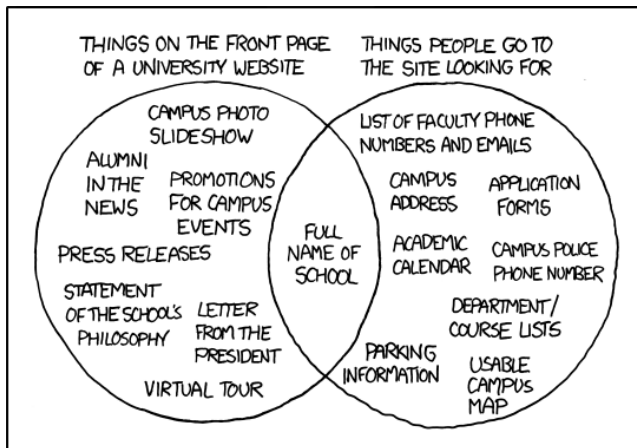
5. Get familiar with the software

Activity 5.2

- Share your backup strategy with the person next to you.
- If you do not have a backup strategy, now is the time to devise one.
- Are there “best practise” examples?



6. Know your university's procedures and regulations



<http://www.xkcd.com>

6. Know your university's procedures and regulations

Activity 6.1

What are some of the university procedures and regulations you might have to think about?

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Activity 6.1

What are some of the university procedures and regulations you might have to think about?

Think about . . .

- Graduation requirements (credit points, publications, etc.)
- Thesis format, binding, copy numbers
- Submission deadlines, graduation dates
- Likely timing between submission and defense
- Forms that need filling out
- Where to go and what to bring
- . . .

7. Exploit synergies

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7. Exploit synergies

Activity 7.1

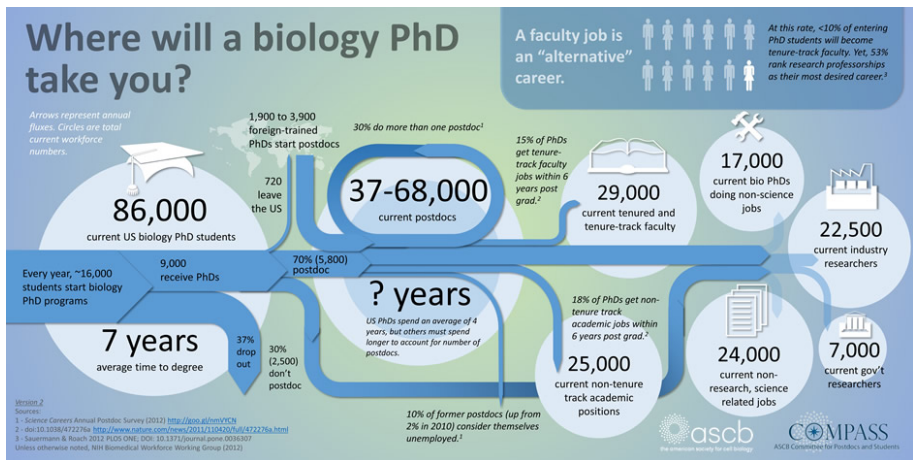
If you want a PhD:

- Think of three examples where you can find useful synergies during your PhD.
- E.g. “I can adapt my defense presentation for a job talk.”

If you have a PhD:

- Think of instances where you have been able to exploit synergies (during your PhD or at another time)
- Share with the person next to you

8. Pay attention to your career

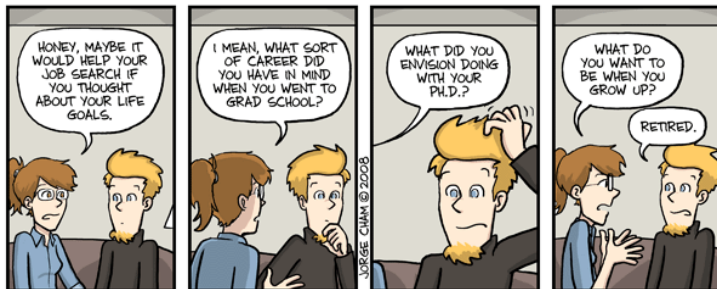


<http://www.ascb.org/ascbpost/index.php/compass-points/item/285-where-will-a-biology-phd-take-you>

8. Pay attention to your career

Activity 8.1

- What do you want to do after grad school?
- How can you prepare for this while still in grad school?
- Is there one thing you can do within the year/month/week to help you get there?



8. Pay attention to your career

Activity 8.2

If you have a PhD:

- How did you go about transitioning to your next career step after finishing your PhD?
- What options did you consider? What were your immediate, mid-term and long-term goals?
- What do you wish you had known?

If you want a PhD:

- Talk to someone who has a PhD about how they managed their career going out of graduate school. Ask them questions.

9. Network

Activity 9.1

What opportunities for networking do you have?

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Activity 9.1

What opportunities for networking do you have?

Ways to network

- Conferences, meetings
- Collaborators, work contacts
- Friends of friends
- Approach people you find interesting
- Online networking tools and fora
- Here and now

9. Network

Activity 9.2

- Introduce yourself to the person(s) sitting next to you
- Learn about who they are and what they do
- Think about one thing you could do for them. For instance:
 - Introduce them to someone they should meet
 - Point them to a useful resource
 - Proof-read a chapter of their dissertation
 - Teach them an experimental technique
 - Share your cookie with them
 - ...

10. Leave on good terms



10. Leave on good terms

Activity 10.1

What things need sorting out/looking after before you leave?

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Activity 10.1

What things need sorting out/looking after before you leave?

Some things to do before you leave

- Order and label your samples
- Have your lab notes and files in order
- Hand over projects
- Discuss continuation with your supervisor
- Sort out authorships and IP
- Have a leaving party