

# Advice for PhD Students

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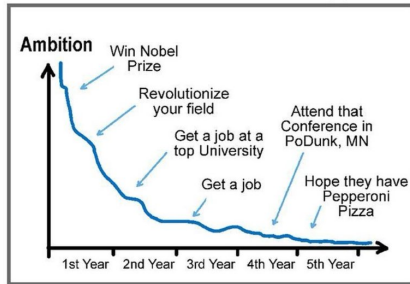
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## Pro-Tips

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# What is a PhD for?

## YOUR LIFE AMBITION - What Happened??



# The Clay Pots Parable



# The Clay Pots Parable (Explained)

*The ceramics teacher announced on opening day that he was dividing the class into two groups. All those on the left side of the studio, he said, would be graded solely on the quantity of work they produced, all those on the right solely on its quality.*

*His procedure was simple: on the final day of class he would bring in his bathroom scales and weigh the work of the “quantity” group: fifty pounds of pots rated an “A”, forty pounds a “B”, and so on. Those being graded on “quality”, however, needed to produce only one pot — albeit a perfect one — to get an “A”.*

*Continued on next slide...*

*Source: Art & Fear*

# The Clay Pots Parable (Explained)

*...Well, came grading time and a curious fact emerged: the works of highest quality were all produced by the group being graded for quantity.*

*It seems that while the “quantity” group was busily churning out piles of work-and learning from their mistakes — the “quality” group had sat theorizing about perfection, and in the end had little more to show for their efforts than grandiose theories and a pile of dead clay.*

*Source: Art & Fear*

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- Don't be afraid to invest
  - Learn about how policies/organizations work
  - Get in the habit of taking an idea and pushing on it for a while
- Talk to people
  - Collaborations are a great way to boost productivity and learning
  - Leverage experts:
    - Institutional knowledge
    - Tools from other fields
  - Explaining challenges/ideas to other people is **super** useful

The Two Pager (Template Link)

- Example 1
- Example 2
- Example 3

# How to Ask for Help - Takeaways

- Be respectful: if you ask someone to spend time thinking about your problem, do serious preparation and prioritize engaging
- Be concrete and explicit: ask only what you need
- Make it easy for them:
  - Write a concise explanation of the setting and the problem
  - Write a minimal working example
- Simplify further:
  - Strip out jargon as much as possible
  - Strip out anything unrelated to your exact question
- Be polite, grateful and humble

# How to Ask for Non-technical Help

- Be respectful: if you ask someone to spend time thinking about your problem, do serious preparation and prioritize engaging
- Be concrete and explicit: figure out which questions you need answered ahead of time
- Make it easy for them:
  - Explain exactly what you are looking for
  - Explain why you want it
  - Guide the conversation back to your questions
- Be polite, grateful and humble
- Listen
  - Be flexible in hearing what they have to say
  - But don't forget to circle back to your questions
- Take notes. Keep them in a durable place.

# More Do's

- Join + partake in communities
  - Attend field seminars/workshops regularly
  - Make the effort to engage
    - Read the paper + make a comment each session
    - Find reasons to talk to faculty regularly
  - Contribute
    - Try to be helpful (even if it takes time/effort)
      - Bonus:** Share things you learn via talks/blogs/tweets/GUIs/etc
      - Caveat:** Take care of yourself; if you feel uncomfortable, don't do it s
- Take time to learn new things
  - New kinds of (policy) settings
  - New methodologies
  - New packages/tools/software New programming languages