Graduate Study Skills
Values and Directions

What Are Graduate Study Skills and Why Are They Important?

Graduate study skills include many academic skills you already have. But learning is a lifelong process and there are new skills to master, especially in disciplinary research and writing. Also, there might be a gap of some years between undergraduate and graduate study in which digital tools have changed, and in which new methods of teaching, learning, and research have developed that require new skills.

A strong toolkit of skills will help you efficiently and effectively manage a graduate workload in balance with your work and other life responsibilities. You will be able to work smart as well as work hard. Keeping up with digital skills will help you manage information and build knowledge more efficiently.

Directions for Thinking About Graduate Study Skills

1. In considering the categories above, what skills do you feel you bring with you? How can these be sharpened? Which skills do you not yet have, or are new to you?

2. How do these skills connect with your academic and professional goals? Why are they important to you?

3. Where are the resources to help you build your graduate study skills? Think of questions to ask your advisor and peers. What department and campus resources are you aware of? How can you find out about resources you might not be aware of?

4. How can my use of social media enhance my academic and professional development?

5. How do my well-being and life circumstances support my capacity to succeed in graduate school?

6. Do I have physical, mental health, or learning challenges for which I might be able to seek support and accomodation for my academic work?

Important Categories of Graduate & Professional Life Skills

In graduate school, you do more than learn content or information. You construct and communicate knowledge. You become an expert in your discipline with a range of skills that help you succeed in school and into your career. Here are some categories of skills to consider:

- **Information Literacy or Knowledge Synthesis:** To find, explore, evaluate, select, analyze, and synthesize information so you can construct, use, communicate, and apply knowledge effectively, ethically, and respectfully. This includes critical and creative thinking as well as effective use of digital tools.
- **Digital Tools:** Awareness of and facility in using digital tools to search, evaluate, and document information; manage and analyze information or data; and present information and data. Awareness and facility with using social media and other web tools to research, communicate, and collaborate.
- **Writing:** Understanding and managing the writing process: generating ideas, managing and structuring information, developing arguments, getting feedback and revising writing, writing for specific audiences and purposes, following academic documentation processes, managing large writing projects, and writing collaboratively and ethically.
- **Study Processes:** Lecture and reading note-taking; organizing, connecting, and managing a large volume of information; planning and coordinating assignments for timely completion.
- **Communication:** Email management and etiquette, effective discussion participation in classroom and social settings as well as in online spaces, oral presentations in different formats and for different audiences (in class, at conferences, informal public settings), networking and building positive connections with others.
- **Collaboration and Cultural Competence:** Working with others, teamwork and leadership, exploring ideas and from multiple perspectives, working with people and ideas very different from your own, working ethically and respectfully across multiple cultures, identities, beliefs, and values.

Your Turn

In each category, highlight your strengths and think of how you can build on them. In a different color, highlight capacities, skills, and tools you have yet to develop. Look for opportunities and resources that will help you develop these capacities and skills as you work through this and other sections of your ASK binder.

Graduate Study Skills Navigator
Checklist of Essential Skills

Whether you are moving along an academic or professional path in graduate school, consider this checklist of essential skills for graduate school and career success. If you check "I have this skill," remember to ask yourself how you can develop it further for graduate studies. If you think you do not have a skill or are unsure of whether you have it to a sufficiently competent level, work with your advisor, a librarian, or the Center for Writing & Rhetoric. Remember to also ask your peers.

Skill	I have this skill	Should I get this skill?
Use library databases to find information (books, articles, websites)		
Use an internet browser to evaluate and select information from reliable sources		
Document information to keep track of sources		
Use a citation management tool to organize information and citations		
Take clear notes in lectures, seminars, and discussions that I will understand and be able to use over time		
Organize information from multiple sources so that I can easily and effectively retrieve and use it later		
Create a system for organizing my information in my computer and online spaces using folders and/or tags that helps me retrieve and use information effectively		
Put ideas in conversation with one another—analyze and synthesize information		
Participate and contribute to discussions positively and productively		
Approach and engage with new or different ideas to query your assumptions, values, and beliefs and expand your knowledge base		
Integrate information into my own writing using the appropriate documentation style for my discipline		
Translate information into visual forms such as mind maps, visual models, charts, and graphs		
Use word processing software to format texts in a scholarly and professional manner		
Use spreadsheet software to organize and visualize information		
Use presentation software to create effective visual presentations for oral and written communication		
Engage an audience in an oral presentation to ensure they follow my key ideas		
Plan and manage long written assignments to allow time for drafting, revision, editing, and formatting		
Formulate research questions that help you derive a strong thesis for a paper or presentation		

Skill	I have this skill	Should I get this skill?
Write a focused and comprehensive thesis		
Develop an outline from a thesis for a paper or presentation		
Manage the drafting and revision process to keep track of and incorporate feedback from peers and professors		
Plan and manage a project by setting clear goals and work processes, interim deadlines and checkpoints, and sufficient time for polishing toward strong final outcomes		
Know how to do quantitative data analysis as required for my program		
Know how to do qualitative data analysis as required for my program		
Know how to interpret and present data analysis		
Use quantitative data analysis software		
Use qualitative data analysis software		
Organize and manage email using software to keep track of important messages regardless of the volume of email you receive		
Know how to navigate and engage in coursework through Canvas, CGU's learning management system		
Work effectively in groups, managing accountability for your role and supporting group members		
Seek accommodations from the Office of Disability Services that would support physical and learning needs		
Set up and work regularly with a study or writing group		
Add other items as you discover them to personalize this checklist:		

Graduate Study Skills
Resource Checklist

Honnold Mudd Library

cgu.edu/library

- ☐ I have explored the Honnold Mudd Library website and bookmarked its page.
- ☐ I have visited Honnold Mudd Library and walked around inside to explore.
- ☐ I know where the book stacks are for all my areas of study.
- ☐ I have three favorite places to study and write within the library.
- ☐ I know where Connection Copy Center and café are.

Honnold Mudd Library Workshops

- ☐ I have explored the library workshop calendar.
- ☐ I have attended at least two library workshops.

Citation Management Tools (Zotero, Mendeley, Refworks, Endnote)

- ☐ I know what citation management is.
- ☐ I understand the importance of citation management and how scholars use it. I can think of three functions or uses of a citation management app.

    1. _____
    2. _____
    3. _____

- ☐ I have attended a citation management workshop at Honnold Mudd Library.
- ☐ I have selected and installed a citation management app on my computer.
- ☐ I am using a citation management app to store all my citations and related articles as I do courses, research, and write papers.
- ☐ I know how to use the "cite and write" function to embed citations as I write papers so that I can generate an accurate and complete reference list or bibliography at the end of the paper.

Research Guides

- ☐ I know who my disciplinary area subject specialist librarian is. Name: _____
- ☐ I have browsed through the Research Guide webpages for my disciplinary area.
- ☐ I have found useful items in the library's Research Guide pages.

Database Searches

- ☐ I have met with my subject specialist to get input on the most effective ways to search, and the best periodicals and databases to use.
- ☐ I know how to write effective search terms and filter my search for peer-reviewed material.
- ☐ I know how to evaluate sources for validity and relevance.
- ☐ I understand what peer review is and why peer reviewed scholarship is important.

Academic Integrity

☐ I have done the Academic Integrity online tutorial on the Honnold Mudd Library website at cgu.edu/academicintegrity.

☐ I have read and understand CGU's Academic Honesty policy on the CGU website at cgu.edu/academichonesty.

☐ What questions do you have about academic integrity and plagiarism? What is still unclear to you? Write questions here to ask your advisor and/or your subject specialist librarian:

☐ I have discussed my academic integrity questions with...

    ☐ My advisor

    ☐ Other professors

    ☐ My peers

    ☐ The Center for Writing & Rhetoric

Documentation Style

☐ I know the documentation style for my discipline.
Write down what documentation style is used: _____ (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.)

☐ I have bought the documentation style handbook for my disciplinary area.

☐ I have bookmarked online sites for quick reference to my documentation style.

Writing & Presentation Skills

The Center for Writing & Rhetoric

cgu.edu/write

☐ I have bookmarked and browsed the Center for Writing & Rhetoric webpages to understand their services.

☐ I have set up my account with the Center for Writing & Rhetoric's appointment scheduler (WCOnline) at cgu.mywconline.com and know how to use the scheduler.

☐ I have visited the Center for Writing & Rhetoric.

☐ I have met with a Center for Writing & Rhetoric consultant to find out how they can help me:

    ☐ Manage and improve my critical thinking

    ☐ Plan and develop arguments

    ☐ Integrate sources into my writing

    ☐ Improve my documentation accuracy and style

    ☐ Revise and polish my writing

    ☐ Develop a writing process

    ☐ Integrate writing consultations as part of my writing process

    ☐ Develop or polish my oral presentation skills

☐ I know the different ways I can use Center for Writing & Rhetoric support and services.

☐ I have attended Center for Writing & Rhetoric workshops. Write the names of some of the workshops you have attended. Plan to attend a few workshops each semester to keep improving your skills.

_____

_____

_____

☐ I have read about Center for Writing & Rhetoric Boot Camps and understand their purpose and when I will be able to participate.

Short reflection: Have you used a writing center before and if so, how is the CGU Center for Writing & Rhetoric different in the support it offers? If you have never used a writing center before, how can the CGU Center for Writing & Rhetoric be of use to you? If you are a good writer, what are some ways in which the Center for Writing & Rhetoric can help you push your writing and oral presentation skills even further? Make some notes in this space:

Your Digital Toolkit

List the digital tools you know how to use and that you think might be useful for graduate and professional life. You might not know what you need yet, but keep a sharp lookout for tools your peers use, that professors recommend, and that are available through school and library resources.

Some examples: Productivity tools such as Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint) or Apple's Pages, Numbers, and Keynote; web storage and collaboration tools like Dropbox or Google Drive; self-management tools like Todoist or Workflowy; data analysis packages like SAS, SPSS, R, NVivo; citation management tools like Mendeley or Zotero.

Digital Tools I Use Well	Digital Tools I Should Learn

Digital Learning Lab (DLL)

cgu.edu/dll

☐ I have bookmarked and browsed the DLL webpages to understand their services.

☐ I have set up my account with the DLL's appointment scheduler at mywco.com/cgulearning and know how to use the scheduler.

☐ I have visited the DLL and know how to get to their offices.

☐ I know what tools DLL teaches that I should learn. Write them here:

_____
_____
_____

☐ There are tools and skills that DLL teaches that I am not familiar with that I want to find out about:

_____
_____
_____

☐ I know the different ways I can use DLL support and services.

☐ I have attended a DLL workshop. Write the names of some of the workshops you have attended. Plan to attend a few workshops each semester to keep improving your skills.

_____
_____
_____

Office of Information Technology (OIT)

cgu.edu/it

☐ I have obtained my student ID card from the Honnold Mudd Library's Connection Center. For hours and more information, visit cgu.edu/connection.

☐ I have explored and bookmarked the OIT website and understand the different services they offer students. I am interested in:

_____
_____
_____

☐ I know where the OIT offices are in Academic Computing Building (ACB).

☐ I know how to work with helpdesk via email, phone, or in-person for technical needs with email and wireless connectivity.

☐ I have visited the computer labs in the Academic Computing Building, Harper basement, and the Drucker building (Burkle).

☐ I know where the collaboration rooms are in the Academic Computing Building and in Harper basement.

☐ I know what software packages I can download for free or at a student discount. I have/plan to get the following:

_____
_____
_____

☐ I know how to print and pay for printing using my student ID card at the computer labs.

☐ I have looked at the computers in the labs and know what software they have that I might be able to use.

☐ I have connected my electronic devices to the correct CGU wifi system (eduroam)

☐ I know how to access and use the student email service and email client.

☐ I understand how to set up email rules and filters.

☐ I know how to set up multiple accounts on one email client to better manage email.

☐ I know how to login and use the MyCGU portal to access resources and important information.

☐ I have downloaded the MyCGU app on my smartphone.

☐ I know how to access Canvas from my portal dashboard and have downloaded the Canvas mobile app.

☐ I know how to navigate Canvas to access and engage with my courses.

☐ I know whom to ask to get help with understanding how to use Canvas effectively.

☐ I know how to access Qualtrics from my portal dashboard.

☐ I know how to use Qualtrics to design surveys.

☐ I know whom to ask to get help with using Qualtrics.

Your Graduate School Academic Skills

Goals and Questions

Having worked through the previous pages, make a list here of items you must work on and any further questions you have. Discuss these with your advisor, with other students, a librarian, or staff members who can help you find the resources or support that you need.