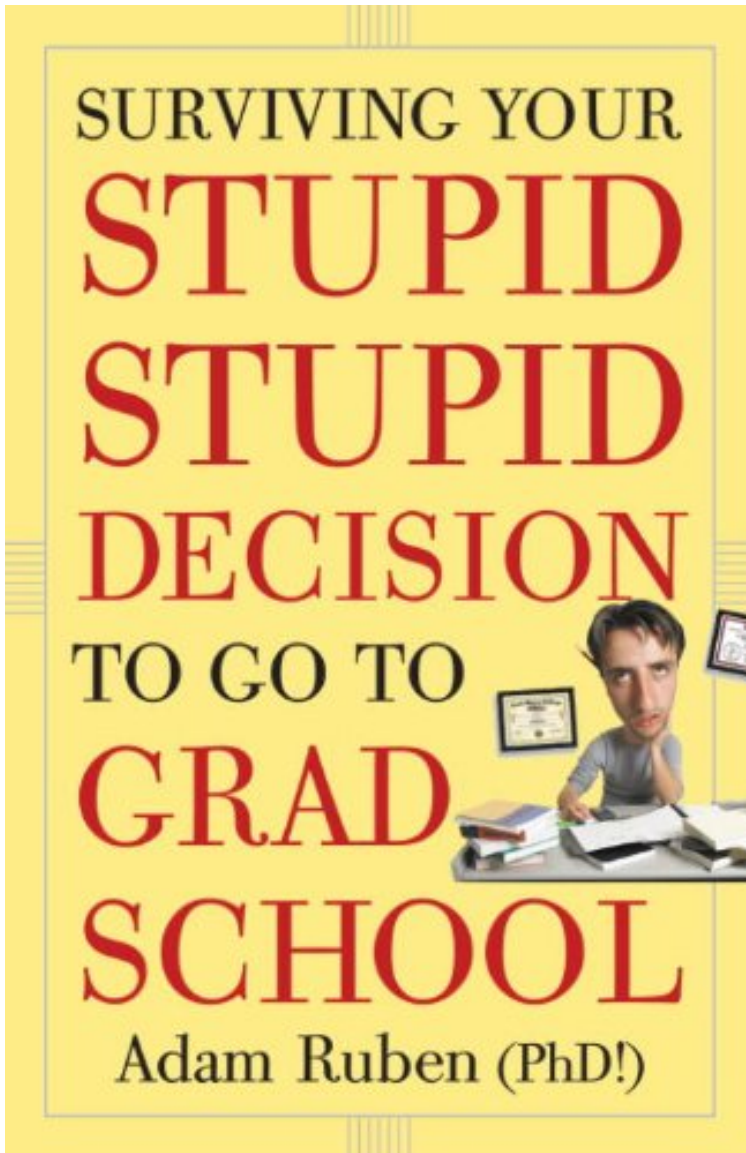


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Surviving Your Stupid, Stupid Decision to Go to Grad School



*Par Adam Ruben
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurThis is a book for dedicated academics who consider spending years masochistically overworked and underappreciated as a laudable goal. They lead the lives of the impoverished, grade the exams of whiny undergrads, and spend lonely nights in the library or laboratory pursuing a transcendent truth that only six or seven people will ever care about. These suffering, unshaven sad sacks are grad students, and their salvation has arrived in this witty look at the low points of grad school. Inside, youll find: advice on maintaining a veneer of productivity in front of your advisortips for sleeping upright during

boring seminars a description of how to find which departmental events have the best unguarded free food how you can convincingly fudge data and feign progress This hilarious guide to surviving and thriving as the lowliest of life-forms the grad student will elaborate on all of these issues and more. From the Trade Paperback edition. Extrait Foreword There exists a subculture of dedicated academics who view spending a decade masochistically overworked and underappreciated as a laudable goal. They lead the lives of the impoverished, grade the exams of the whiny, and spend lonely nights in the library or laboratory pursuing a glowing truth that only six or seven people will ever care about. These people are grad students, and they are idiots. This book is for readers considering or already committed to spending the best years of their lives without sunlight. You'll learn which departmental events have the best free food, what pranks to play on hot-but-vapid undergrads, how to convincingly fudge data, and why your friends who opted to take faceless nine-to-five jobs after college were actually the smart ones. Preface Seriously? A foreword and a preface? Indeed. The existence of both sections can teach you a lot about grad school: 1. Much can be gained by stretching a small amount of content over multiple pages. 2. In general, such redundancy imparts powerful messages that are powerful. 3. Your reaction reveals whether you should be a grad student: a. Those unfit for grad school have skipped ahead, probably to a page with an illustration. b. Those who belong in grad school feel a compulsion to read every word (and, in some cases, take notes to prepare an extensive critique on the book's use of dialectic assonance). Prologue All right, now this is just insane. A prologue? Really? Are we stuck here in limbo, doomed never to begin the book? Exactly. Now you're getting it. This book is like your life, and the prologue is grad school. You eagerly want to begin your life, but grad school stands in the way, and just when you think it's over nope! Another section. And the hell of it is, you could begin your life this moment. Really. You could skip to Chapter 1 and begin reading the actual book. But out of obligation to the printed word, or out of inertia, or out of a misguided need to finish what you start, you'll keep reading and waiting. A foreword, a preface, and a prologue. Ridiculous. I mean, seriously, what's next an introduction? Introduction Every speech at my college graduation buzzed with a sense of finality. You have completed your education, each one reminded us. Now go contribute to society! And most of my classmates eagerly accepted the challenge, having known that this day the official, robe-clad end of the beginning would someday arrive. As they pocketed their diplomas, they envisioned their new jobs, their new responsibilities, their lives outside the academy. They entered college as children, but they exited on that hot June afternoon as citizens of the world. Most of them. Not me. And not all of my classmates, either. As guest speakers and valedictorians exhorted us to go forth into the real world, a few of us felt the directive a bit premature. We knew that college had ended, but we also knew that the real world was years away. We were prepared instead to enter a half-assed compromise between college and real life, a simultaneously intense and lackadaisical academic perdition called grad school. I felt a little like a cheater, like a twelve-year old who still wades in the kiddie pool, knowing it's well past time to start swimming, but frightened of the loud teenagers in the big pool. Or maybe like a budding musician who masters Guitar Hero, but never picks up an actual guitar. Instead of a job and a boss and a mortgage, September would bring another college campus with its dorms and quads and classrooms and we wouldn't even feel like its most welcome occupants. We would walk around our new planned communities in a daze, not quite fitting in with the social culture, and not really supposed to. We would experience all the disorientation of a new campus just like we did four years ago but none of the excitement. And we'd have no idea whether to go to football games. *** I spent the first two months of grad school determining whether three amino acid residues (out of hundreds) were important for the functioning of a certain protein (out of thousands) that helps certain bacteria eat a sugar called arabinose. I demonstrated that those three residues are not important. Two months. But that's grad school. You take a tiny corner of the universe that a professor finds fascinating and bury your face in it, only looking up occasionally to steal unattended bagels. At the end of two months, I felt ready to announce my discovery to the world. Residues 103, 107, and 109 are unimportant! I wanted to cry from the hilltops. Unimportant! But a journal article never quite coalesced, and I moved on to a different lab, and now exactly zero people know about my discovery which, had I ended up publishing the results, would have been exactly the number of people who cared. What was this? My entire life, I felt I was gearing up to do something. Now I had finished my college education, and as a reward, I got to sit in an ignored corner of an academic building, growing and harvesting plate after plate of meaningless bacteria, solely for the sake of turning grant money into fodder for more grant money. To a member of the generation that was reminded, You're special! at every turn, nothing strikes a blow like realizing you've reached adulthood positioned to be completely, maybe permanently, irrelevant. *** Hence this book. No matter where you are in the grad school

process, you've probably felt this way (or will soon). Sure, you love what you study but to the exclusion of nearly all else? When you're typing page three of a 25-page paper at 4:00 AM, sucking down your ninth Red Bull of the night, will you honestly feel there's nothing you'd rather do? Or will you shut your laptop in anger, thrust your head into your hands, and lament your stupid, stupid decision to go to grad school?***If there's one thing I've learned from writing a book about grad school, it's that writing a book about college must be easy. Most college students are young, overconfident, drink beer, go to classes, take exams, write papers, party, live in dorms, deal with professors, parents, and roommates in other words, their experiences are relatively universal. Grad schools are all different. You could earn a Masters, a Ph.D., a J.D., an M.B.A., a D.V.M., (that's a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine), or one of hundreds of other degrees. Your daily routine could include hours of classroom instruction (either giving or receiving it), or you may never need to attend class. You might obligatorily spend twelve hours a day in a lab, or you might have to research your dissertation at your own pace in a location of your choosing. Hell, you may not even write a dissertation. You also might not have oral exams, teaching responsibilities, or an actual advisor. Your program may stop after a flat-out guaranteed two years, or you could find yourself puttering around campus a decade from now, swearing up and down that you're going to graduate any minute. You might be twenty-two years old and eager to spend the rest of your life studying particle physics, or you might be fifty, have a job and a family, and you've decided to earn an M.B.A. at night online for a little salary bump. So here's what I don't want. I don't want to find my book on .com with little user reviews that say things like this: What the hell is a thesis?, April 13, 2010 By Stupid Whiny Complainer Not everything in this book applied to me! Waah! Waah! If you read a sentence in this book about the GRE, for example, and you're getting your advanced degree from a pharmacy college, which means you've taken the PCAT instead let it go. As grad school teaches in spades, it's not all about you. In fact, almost nothing is. So relax, enjoy, and please fight the urge to take notes. Maybe you'll even learn something, which is allegedly the point of grad school. Then get back to work. Chapter 1 Stop? Drop? Enroll? DECIDING WHETHER TO RUIN YOUR LIFE WHEN facing a major decision say, whether to buy a car take a piece of paper and make two columns. Label one "Pros" and the other "Cons." In these columns, write the positive and negative factors that will influence your decision. (For example, "On the one hand, I'd have an easier commute, but on the other hand, I'd have to pay for parking.") Then see which list is longer and your decision is made. When deciding whether to go to grad school, the process is similar. Take a piece of paper and make two columns. Label one "Cons" and the other "Super Cons." In these columns, write the negative and really negative factors that influence your decision. (For example, "On the one hand, I'd feel overworked, but on the other hand, I'd also be depressed.") Then see... Revue de presse "A hilarious, and exquisitely thorough, rebuttal for every time your parents bring up 'The G-Word.'" -- Rob Kutner, writer, The Daily Show, The Tonight Show with Conan O'Brien, author, Apocalypse How "The academic world is so full of humorless wonks and pedants, that Ruben arrives like a crazed party-crasher. It's as if a tweedy committee coma has been interrupted by someone from the roller derby. This very funny book also slings many sly arrows into an overstuffed and moribund culture that needs repair and reconfiguration. -- Compound Calico, Moderator, RateYourStudents.blogspot.com "Adam Ruben's book is funnier than even the funniest dissertation, thesis, lab report, or legal brief. I wish my law school casebooks had been 10% as enjoyable to read." - Jeremy Blachman, author of Anonymous Lawyer Indispensable for any prospective grad student who wants to get a jump on his or her anxiety requirements. This book proves that years of obscure, excruciating academic toil can, in fact, make a meaningful contribution to society as a source of comedy. -- Jay Katsir, writer for The Colbert Report Why waste a few years in grad school when you can waste a few bucks on this hilarious and insightful book instead? You'll end up with the same career prospects (zero), but have had a lot more fun." -- Jeff Kreisler, author of Get Rich Cheating "Hilarious! Adam Ruben has nailed the graduate student experience, and has done it with a great sense of humor....this is a true survival guide for anyone foolish, er, ambitious enough to embark on an advanced degree." -- Dexter Holland, Grad School Sufferer and Sympathizer (Lead Singer, The Offspring)