Moving to a new city and starting at a new school can be daunting. Here are some tips and advice!

**First paycheck** Your first month’s paycheck will be about half of a normal months pay! This will be about $1000—and you will not receive a full paycheck until next month—so plan accordingly.

**Signing up for health insurance** You will be able to register for health insurance once you are here. If you are in town before orientation, you can stop by the union office (609 E. 13th St., Eugene, OR 97405), or you can simply wait until orientation. If you have a partner that will be added to your health insurance, you will need to bring information such as their social security number.

**Living on a budget** Bike or take the bus to work, if possible. UO parking permits are expensive and parking is scarce. Your UO ID card works as a free bus pass on all LTD bus routes, so it’s good for getting around town as well as to work. ION has a bike cage next to Huestis that is free to use (get a code from Mindy) so you can securely store your bike on campus.

Try to find a shared living situation with other students. I found a group of other graduate students and young professionals who were looking for another roommate on ”Shared Rooms” on craigslist. Although it can definitely be hit or miss on craigslist, I think the living situation really helped, and not only for saving some money on rent.

Being in a stable living arrangement is crucial, especially for the first year. I suggest prioritizing being in comfortable housing that is close to the University, even if you have to pay a little more. Also, don’t live around the Greek houses, too much partying all night.

Live in UO graduate student housing, if possible. It is a good price, and no BS from landlords just trying to take advantage of UO students.
Grocery & restaurant advice Winco is cheap and has an amazing bulk section. Trader Joe’s is also fairly inexpensive and within biking distance of campus. Fred Meyer (moderately-priced), Walmart (cheap!), and Target (cheap!) are all on the EmX bus line in west Eugene.

Hideaway bakery sells fresh bread and pasta. Sweet life has amazing desserts. Winco (cheap, employee-owned), McMenamins (will let you split the check a million ways if you ask nicely and tip well, close to campus, good beers, indoor and outdoor seating with firepits).

Mezza Luna has good quality pizza. Whole foods have many "no salt added" products not available other places. Market of Choice has the best local meat and produce. Trader Joes is good for guilt pleasure foods.

Meiji is delicious but pricey; Agate alley is close to campus, reasonable prices, decent food and drinks (but avoid on Thursday nights when undergrads take over); tacovore is decent hipster tacos and really good margs; Akira—super pricey but best sushi; Bartini—yummy cocktails; Ta ra rin is good thai food, not too expensive.

Sunrise market is a good Asian grocery store, winco grocery store has cheap prices.

El Super Burrito! (excellent vegetarian options)

Fun things to do in Eugene

- Beer Stein (lots of beers/ciders on tap, and yummy food): 1591 Willamette St, Eugene, OR 97401
- Tacovore (awesome margaritas and great tacos): 530 Blair Blvd, Eugene, OR 97402
- Off the Waffle (sweet and savory waffles – good any time of the day): 840 Willamette St, Eugene, OR 97401
- Vero Coffee Shop (cute and cozy coffee shop): 205 E 14th Ave, Eugene, OR 97401
- Hideaway Bakery (bakery and coffee shop with indoor and outdoor seating): 3377 E. Amazon Drive Eugene, OR, 97405
- Elevation Bouldering Gym: 348 Lincoln Street, Eugene, OR 97401
- Saturday Market (every Saturday throughout the summer/fall): https://www.eugenesaturdaymarket.org/get-to-saturday-market.html
- Ninkasi Brewing Company: 272 Van Buren St, Eugene, Oregon 97402
- Sweet Life: (pastry and sweets) 1609 East 19th Avenue, Eugene, Oregon 97403
- Prince Pucklers Ice Cream: 1605 E 19th Ave, Eugene, OR 97403
- Hot Mamma’s Wings: (chicken wings) 420 W 13th Ave, Eugene, OR 97401
- Bobahead: (boba) 853 E 13th Ave, Eugene, OR 97401
During each term of your first year in the program you will likely be taking 1 or 2 courses, completing a research rotation, helping to teach a course and completing a qualifying exam. This can be a lot to balance, and you want to set yourself up for success! Managing competing priorities is a necessary skill in graduate school and beyond. It is important to set up a system of time management that will be useful for you. Some of us use traditional planners, while others use online tracking platforms such as trello; neither one of these are perfect, it is entirely dependent on what works for you and your needs. Below is more advice from previous graduate students about classes, rotations, teaching and qualifying exams.

**Classes** You DO NOT need to register for classes BEFORE orientation. When you get to campus, you will be meeting with your interim advisory committee (IAC), and they will advise you on courses to take dependent on your interests. Nearly all of the courses you will be taking are first year courses, so there is not a problem about getting enough seats.

**Rotations** If you have not set up your first rotation, you should start emailing faculty. Often, labs need time to prepare a project and get the appropriate supplies for students to carry out an experiment. If labs are already hosting one rotation student, they may or may not take another at the same time. Most importantly, you should take your rotations seriously. Even if you have identified which lab you would like to join, you should take the other rotations as real, viable labs you may join—funding and circumstances can change, and you do not want to be in a position at the end of the year without a lab.

**Teaching Assignment** First year students teach courses to cover their stipend. You will either be leading a lab session or a discussion for one course each term. Typically, you will have two sections per course. If you have not heard of your assignment, it is okay! You will be receiving an email with your assignment from the course coordinator, Cristin Huslander. First years can be in any course, however, most will likely be in the introductory biology course: BIO211.

**Qualifying Exams (aka “Quals,” “Cumes,” or “Quarterlies”)** Depending on your institute, you are required to take certain number of qualifying exams (check out the handbook for specifics). Your first qual is usually two to three weeks into your first quarter. A couple of things you should know:

1. There are a number of exams written each quarter (one for each biology institute in addition to a number of chemistry exams). You can take any qual you would like although your IAC will help you to choose the one most applicable to your interests.

2. The quals usually relate to the course that you are taking BUT they are independent of the courses. For the Fall and Winter terms, you will most likely be emailed specific instructions for the exam a week or so ahead of the scheduled exam time. Usually, these instructions will include a topic and/or a list of journal articles to read and help you to prepare for the exam. During the two hour exam period, you will then have a series of questions to answer in the allotted time that test your ability to understand articles and think critically about scientific problems. Make sure to read the instructions carefully and know what you can and cannot bring to the exam with you (articles, notes, laptop, etc.) and any hints as to the types of questions you may be asked. Each exam will likely have a different format and requirements.
Quiet spaces to study/work The reading room on the second floor of the Knight Library is my favorite place for intensive reading or writing. The cafe in the science library is a great place to hang out or get a snack.

LISB conference rooms, vero coffee shop, science library. grading (i try to go for places with big tables) - beer stein, science library. I suggest trying to grade away from home (obvs not everyone can do this) but it can help create some separation between work and normal life.

Science library (there’s a no-talking room in there), Marché Museum Café, Elevation Climbing Gym (They actually have a lounge area that is really nice if you want to switch off between grading/studying and climbing).

Hidden bakery, Vero coffee, or McMenamins for light reading and hanging out. The Knight library is my favorite place to do serious work. I grab a coffee, go up to the computers on the silent floor, and plug away. It’s quiet, and I enjoy using the school computers because then I can’t get distracted by social media or the code that I can’t get to work.

A typical week in graduate school

As a first year my typical week includes classes, many hours of homework, several hours of grading and advising for your TA position, staying late to be able to actually work on your research, and being sure to take at least one day off to go on an adventure (or just relax, whatever you are into!)

Eh well nothing is typical anymore, but a week in computational neuroscience looks like lots of screen time. And even more so now with lab meetings and Journal clubs on Zoom. ~4th year

4th year: I make a list of goals and discuss them with my PI each week. I focus on writing and research projects each week. I spend 10-15 hours a week mentoring a honors college undergraduate. Each week, I attend at least one research seminar and jounral club, sometimes 2 if time allows.

Fifth year- I don’t work in the lab everyday. I have days for reading, writing, data analysis. And then I have days where I spend long hours in lab.

(Starting 5th year). Pre-pandemic, I worked about 10am-7/8pm in the lab. I came in some weekends when it made sense to but didn’t make that a priority every single weekend. I highly prioritized exercise and seeing friends and doing hobbies to avoid burn out. Post pandemic, we’re on a super weird always changing schedule and I just do what I can.
**Mental Health**  
Graduate school is hard, especially the first year. You will be pulled in lots of different directions, and it is important you take care of yourself. This means different things for each individual of course, however, we want to remind you that is encouraged to reach out to mental health professionals. There are providers on campus, but they typically only provide 10 sessions and can have a long wait time. However, the health center also has professionals who will meet with you once or twice and then help you to find a provider in the community. There are lots of providers throughout Eugene that you can connect with that will also accept your insurance.

**Feed the body and the mind**  
In addition to mental health, to survive graduate school it is important to sustain as much physical activity as possible. Graduate school can be mentally grueling; it is important to balance that mental training you are doing with physical activity. Many of us find our balance by taking advantage of the rec center on campus. During the school year, we can access the center for free (including the rock walls, pool, courts, workout machines, and equipment). Although not recommended your first quarter, you can also take 1-credit PE classes each term, such as yoga, weight lifting, backpacking, climbing, etc. These can be a nice break from the stresses of lab and can allow you to explore new interests! Just be aware that, although the classes themselves are included in your tuition, some of these courses have added fees. Additionally, there are group work out classes (GroupX) that run throughout the day that are not tuition based. You can buy a pass, and use it at your leisure. https://rec.uoregon.edu

**Find your community!**  
When I first came to grad school I thought that’s where I could get all the social support I needed, and boy was I wrong. Build a community outside of science, and be open to finding people where you least expect it.


Womxn in Neuroscience – https://blogs.uoregon.edu/womxinneuroscience/

Women in Graduate Sciences – https://blogs.uoregon.edu/uowgs/

Community for Minorities in STEM – https://pages.uoregon.edu/cmis/

UO chapter of Society for the Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science – https://uosacnas.uoregon.edu/

UO craft center – https://craftcenter.uoregon.edu/

Elevation Climbing Gym – https://elevationgym.com/

UO bike program – https://outdoorprogram.uoregon.edu/bikeprogram
First year: be okay with your future plans changing. Be honest with yourself and check in mentally. You can do anything, whatever you convince yourself of. Use your intuition. If you are going into graduate school and have a passion for academia/teaching, you NEED to crave research. You will spend the next 5 or so years researching, so enjoy the journey, not just the outcome. This will help you not be as stressed.

Don’t stress as much about teaching and grading. Take opportunities to give talks. Don’t expect that you won’t have to teach after year 1. Take time off when you need it (within reason).

We are so excited to have you in the neuroscience graduate program!

Find something you enjoy doing that allows you to clear your mind and strike a work/play balance.

Have fun! Yes, graduate school can be exhausting, but focus on learning what you want to learn. This is your life!

Don’t try to be perfect at everything, especially in your first year as a grad student.

Just keep pushing forward, it’s okay to have setbacks!

You can absolutely do this, and you definitely belong here. Your first year is so hard for so many reasons, but we all want you to succeed!
WELCOME TO ION!

Help for Victims and Survivors
https://safe.uoregon.edu/
“If you are a victim or survivor of sexual assault, sexual harassment, dating or domestic violence, gender-based harassment or bullying, and/or stalking and need help, start here. We have staff available 24 hours a day for confidential advice and assistance. Even if you are unsure what to do, call 541-346-7233 (SAFE) and you’ll be connected with somebody who will listen to you and help guide you as you figure out what you want to do next. We are here to support you and help provide the assistance and services you need.”

Resources on reporting incidents of bias, discrimination, or discriminatory harassment:
https://respect.uoregon.edu/
“As a member of the University of Oregon community, you have the right to learn, work, and live in an environment free of discrimination and hate. We all have a responsibility to maintain an environment free of prohibited harassment and discrimination. Together, we can create and maintain a respectful and inclusive community that provides the support and opportunity necessary for each member of the University of Oregon to thrive.”

Safe Transportation
Safe Ride 541-346-7433 (RIDE) ext. 2
7pm - midnight Sunday-Thursday
7pm - 2am Friday & Saturday

Designated Driver Shuttle
541-346-7433 (RIDE) ext. 1
10pm - 2:30am daily

UO Campus Shuttle
(map.uoregon.edu/campus-shuttle; https://www.facebook.com/UOCampusShuttle/)
10pm - 2:30am daily

Mental Health services on campus
People seeking treatment can visit the website at https://psychology.uoregon.edu/psychology-clinic/ or call the clinic at 541-346-4954 to schedule an appointment and receive an assessment for a customized treatment plan. If the clinic is unable to meet their specific need, they offer referrals. For patients on medication, a consulting psychiatrist is onsite once a month for medication evaluations or medication management.