

# GRADUATE STUDENT SURVIVAL GUIDE

For all the positive experiences you'll have during your time as a doctoral student at UA, there will be times of struggle and stress. This survival guide includes helpful information from experienced graduate students to aid your transition into graduate school and your survival within the program.

*In times of extreme hardship, always reach out to the Director of Graduate Studies. Do not wait until you're on academic probation before seeking help!*

## NOTE: ADDING TO THE SURVIVAL GUIDE

This Survival Guide is updated regularly by a volunteer graduate student. Any graduate student may submit suggestions for updates. Please follow these guidelines for submissions:

- Topics should be specific to the needs of UA PhD students
- Do NOT write general self-help information that students can find themselves online
  - The Survival Guide already includes some general self-help information
- Keep it short (1-6 paragraphs)
- Keep it factual and simple
- Keep price assessments general, as every person's budget is different (e.g., "General grocery stores can be less costly than specialty stores")
- Do NOT insert your opinion or state controversial ideas (e.g., "Sprouts is expensive"; "Sam Hughes is a bad neighborhood")

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## Resource Manual for International Students (Americans might also benefit from this!)

International Student Services provides a resource manual with helpful information about adjusting to American institutions (buying a cell phone, obtaining a driver's license, housing options, local laws, etc). The manual can be found at:  
<https://global.arizona.edu/international-students/student-resource-manual>

### Grocery Stores and Miscellaneous Shopping

Popular grocery stores in Tucson:

Fry's	Safeway	Albertson's	Walmart
Food City	Giant		

These grocery stores specialize in selling "natural," organic, or allergy-sensitive foods:

Sprouts	Trader Joe's	Whole Foods	Natural Grocers
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Produce on Wheels With-Out Waste (P.O.W.W.O.W)

<http://www.borderlandsproducerescue.org/produce-on-wheels/>

There is a really great produce rescue organization in Tucson called Produce on Wheels With-Out Waste. Their produce varies, but you can always stock up and freeze things for later use. It can save a lot of money and you are also saving produce from rotting in landfills where it isn't helping anyone. The P.O.W.W.O.W. program operates during produce season, typically November through August. Every week, usually on Saturdays, P.O.W.W.O.W. host sites are held in cities around Arizona. These sites are hosted by community organizations (churches, civic organizations, schools and universities.) Visit any P.O.W.W.O.W. site and leave with up to **70 lbs of fresh produce, all just for a contribution of \$12.**

.These are small grocery stores that are located near the campus:

Food Conspiracy Co-op (on 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue)  
Johnny Gibson's Downtown Market (on 6<sup>th</sup> Ave, off Congress St)

Tucson has a wide selection of thrift stores. Here are a few near the campus:

Casa de los Niños Thrift Store (1302 E Prince Rd)  
Tucson Thrift Shop (319 N 4th Ave)  
Goodwill on 4<sup>th</sup> Ave (300 N 4th Ave)

These are more "high end" thrift stores. You can also sell or trade your used things:

Buffalo Exchange (2001 E Speedway Blvd)  
Bookman's Entertainment Exchange (3330 E Speedway Blvd)  
Plato's Closet (4140 N Oracle Rd)

Useful information about grocery stores in Tucson:

- Many grocery stores in Tucson have shoppers' club cards. Shoppers' club cards give you discounts on items in the store.
- Fry's and Safeway have gas reward points when you use their shoppers' club cards. When you swipe the card at a gas station that accepts a particular grocery store's reward points, you can receive gas at a discount after you've accumulated enough points.
- Safeway and Albertsons have a 10% discount for students every Saturday (with Student ID)

Useful information about textbook shopping and other types of shopping:

- Goodwill on 4<sup>th</sup> Ave has a 20% student discount for students every day of the week (with Student ID)
- Casa de los Niños Thrift Store has 10% student discount (with Student ID)
- Checking books out from the library and using Inter-library Loan is a great way to save money on textbooks
- Amazon offers a free 6-month Prime membership to students (just remember to set a date on your calendar to cancel it if you don't want to be charged after six months!)

## **Things to Know about CAPS (Counseling and Psych Services)**

CAPS is the University of Arizona's counseling and psychiatric center. Contact information for CAPS can be found in the Resource Guide. Your student health insurance covers most of the services CAPS has to offer, though there are copays. Campus Health has a pharmacy, but some medications (e.g., medications for ADHD) may require a referral to an off-campus location. Here are some other things you should know about CAPS:

1. If you've never been to CAPS, or it's been more than 6 months since your last appointment, you should go directly in-person to CAPS for "triage." At that visit, you will meet with a random counselor who will assess your needs and go over options for next steps.
2. Typically, you have three options for next steps—and you can use as many or as few as would benefit you:
  - Utilize free or reduced cost community services, such as support groups, counselors-in-training, etc. During triage, the counselor will likely provide you with a list of some of these resources, and can help you figure out who to call if you need more specialized services (for example, a support group for a specific condition).
  - Schedule an appointment with an on-campus or community counselor. This option is for people who want to pursue therapy. Typically, if you and the triage counselor feel like you would benefit from short-term therapy (maybe 3-5 sessions) you will see an on-

campus counselor. If it's more convenient for you, or you need longer-term care, you can be referred to a community counselor.

- Schedule an appointment with an on-campus or community psychiatrist. If you and/or the counselor suspect you would benefit from psychiatric medications, you will schedule an appointment with an on-campus or community psychiatrist. Again, whether to schedule on-campus or off is based on wait times and personal preference.
- If you decide to try short-term therapy first, and you and the counselor later decide you need longer-term care and/or medication, s/he can help you set that all up. Wait times for initial on-campus and off-campus appointments (especially for psychiatrists) can be **long** so it's best not to wait until the situation is too critical.

## **Cooking Healthy on a Budget**

Cooking healthy meals on limited funds and with limited time is a challenge, but definitely possible. Cooking at home is one way of saving money, and it need not involve eating boxed macaroni and cheese every day. For free recipes, check out:

**<http://cookingoncampus.arizona.edu/recipes>**

And check out this recipe—brought to you by UA graduate student, Darla Still:

**<http://darlastill.tumblr.com/post/136408511540/my-recipe>**

Here are a few additional tips and recipes:

### ***I Just Need to Survive for a Few Months...***

You can survive without most things, at least in the short term, but you cannot survive without protein and water. There are eight (8) essential amino acids (amino acids are the building blocks of protein) that your body absolutely requires and cannot synthesize itself. You won't just be "unhealthy" and blah, you will actually die without it. In developing countries, international development organizations have made great progress in ensuring the survival of small communities by promoting agricultural products that contain these 8 essential amino acids. Ever wonder why rice, beans, and corn are so popular around the world? You're about to find out!

You can find all 8 amino acids in any type of meat. However, meat is expensive and if you're facing hard times and just trying to survive (at least for a month or two), there are plenty of cheap sources of vegetarian protein (note: you need to eat a lot of it, not just a small side dish). The following combinations will provide you with the absolute basic nutrients you need to survive: (1) beans and rice (especially brown rice), (2) beans and corn, and (3) mixed nuts and seeds. Lentils and soy products are also excellent sources of most of these amino acids.

### ***More Tips:***

1. Chicken is a cheaper and healthier alternative to other types of meat. Brine your chicken before you cook it by soaking the raw chicken in salt water for 20 minutes. Big difference in taste.
2. White rice is generally better with light broths and sauces. Add a little lemon or lime juice to your white rice, just before it's done cooking, for a crisp Mexican taste. No sauce needed.
3. Brown rice pairs better with heavy, flavorful sauces, like teriyaki or curry. It's more nutritious than white rice.
4. A healthy brain needs both sodium and potassium (positive and negative ions that facilitate brain function), as well as calcium and Vitamin D. Remember: (a) calcium doesn't absorb without vitamin D, so make sure to eat both at the same time, and (b) eat enough sodium and potassium. If you feel like you're not eating enough potassium, try using potassium salt instead of iodized salt—but be careful! You need iodine, too, so make sure you're getting enough iodine and sodium from another source.
5. To cut down on your salt intake, try using lemon juice, vinegar, white or red cooking wine, or the juices from canned or pickled products (e.g., juice from an olive jar) to flavor your foods instead.
6. Crock pots are advantageous because you can leave your food cooking all day without monitoring it, and come home to a fully cooked meal. Put the meat on the bottom, followed by potatoes or cooked rice, and then the vegetables. Chicken, beef, or vegetable stock or broth is usually fine with most dishes. The food will taste like whatever you cook it in (so, maybe don't use plain water).
7. Yes, it's entirely possible to buy fresh vegetables and fruits without breaking your budget! Here's some things to keep in mind: (1) Don't overdo it! Pick 1-3 vegetables to add to your beans and rice, and stop; (2) Try to pick differently colored fruits/veggies, so you're getting a wide variety of flavonoids; (3) Choose cheap fruits and veggies (e.g., bananas, watermelon, carrots, celery) instead of the expensive ones (e.g., berries, mangoes, artichokes, avocados).
8. Gardening saves money. Community gardens exist all over Tucson—plant your own vegetables and fruits. Or pick up a tomato plant and grow your own herbs and spices inside your house. All you need is a pot and some fertilizer.
9. Freeze your leftovers. They'll last longer. Almost anything can be frozen, even milk.
10. If you're in a rush and still want to eat healthy, try some hummus with carrots and celery, some guacamole with tortilla chips, or a peanut butter and banana sandwich.
11. Trying to cut down on desserts? Have yogurt instead. You can make it more cheaply by mixing plain yogurt with honey, fruit, or granola. Graham crackers are another low-fat alternative (they can also be eaten with the yogurt). Gold fish crackers and popcorn can have less fat than other salty snacks. Or go for the nonfat dairy products. They taste the same as the dairy products with whole milk and usually have the same consistency in cooking.
12. Use whole wheat pasta instead of regular pasta. It tastes and costs about the same. The texture might be a little different, but it's usually hardly noticeable, as long as you don't overcook the noodles and are mixing it with some kind of sauce.

## **Cheap and Way-Healthier-Than-Instant-Ramen Recipes**

### **Fish or Chicken and Rice**

#### *Ingredients:*

- 6-8 tilapia (or other white fish) or chicken legs, breasts, or thighs, uncooked
- 1 or 2 cups of rice (brown rice is healthier), uncooked
- about two 32-fluid oz containers of chicken broth (for cooking the rice; fat free is healthier)
- 1 cup of frozen vegetables (e.g., peas)
- about 1/4 or 1/3 cup cooking oil (olive oil is healthier, canola oil is cheaper)
  - NOTE: Extra virgin olive oil is better for salads. Use a heavier olive oil for cooking.
- a bottle of lemon juice
- salt
- pepper

#### *Directions:*

If using chicken, soak it in a bowl of salt water for 20 minutes before cooking. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Line a cake pan or casserole dish with aluminum foil, if desired. This saves on cleaning later on. Coat the bottom with oil. Add lemon juice until the bottom has a coat of liquid. Place the fish or chicken in the pan. Sprinkle with salt and pepper to taste. Cover the pan with aluminum foil.

When the oven is heated, put the dish in the oven. Set your timer to 20 minutes for fish or 30 minutes for chicken. If it's not done, add more time. The fish will flake with a fork when it's done. It should be moist, not dry. Use a thermostat to determine whether the chicken is done. Or, cut the chicken in half. If it feels tough or looks raw or bloody, it's not done. It shouldn't be dry, though it might brown a little on top.

Cook the rice using the instructions on the package, but substitute chicken broth for water. Cook the frozen vegetables using the package instructions. Mix the vegetables with the rice when both are finished cooking, if desired. For brown rice, add a pad of butter and some salt and pepper to soften the taste.

### **Spanish Beans and Rice**

#### *Ingredients:*

- 1-2 cups rice (brown rice is healthier), uncooked
- 1 can of beans (black, red, or white)
- 1 can of tomatoes, diced or stewed (or tomatoes with green chilies for a spicier version)\*
- ½ onion, chopped\*

- salt
- pepper
- 1 teaspoon oregano
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- butter

\*For a potentially cheaper version, substitute tomatoes and onion for a can of chunky salsa.

*Directions:*

Cook the rice using the package instructions. Mix the beans, tomatoes, and onion with the rice when the rice has about 15 minutes left to cook. Add salt, pepper, butter, oregano, and garlic powder.

### **Alternative recipe #1: Spanish Fried Rice**

Cook the rice first, then fry all of the ingredients together with cooking oil to make Spanish fried rice.

**Note:** There's a million ways to cook beans and rice. People eat beans and rice worldwide. Look online for more recipes.

## **Ham and Potatoes**

*Ingredients:*

- 1 whole ham, uncooked
- ½ an onion, cut into quarters or chopped
- 1 pale ale beer (something without a distinct flavor)
- about 4-5 white or red potatoes, chopped
- ½ cup cooking oil
- about 1 tablespoon turmeric
- about 1 tablespoon tarragon
- about 1 tablespoon chili powder
- about 1 tablespoon yellow mustard powder
- salt
- pepper
- other spices to taste, if desired
- minced garlic to taste, if desired
- frozen vegetable of your choice

*Directions:*

Add the ham, onion, and beer to a crockpot. Cook about 6 hours on high, or until done.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Line a casserole or baking dish with aluminum foil, if desired. Grease the baking dish by (1) spraying it with cooking spray, (2) coating the bottom with oil, or (3) rubbing butter inside the dish to coat it. Mix the oil, spices, and garlic in a large bowl. Add potatoes and mix with a wooden spoon until all the potatoes are coated. Spread the potatoes evenly in the baking dish and cover with aluminum foil. Bake for about 30 minutes. Continue baking until potatoes can easily be poked with a fork. Prepare the frozen vegetables using the package instructions.

## **Taking the Bus in Tucson**

You can go about this a number of ways, depending on your primary means of transportation. If the bus will be your primary mode of transportation, you may want to consider purchasing the unlimited bus pass, online.

### **What is Suntran X?**

Unless you live really far East, in the foothills, you do not need this. You may still consider purchasing the unlimited bus pass if you intend to take the bus and maybe bike. If you are hardcore into biking, then maybe ignore the bus pass. Taking the bus is cheap (about \$1.75 or \$2 as of August 2017) and easy. I say “easy” because you can use their app to time when the bus actually arrives.

You have to ask the driver for a transfer when you need one, but not if you have an unlimited bus pass (it doesn't cover the entire summer). Taking Lyft or Uber can add up as a primary means of transport, and definitely costs more than taking the bus.

## **Tips for Living and Working Alone**

Graduate school can be particularly challenging for extraverted people or those who are accustomed to busy households. Here are some tips for living alone:

- Live near people (fellow graduate students, or other family and friends)
- Cook a weekly meal together (and eat leftovers to save money)
- Give each other your perishables when someone leaves town to reduce waste and save money
- Be careful not to buy more fresh food than you can eat by yourself
- If you buy too much food, freeze it or cook it to store as leftovers
- Make room in your schedule for social activities

Here are tips for working alone:

- Talk to yourself out loud when pondering ideas; have conversations with yourself
- Take a car trip or a walk, listen to music, and think about your ideas
- Work in the office or the library, if being around people helps you to focus



- Be careful not to disrupt professors, graduate students, or office staff while they're working—instead, ask them to join you for lunch or coffee breaks
- Form or join study groups

## **SNAP and Medicaid**

Individual circumstances and Arizona's eligibility requirements vary, but graduate students may receive SNAP (supplemental nutrition assistance program) or Medicaid benefits (even if you already have the Aetna Student Plan). You can learn more about these programs from the Arizona Department of Economic Security (<https://des.az.gov/>). See the Resource Guide for additional AS DES contact information and alternative sources of assistance.

## **Parenting**

Life doesn't stop just because you're in grad school. If you're thinking about children and starting a family while in grad school, you are not alone. Several sociology grad students have started families in recent years while in various stages of the program. It's not easy, but it's possible and welcomed, and there is support.

We encourage all parents and anyone who's willing to help babysit to subscribe to Childcare Swap, our department listserv: [childcareswap@list.arizona.edu](mailto:childcareswap@list.arizona.edu). Caregivers for sick, elderly, or disabled people of any age are also encouraged to subscribe. On this listserv, you can send out calls for play dates, requests for information, requests for babysitters or relief from caregiving, or anything else you need.

To subscribe, send an email to "[list@list.arizona.edu](mailto:list@list.arizona.edu)". In the Subject heading, type: "subscribe [childcareswap@list.arizona.edu](mailto:childcareswap@list.arizona.edu) [yourfirstname] [yourlastname]". Do not type anything in the body.

Graduate students, faculty, staff, and significant others are all welcome to subscribe.

### ***University of Arizona Childcare Services***

The University of Arizona offers reimbursement for qualified childcare expenses with UAChildcare Choice. Basically, you can get reimbursed (Up to \$2000 as of July 2017) for qualified childcare (<https://lifework.arizona.edu/cc/childcare-choice-student>).

Also, they have Sick Child/ Emergency Back-up childcare program. Once enrolled in this program, you can call a number when your child is sick at home, while you need to teach or go to classes, and they send a person to take care of your child. There is a small co-pay for it (\$4/hour). UA covers the rest ([https://lifework.arizona.edu/cc/sick\\_child\\_and\\_emergency\\_back\\_up\\_care\\_program](https://lifework.arizona.edu/cc/sick_child_and_emergency_back_up_care_program)).

### ***YMCA Discounts and Childcare***

All UA employees are exempt from the \$50 enrollment fee and get a monthly discount at local YMCAs. UA membership is currently \$32/month (or less if you qualify for a scholarship) and includes 2 hours of childcare daily for parents that remain on site for children as young as 6 weeks old. You do not have to be using the gym to take advantage of the childcare services. You can bring a laptop and work in their community lounge.

## **Caregiving and Bereavement**

Caring for sick or elderly parents can be especially difficult for graduate students. Parents may be reluctant to move in with their children or to live in a nursing home. The department allows graduate students to take leave for up to one (1) year. If you feel this option is necessary, contact the Director of Graduate Studies. Make sure the office staff and department head are aware of any circumstances that might result in a short-term or long-term leave of absence.

Also, remember—*your professors are human beings, too*. Sickness, aging, and death happens. Tell them your circumstances, so they know what to expect. Most professors will readily accommodate you by giving you extensions on assignments, for example. Contact your fellow graduate students by emailing the Graduate Student listserv ([socgrads@list.arizona.edu](mailto:socgrads@list.arizona.edu)) and ask if anyone can cover your class if you're an instructor or teaching assistant. If this happens, contact the office staff (if you're an instructor) or your TA supervisor to let them know your intentions.

The University of Arizona offers services for elder care (<https://lifework.arizona.edu/ec>).

The university also offers resources for various issues that are interfering with your ability to function in school or work (<https://lifework.arizona.edu/ea/what-employee-assistance-0>), including mental health, stress and coping, alcohol or drug issues, job or career concerns, financial problems, and nutrition counseling.

To be a good caregiver, you have to take care of yourself. Call upon your fellow graduate students if you need a break from caregiving. Requests for caregiving help can be submitted to the Childcare Swap listserv ([childcareswap@list.arizona.edu](mailto:childcareswap@list.arizona.edu)). See the parenting section for information on subscribing to this listserv.

## **Socializing with Fellow Graduate Students**

It's important to feel connected with your fellow graduate students for both professional and personal reasons. Use the Sociology Graduate Student listserv ([socgrads@list.arizona.edu](mailto:socgrads@list.arizona.edu)) to reach out to graduate students in the department. The listserv can be used for pretty much

anything—sending information, requesting for books, calling for dog sitters, inviting everyone to happy hour or parties, and so on.

Keep in mind that your fellow graduate students are diverse. Always be considerate of graduate students who are busy with parenting, caregiving, or other obligations. Keep your expectations reasonable. People differ vastly in their cultural backgrounds, personal interests, financial capabilities, dietary restrictions, and schedules. Naturally, some activities will appeal more to some graduate students than others.

Graduate students should try to participate in major department social events, such as Recruitment Weekend. However, you may not have the time or energy to participate in weekly happy hours, for example. In this case, it's better to connect with your fellow graduate students in a way that fits your schedule. Here are a few suggestions:

- Everyone has to eat lunch. Send an email to the Sociology Graduate Student listserv and see if anyone wants to have lunch or coffee.
- If you have children, set up play dates with your fellow grad student parents.
- Instead of a house party, try planning a kid-friendly or pet-friendly activity, like a picnic, a hike, or a trip to Tombstone, and invite other grad students to join you.
- Be conscious of the type of “crowd” that a particular activity attracts. Take the time to experience new activities with minorities and people from diverse cultural backgrounds who may be greatly outnumbered in the department.
  - Remember, attending one culturally diverse event is a novelty for you, but culturally diverse grad students must step outside their comfort zones on a regular basis, which can be very exhausting. They may choose to spend their time with people who are culturally similar to themselves, and that should be respected.

The Graduate Student Association is responsible for scheduling social activities. Contact the current social event planner to recommend ideas for social events.

## **Flights**

The cheapest flights are generally from the Phoenix airport. If you park in a grocery store parking lot and take a taxi or other transport to the Phoenix airport, it can save money. Large grocery stores, like Safeway, and plazas with multiple stores usually won't tow you if you leave the car parked for a week or two. However, there is always a risk.

If you'd rather not risk being towed, you can purchase a shuttle bus ticket. Sky Harbor is a popular option (<https://www.arizonashuttle.com/schedules/tucson-phoenix-sky-harbor/>). Sometimes other bus companies, like Greyhound, have cheaper rates than the shuttle buses. Taking the bus to Phoenix instead of departing from Tucson can save you money, but it does take additional time (it's at least a 2 hour drive to Phoenix, and the roads are prone to traffic jams).

## **External Self-Help Websites**

Here are a few external websites for general self-help, which students found particularly useful:

**Scholarstudio Blog: A Resource for Graduate Writers and Advisors**

<https://scholarstudioblog.wordpress.com/2016/10/09/mental-health-in-academia/>

**Grad Café Forum: List of Resources**

<http://forum.thegradcafe.com/topic/89043-resources-for-new-graduate-students-in-sociology/>