

HOW TO SURVIVE YOUR PhD

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ON ONE PAGE

WRITTEN ON A TRAIN
BY DAVID GAUNTLETT

* It's only an exercise in showing you can do research.

* Get it done in 3 years.

* Stick at it and it will all fall into place.

* Try new things. Rejecting the orthodoxy is (usually) good.

* Don't be too lonely.

* Meet other PhD students and see that they're insecure too.

* Try to get input from other experts besides your supervisor.

* Publish stuff. Start with a review (get your supervisor to pass you one of their invitations), hectic THES article, or anything. It's a confidence boost. Editors seek content, so offer.

* Don't get too anxious about "originality" because it's probably quite hard to compose a PhD without being original. On the other hand, try to be original!

David Gauntlett explains...

On 5 September 2001 I was an invited speaker at a Symposium organised by the London Doctoral Forum. As well as a panel discussion on issues such as how to integrate theory and empirical research in media and cultural studies PhD projects, there were workshops on the process of doing a PhD. I was meant to be running one entitled 'Surviving Your PhD', which is a topic I have various thoughts about, so that was OK, except they weren't written down, so on the train between 7.00 and 9.00am I tried to write down my list of ultimate suggestions for PhD students. These cover both how to get through a PhD without going mad, and how to emerge from the PhD process with something useful to help you on your way into an academic (or other) career. Some of them may be quite cynical, but I think that PhD students should find them useful...

* Massage the ego of your foolish supervisor

* Get staff to introduce you to publishers & editors.

* Get yourself known, maybe by being "controversial".

* Believe in self. Note the uselessness of % of academics.

Write your own percentage here

* Good writing style is probably more important than you think.

* Don't spend forever reading without writing.

* Don't make inadequate notes.