



Hello Graduate Student

As a graduate student, you may find that an important role you have is as a TA to one or more undergraduate courses in your academic discipline. This role is an important one as you provide vital support to the course Professor, you are a source of information and guidance to undergraduate students, and you have the chance to develop your skill set in preparation for a potential career in academia. However, this role may also come with some challenges. The focus of this edition of GRADUpdATE is the ups and downs of teaching.

**The 'Ups' of Teaching:**

- Helping Others – teaching allows you to help other students learn and generate interest in new subject areas.
- Improving Your Own Studies –not only will teaching help you learn the course material more thoroughly, but you will also become more appreciative of your Professors.
- Expanding Your Horizons – for many graduate students, their professional academic circle is limited to those colleagues and classmates that share similar research interests. Teaching can help you expand your professional circle to others outside of that immediate circle.
- Love of the Job – teaching can be fun and rewarding for many graduate students. It allows you to “flex” other academic muscles and be creative in a way that research may not provide.

**The 'Downs' of Teaching:**

- Bad Days – some teaching days will not go as planned. Reflect on what happened and try to improve.
- Bad Courses – there will be some courses that feel like a struggle to teach from day 1. Do your best to prepare engaging material, help the students as best as you can, and try to learn from the experience.
- Bad Class Dynamics – some course sections will have better class dynamics than others. Adjust your style and approach to fit these different dynamics.
- Bad Teaching – if you have concerns about your teaching abilities, seek out ways to try to improve by speaking to other TA's or Professors, asking for feedback from trusted students, or seeking out assistance from the Teaching Support Centre.

Your role as TA can prove to be an exciting, challenging, and sometimes difficult experience. Embrace the role and learn to be the best teacher you can be.

## References

Curzan, A. & Damour, L. (2003). *First Day to Final Grade*. The University of Michigan Press: Ann Arbor, MI.

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