Graduate school presents challenges to many students due to the volume of detailed material that must be mastered. Can you do it? SURE. But you may need to increase your efficiency. To do this, think about your time management skills. Also, read the study skills and reading handouts.

Are you overwhelmed?

* As soon as you begin feeling overwhelmed, and nervousness hits, sit down and make a plan or a schedule. If you have a plan, review your plan and revise it if necessary.
* If you are overwhelmed because you are falling behind, or perceive that you are falling behind, follow the steps below. It’s unavoidable that you will get behind now and then; maybe you had a test in one course and let your other courses slide or maybe you chatted with classmates and now you believe you know significantly less than others on a given topic. Here’s what to do!
  + Go to where the class is now and get back on track to keep up and not get further behind.
  + Make time to catch up THAT WEEKEND.
  + Don’t ever get more than a week behind.
* Look for hidden “bonus minutes.”
  + 8-10 hours a week is spent taking breaks between classes and lunch hours. This isn’t counting the unscheduled blocks in your schedule. What do you do with that time? Are you intentional with the time?
    - This time could be used to survey reading, meet with a study group, or review flash cards.
    - You could use lunch hours to work out. You could read for the next day at lunch or go over your notes from your morning lectures.
  + Are you prepared to make the best use of unscheduled blocks? Do you have your materials and “to do” list accessible?
  + Try to spend a little time with your instructor. Believe it or not these are people who LOVE to talk about the subject you are teaching. You can often gain insight that will get you back on track.

Are you distracted?

* Are you taking breaks?
* Are you thirsty or are you hungry – if so, fix these problems quickly.
* Are you surfing the net or being interrupted by other electronic distractions?
  + Turn OFF Wi-Fi.
  + Turn OFF your music.
  + Concentrate on your task at hand.
* Are you distracted by other thoughts?
  + Try thought stopping – google it if you don’t know about it.
  + Try jotting down what you want to deal with LATER (often what I want to search online may seem important at the moment, yet when I look back, it’s lost importance).
  + Try reading out loud. Try summarizing out loud what you just read.
  + Try reading just a paragraph or just a section before asking yourself what you just read.
* Are you distracted by disorganization?
  + Take time weekly to get your ducks in a row. Locate your materials. Organize your notes.
  + At the end of each course, organize the materials you want to access later.
  + Always have access to your calendar. If you are overwhelmed, think of your next action.
* Are you distracted by disorganization? (cont).
  + Have access to a “to do” list – this will free up brain power for more important learning related tasks. Focus on ONE tangible action to get you one step closer to your goal.

**Friends and family**

* Yes, you still MUST make time for friends and family.
* Acknowledge these commitments, but scale back and plan time wisely.
* Your BFF will understand if you don’t text back right away.

**Sleep**

* Each handout has mentioned the importance of rest.
* Sleep helps consolidate memories.
* Relevant to this list – sleep helps you function more efficiently – in class and during study times.
* Try taking a power nap during the day if you are short on sleep.
* Australian study – performance on exams, verbatim recall, and coordination of sleep deprived people compared to people with a blood alcohol level of at least 0.1% (Williamson & Feyer, 2000).
  + In Colorado, you will get in trouble with a blood alcohol measurement of .05-.08, and bigger trouble if you have a number measuring .08 or higher.
  + Most students wouldn’t consider coming to an exam drunk, yet feel comfortable coming sleep deprived. Think about it.

**Positive Self Talk**

* Don’t decide a class, or a set of tasks, is impossible. Try reframing these “impossible tasks” to be “challenging.” Accept the challenge.
* Dwelling on a score or a task will only detract from your success. Don’t let this happen. You beat out many competitive students for this spot – we are confident you will be a great dentist. You should be confident, too.
* Place yourself in a positive/nurturing environment – limit your time with people telling you how hard things are or that it can’t be done.

**Divide and Conquer**

* Divide longer chunks of study time in 50 Minute blocks at the longest, followed by a 10-minute break.
* Some will do better with shorter blocks and shorter breaks.

**To Cram or Not to Cram?**

* The answer should be clear by now.

Review the three phases of learning presented in the study tips handout and make sure you are following those steps, specifically reading before class. It will help more than you can imagine.