It’s just about to start. You are probably wondering what to expect as you begin First Year, and what will be expected of you. The short answer is “Lots!” But be optimistic: you are intellectually and academically capable, or you wouldn’t be here. And well over 90% of our students graduate, so no doubt you’ll make it too.

Here are some things earlier students have told me they wished they had heard as they were starting First Year.

**Expect Change:** “It wasn’t like high school!” Both the kind and the amount of work you’ll have to do will be different. Expect that you’ll have to adapt your previous study techniques and learn new ones. Work at it deliberately.

**Start Early:** “Before I knew it, the work had piled up so high I could never catch up.” It looks tranquil at the beginning, but pretty soon it will be pouring in on you so fast you’ll wish you’d done some of the reading or memorizing sooner. Get reading your texts early so you won’t be hearing about things for the first time in lecture. Don’t be fooled if it looks like review from high school: make sure you know it better now than you did then, and get ready to move into the new stuff when it appears.

**Work Hard:** “I would never have believed we’d be expected to do this much work!” We expect a great deal from our students at UofT, both quality and quantity. If you were a good student in high school, you probably didn’t have to work that hard. Here, everyone works hard, even the good ones -- in fact, especially the good ones. This means two hours per night won’t cut it. Get working hard and long from the beginning so you can build up your powers of concentration and endurance. Even if you don’t succeed at it right away, when you need it later you’ll be ready.

**Talk to Others:** “By the end of the year I knew people, but it took a while.” Exert yourself early to meet people and benefit throughout the whole year. Introduce yourself to neighbors in your classes. Join a study group. Do talk to strangers: that way they won’t stay strangers. Finding out your fellow students are encountering the same things you are can be reassuring.

**Don’t get Discouraged:** “After I got through that bad patch, things started to improve.” Any new experience causes some strain. If it were easy, it wouldn’t be so valuable. “I couldn’t get it for a long time, then all of a sudden it was clear.” The learning curve in First Year tends to have a couple of dips in it. If you get discouraged and stop, you won’t be able to push up the incline on the other side of the dip. Keep working at it.

**Seek Help:** “I wish I’d asked someone sooner.” If you are having academic or personal problems, get some help. Your TAs and instructors will get you on the right track, and we in the Registrar’s Office will be happy to help too, but you have to come forward.

**Plan Your New Life:** “I wish I’d tried out some of the things in First Year that I did in later years.” Manage your study time and work hard, of course, but also plan some time for meeting people and trying out new things. The balance and variety will do you good.

Good luck!

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