

Tips for Future 499 Students in vandermeer Lab!

- Dedicate the first 4 months of your thesis to reading papers regarding your project. This will help you gain a better understanding of your project and the significance of your experiment. Make sure to save a copy of all the papers you read in a folder on your computer so you can reference them when you write your 499 Thesis Report/Proposal.
- Talk to the Masters/PhD/Post-doc students in the lab! They are a great resource for you. Share your experiences in the lab with them and if you are confused with anything, they will do their best to help you out.
- When you write your proposal, make sure you have *really* thought about the experiment you will conduct and what type of results you will need to obtain, in order for you to make a proper conclusion. Do you know what measures you will use to test your hypotheses? What type of statistical analysis will you conduct on your data? What is the time frame for your project? These are few of the main questions you should be asking yourself as you begin writing your proposal.
- Submit the rough drafts of your proposal and report to Dr. van der Meer for revision. Don't hesitate to do so! He will provide constructive comments that will help you better your report/proposal.
- Be dedicated to your experiment(s). The more you are able to connect with what you are doing, the better the experience! If you are working with rats, be committed towards developing a positive relationship with them. This will really help you in the long run while you are training the rats on your own experiments.
- Perform your experiments at approximately the same time every day. This will help your rats get into a routine. Sometimes if there is a large discrepancy between when you perform experiments every day, the rats can become more agitated when you train them.
- When something goes wrong in the experiment, try to brainstorm creative solutions. Don't worry, everything will work out in the end!
- While your experiment is being conducted, every 5-8 days, perform some quick data analysis on the data you have collected to see if you are able to see a trend in the data. From this, you will get a sense of what to expect at the end of the experiment. This information will also help you formulate thorough conclusions in your report.
- On every training day, handle each of your rats for at least 10 minutes. This will help them get used to you and will serve as a de-stressor. Minimizing their stress on the track will allow them to perform at their best. This also means that you will collect data that is an accurate representation of their ability.
- Be open to new experiences. Step out of your comfort zone. If you are hesitant in working with rats, spend some time with the rats during handling sessions to get used to them. Take the initiative to become a better experimenter day by day, by applying what you learn.

If you have any more questions, please feel free to contact me (Radhika) at:
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