



CNS Grad Student Guide (CNSGSG)


1. CNS Grad Student Guide (CNSGSG).....	1
2. NYU stuff	3
A. Before you come	3
B. NYU Home (and Albert)	3
C. NYUCard	5
3. CNS stuff.....	7
A. Pay checks and direct deposit.....	7
B. Taxes	7
C. Reimbursement.....	8
D. Administrative structure	8
4. Academic	9
A. Requirements	9
B. Rotations.....	9
C. Courses.....	9
D. TAing.....	10
E. Milestones	10
F. Advisory committee	11
G. Thesis committee	11
H. Funding.....	11
5. Research.....	13
A. Papers	13
B. Matlab	14
A. books.....	14
B. websites (helps, tutorials)	14
C. guides (pdfs)	15
C. Figures	15
D. Posters	16
E. Slides	18
F. Manuscripts	19
G. Seminars.....	19
H. Lab meetings	19
I. Conferences and workshops.....	20
J. Reimbursement.....	22
K. Courses.....	23
6. Housing	24
A. First year options	24
B. Pros/cons of different boroughs/neighborhoods	25
A. Manhattan	26
A. east village/alphabet city	26
B. gramarcy/murray hill.....	26
C. harlem/washington heights	27
B. Brooklyn.....	28
A. williamsburg/bushwick.....	28
B. prospect park/prospect heights.....	28
C. fort greene.....	28
D. red hook.....	28
E. carol gardens	28
C. Queens	29
A. astoria.....	29
D. New Jersey	30
C. How to find an apartment.....	30
7. Past and future of this guide.....	33

NYU stuff

Before you come

Your first encounter with the wilds of the NYU bureaucracy may be academic registration. In your first year, you take the core curriculum, and the department will inform you about the courses to register for (see also <http://www.cns.nyu.edu/doctoral/>). You will probably know all about this well before classes start from the information package that you receive on being accepted at CNS. Once you set up your login at Albert (below), you will find that you need what are technically called *registration codes* for restricted courses. Nava Rubin (the director of graduate studies) and Krista Davies are the people to contact for these. You can also find a general schedule of all courses offered at NYU at <http://www.nyu.edu/academics.nyu> under "Departments and Courses" and "Schedule of Classes."

NYU Home (and Albert)


 NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

Sign In

NetID

Password

GO



Forgot your password?

Problems signing in?

Need to **activate** your NetID or NYUHome account?

Access and use, or causing access and use, of this computer system by anyone other than as permitted by NYU are strictly prohibited by NYU and by law and may subject an unauthorized user, including unauthorized employees, to criminal and civil penalties as well as NYU-initiated disciplinary proceedings. The use of this system is routinely monitored and recorded, and anyone accessing this system consents to such monitoring and recording.

Questions? Comments? Please email askits@nyu.edu, or call ITS Client Services at 212-998-3333.

Unless otherwise noted, all content copyright New York University. All rights reserved.
Designed by The Office of Web Communications

Copyright Communication | Important Notice | Feedback

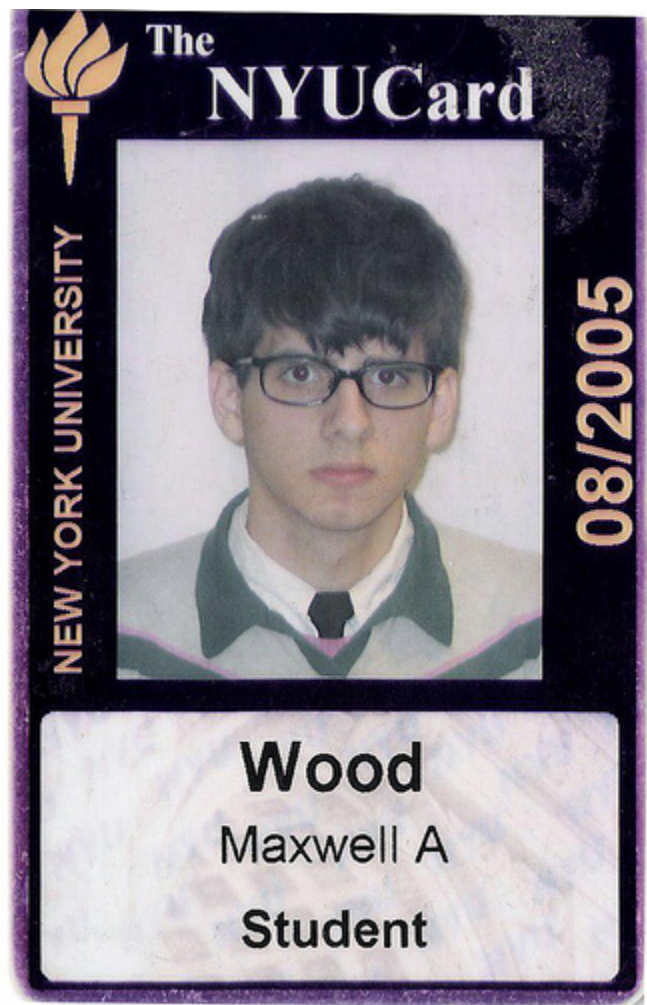
This consists of most of your NYU online stuff.

The online registration system is Albert. It can be found at: <http://www.nyu.edu/resources.nyu> under the "Other Services" section. You can also login from your NYU Home page (<http://www.home.nyu.edu>). You can use Albert to access your class schedule, grades, unofficial transcripts, degree progress, financial aid status, account balance, and address information. Some of these things will become useful later on when you apply for things like grants and outside courses. You will be prompted for your student ID (on the back of your NYU card) and a four digit PIN number. Don't forget your PIN number! You will use this number only a few times each semester, so choose something simple that you can remember.

NYU Home is your gateway to most online stuff you will need at NYU including Albert, Blackboard (for classes and TAing), your email, access to the library, and a whole slew of seemingly completely random tidbits of information--peruse at your leisure. From the "Home" tab, you can access your email and the NYU directory. The "Academics" tab is where you can log in to Albert and Blackboard. The "Research" tab allows you to access the Bobst library including the catalogs (sporting the adorable moniker "BobCat"), ejournals, and databases including Pubmed. These are useful when you're doing research off campus. Funnily enough, the "research" tab also has an off-campus housing registry which might be worth looking at, but has rarely been fruitful.

Be warned, you have to change your password to NYU Home yearly.

NYUCard



The next step is getting an NYUCard. This is your key to the library, paychecks, your lab, cheap movie tickets, and Coles and Palladium gym facilities, so you need it right off the bat. You will also need your NYUCard to get into Meyer (you have to show it to the guard on your way in), and you will need swipe access to Meyer on weekends and holidays when the main entrance is locked. However, before you wait in line (and there WILL BE a line; it often stretches all the way back to the elevators, so bring something to do), there are two things you should do: register for classes and make sure your bills are all paid. You can register for classes without your tuition paid in full, but unless your bills are paid, you can't get your NYUCard validated, so you'll have to back to the NYUCard center. Furthermore, if your bills aren't paid, your NYUCard will be rendered useless and you won't have swipe access to anything (including the gyms). You can check your accounts through the Bursar tab on Albert. If your bills aren't paid, you should call the Bursar, but you will probably have to talk to Krista Davies. Seriously, make friends with Krista. Besides being very important to your happiness at CNS, she is also an awesome person. Once you're prepared, you can march off to the NYUCard Center: 7 East 12th Street, Third Floor. Email: nyucard@nyu.edu; phone: (212) 443-CARD (2273). The office is open Mon-Thurs: 9-6 and Fri: 10-4, with extended hours at the beginning of the semester. Check out the NYU Card website for exact hours (<http://www.nyu.edu/nyucard/>). If you lose your NYUCard, you can get a new one from the

NYUCard center for \$15 the first time, and \$50 the second.

New students: if you are here (in NYC) somewhat earlier than September, you can get your NYUCard card without having to wait around in a line. The real crunch starts towards the end of August and continues through to the second week of September. Go to the NYUCard Center as early as you can.

CNS stuff

Pay checks and direct deposit

Now that you have your NYUCard, you could go straight to the library, but perhaps you were thinking about grabbing a drink (you might need one after all that standing in line). In that case, you might want to pick up your paycheck. Depending on whether you are TAing or not, paychecks will be available biweekly at the CNS office (8th floor of Meyer) and will probably be dropped off in your mailbox, or on the 15th of each month in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS) office. This is located at 1/2 (yes, this office revels in the Carrollian address of "one-half Fifth Avenue") Fifth Ave. You may now also choose to have your paychecks deposited directly into your bank account--this is highly recommended as your paycheck will be deposited even if you aren't around (and need money--say while vacationing in Barbados). To set up direct deposit, you have to get the appropriate form from Ashley Delphia (who conveniently shares an office with Krista). Fill it out and provide a voided check. If you need to open a new bank account in NYC, do that first. It takes a long time (say 6 weeks) for direct deposit to kick in, so plan accordingly.

Taxes

As long as we're talking about income, here's what you can expect from income taxes. Assuming you're single and have no other sources of income, roughly 15% of your paycheck will get eat by federal, NY state, and NY city (unless you're a New Jersey resident) taxes combined. But unlike a regular employer, NYU does not withhold any taxes from your paycheck unless you're an international student or when you're a TA. Basically, whether taxes are withheld, reported, or neither, depends on the source of money from which you are paid, and this may not be immediately obvious, so pay attention. International students should take a close look at the international section in this guide as what you need file may depend strongly on what tax treaties your home country has with the U.S. Basically, keep an eye on your paycheck forms to keep track of:

- a. How much you're being paid
- b. How much is being withheld--if any

You may need to save money (yes, *ouch*) to pay your annual taxes if no amount was withheld from your paycheck. If a substantial portion was withheld, you may want to calculate your taxes extra carefully to sure that you get the refund that is owed to you.

American students need to pay estimated taxes quarterly. You could "forget" to pay your estimated taxes, but the IRS can slap you with a penalty for doing that. And besides, you'll probably be getting federal tax-funded grant money at some point in your life, so quit griping and do your civic duty. Technically you should pay one installment before the end of the calendar year because you will probably be a little over the threshold (\$1000 owed in federal tax). If you're that organized, congratulations. Otherwise, you can just risk it and wait until the April 15th deadline to fill out the estimated tax forms.

All tax forms and instructions are available these days in Acrobat format on the web. Information and forms are available at: <http://www.irs.gov/individuals/index.html>

The site is actually amazingly useful. The Yahoo website also provides federal, state, and city forms and may be faster to access--especially in April.

NY city taxes are included on the NY state tax form, but don't get fooled into thinking that it's going to make your life simpler. It can take hours to decide whether or not you are supposed to file additional forms. If you resent the time that you have to spend on your taxes enough, then it might be worth using an online service like Intuit's turbotax.com or H&R Block's taxcut.com. If you're lucky enough to qualify for the EZ forms, either site will let you fill out and file your taxes for free. Otherwise, it costs about \$10-15 for your federal return and about the same for each state return.

Reimbursement

The current economic climate has prompted NYU to change it's reimbursement policies. Reimbursements under \$50 can be paid in cash quickly, but anything higher than that can take weeks to get reimbursed. Bring all concerns to Joanne Rodriguez.

Administrative structure

Director: Tony Movshon.

Director of Graduate Studies (DGS): Nava Rubin.

Administrator for Student Affairs (ASA): Krista Davies.

The DGS and the ASA are your main points of contact for any matter related to the graduate program. An email to <dgs@cns.nyu.edu> will reach both of them.

Director of Undergraduate Studies: Chiye Aoki.

Associate Director: Amala Ankolekar. Oversees all aspects of CNS operations including budgetary, personnel, visas, daily operations, physical plant construction, faculty, postdoc, student, and staff needs and special projects.

Administrative Assistant to Director: Joanne Rodriguez. Provides comprehensive administrative support to the Director. She is also responsible for reimbursements.

Office Manager: Erick Howard. Responsible for enhancing morale to all aspects of CNS. Also does Tea Time, so be nice to him, but not too nice.

Other staff, by name: Ashley Delphia, John Healey, Rosalie Morrisson, Hillary Webb.

CNS Intranet ([link](#)): You can access various things through the intranet, most of which are just for fun, like photos of past events and current members of CNS. However, there are some useful things to do here, such as reserving class and meeting rooms (815 and 807, respectively). Of course, you have to be in the Meyer building to access it.

Academic

Requirements

Rotations

You are required to do two rotations in separate labs, but you may do additional rotations if desired. One of the nice things about our program is that there is a certain amount of flexibility with the duration and number of rotations. The suggested schedule is that you'll start your first rotation about six weeks into your first semester and stay until the end of the spring semester. The second rotation will be done during the summer between first and second years. However, some people have chosen to either extend a rotation or cut one short depending on how the research is going, whether or not they want to do a third, etc. Keep open communication with your advisor and director about what you want to do for your rotations. The faculty are committed to helping you find a program that works for you and your interests, so don't be afraid to speak up about how you're feeling about your rotations. These are for your benefit. There are no minimum research requirements for the rotations. The actual requirements of your rotation will be determined by you and your advisor. You will, however, receive a grade from your advisor.

Courses

You are required to take a total of nine graded courses: six core classes and three electives. The core classes consist of Cellular, Molecular and Developmental Neural Science; Sensory and Motor Neural Science; Behavioral and Cognitive Neuroscience; Laboratory in Neural Science I & II; and Mathematical Tools for Neural Science. Mathematical Tools for Neural Science (Math Tools) is taught every other year. You will take it in either your first or second year, depending on when it is offered. The rest you will take during your first year. The Laboratories in Neural Science are lab classes that meet once a week and exemplify concepts currently being taught during the other core classes. The others are kind of self explanatory. They are team taught (the faculty lecture on their areas of expertise). Currently, Cell/Molec and Sensory/Motor are being jointly offered with students from the NYU Medical Campus (which means some of the lectures are taught there). Behavior/Cog is jointly offered and taught by people from the Psych department and includes a Neural Anatomy component (taught during the first five weeks of Lab II). **You must pass all of these courses with a minimum grade of B+.** This essentially replaces our qualifying exams.

Additionally, you must take three graded elective courses. NYU offers a wide range of electives (see the CNS website for a full list). They are offered sporadically depending on when the faculty feel there is enough interest etc. So if one looks interesting to you, make sure you let that faculty know, and get your interested classmates to do the same. You may also take your electives outside of CNS. This of course includes courses offered in other departments such as: Psychology, Biology, Computer Science, Engineering, etc. Additionally, New York City universities have this really cool exchange program which means, as a grad student, you can take courses at Columbia, Rockefeller, CUNY, Fordham, NYU Medical, etc. This requires a little extra effort, but makes significantly broadens your options. Be sure to check with the DGS and your advisor to make sure the course is appropriate.

TAing

As a part of your fellowship, you are required to TA during two semesters during your PhD. Generally, this will be one semester during each your second and third years. As these are considered part of your contract, you will not receive additional compensation for these. You may, however, TA for additional semesters and get paid. Compensation depends on the course. The courses our department covers include one general education class (called "MAP" classes at NYU) titled "Brain and Behavior" as well as all of the undergraduate neuroscience courses that the department offers. You will not be asked to TA for any random undergrad classes outside the department such as organic chemistry etc. Depending on the class, TAing usually requires that you teach either a discussion section or a lab, and always requires grading the students assignments. Teaching experience is an important resume builder if you plan to stay in academia, and can also be very rewarding. It is, however, rather time consuming - so be prepared.

Milestones

In addition to course work and research, there are a couple of big milestones along the way. As mentioned before, we do not have qualifying exams. However, we do have these "milestones" that serve as bench marks along the way. While people do tend to stress out preparing for the talks and such, its not like you're graduation is dependent on you passing these with flying colors (ie you will not be graded). Generally speaking, they are pretty casual, and usually followed by wine and cheese.

The first one is your First Year Talk. This is somewhat of a misnomer, as it will occur at the beginning of your second year. This is the first time you'll be speaking in front of the entire department, so its kind of like your coming out party. However, the pomp and circumstance that we tie to the event aside, its really just a fifteen minute talk summarizing one of the rotations you did during your first year. Because rotations may only last a couple of months, it is not expected that you'll have impressive data (or really any data, for that matter). The purpose of the talk is more to give you the opportunity to get some experience putting together a nice presentation and speaking before a large audience.

At the end of your second year, you'll submit your Second Year Paper. It will be in the format of a pre-doctoral NRSA grant proposal (an individual National Research Service Award). The purpose of this requirement is to get you to think critically about a research problem and prepare a grant proposal which details the whats and hows of the experiments you've designed to get some answers to this problem. It can be an excellent exercise if you are writing a proposal based on your intended thesis project. However, you are NOT required to write about your thesis topic, and you are NOT required to actually submit this to the NIH (but if you are interested... see the Funding section).

During the spring of your third year you will give your Third Year Talk. This is a thirty minute talk given to the department and will hopefully include some of the preliminary data of your thesis as well as outline what you plan to do during the rest of your time at NYU. Again, this is an excellent opportunity to speak in front of the entire department and get some feedback from the faculty and your classmates about your research and your degree progress.

And finally, when you're all done, you will give an hour long Public Talk based on your dissertation. This is the last time you'll speak in front of the whole department, and the most formal of the talks. Expect to be grilled. This is separate from your Thesis defense,

which will follow immediately after the public and be attended only by your Thesis committee (see below).

Advisory committee

During your second year, you should start forming your advisory committee. This is separate from your thesis committee. Your advisory committee will consist of your adviser and at least two other faculty members. You'll meet with your committee at least once per academic year (more frequently if desired). The purpose of this committee is to keep you on track to graduation (yay!). They'll make sure you're meeting all your requirements and making sufficient progress on your project. You should choose the members of your committee based on how they can benefit your progress. You can add or subtract people from the advisory committee at any time, depending on the changing needs of your project. One of the three (NOT your adviser) will serve as committee chair. The committee is responsible for making sure the academic standards of the department are met and reporting your progress to the faculty at large. Although people often choose to keep these people on their dissertation committee, this is not necessary.

Thesis committee

Funding

Upon admittance to the graduate program, you are guaranteed funding for at least the first five years of your PhD through the department. You are strongly encouraged to apply outside funding sources if you are eligible. This does not apply to International students (non-residents) who are not eligible for any grants. This is good practice for you and will look amazing on your CV. Most students in this program generally apply for two different types of grants during their time here: the NSF and the NRSA. Whether you are eligible or not, the second year paper (see below; a requirement in the program) provides you with an opportunity to write a grant proposal. You can use this quite effectively to design a project and have your committee read it and give you their informed feedback.

The National Science Foundation (NSF) offers pre-doctoral training grants. In order to be eligible for these awards, you must have had less than the equivalent of one semester's worth of graduate level training (no more than a certain number of graduate credits). The application is due early in November. The competition for the NSF grants is quite stiff, but certainly not impossible. Generally, quite a few CNS students are supported by NSF. Keep in mind the following advice: The review board is not necessarily looking for someone who knows everything, or who has the best project, but someone who can think through ideas and present a proposal which asks a specific question and then proposes an experiment (or set of experiments) whose results will answer this question. In addition, it is important to have a faculty sponsor in whose lab you will do this research. The review committee likes to see that a professor plans to give you his/her time and resources. This does not necessarily have to be the person with whom you will do your thesis; if you get the grant, you do not have to complete the project you've proposed. Although you may be a little overwhelmed by the demands of course work, research and applying for these grants during the fall, it can be worthwhile to give the applications some extra attention: you really do have a significant chance of getting a fellowship.

The National Research Service Award (NRSA) is offered by the National Institutes of Mental Health. These pre-doctoral awards were once available for anyone that fell under the realm

of 'Neuroscience' but now they have been restricted to areas that fall under Mental Health exclusively (i.e. cognitive). The application process begins by submitting a paragraph to determine whether you can actually submit The Application. If you think your application might be related, give it a shot. When it comes time for application submission, the Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP, 15 Washington Place) has the forms and instructions. You should also make an appointment to speak with your sponsor's grant officer at OSP. He/she will inform you of deadline changes and other details related to your submission. Be aware that you will need three letters of recommendation not including the letter of support from your sponsor. The format of your second-year paper will conveniently be identical to the NRSA. To ensure quality control, you will be strongly encouraged to submit this (its for your own good).

Research

Papers

We collect and read lots of papers. You probably do (or will do) the same. Here are some thoughts about this process.

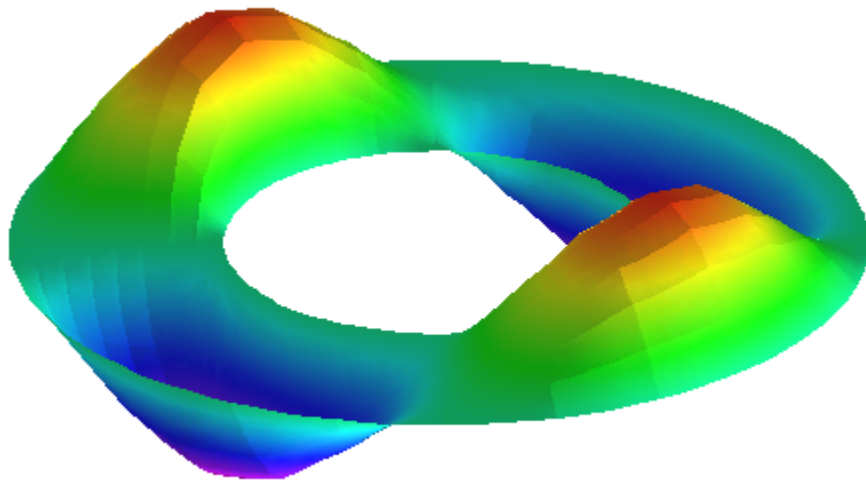
Dennis Pelli has written some useful advice on finding, getting, naming and referring to papers ([link](#)). He suggests, for example, that you should name your pdfs by author+year+word+".pdf". This is a nice system. One of us uses a modified version, which is to use the name of the first author and the first actual word of the title. For example, for 'Phenomenal coherence of moving visual patterns' by Edward Adelson and J. Anthony Movshon 1982 Nature, rename the file 'adelson1982phenomenal.pdf'. Someone in our lab uses an alternative system, which is to allow a reference management application, like JabRef ([link](#)), to automatically name the file according to its bibtexkey, such as 'Adelson1982.pdf'.

Since we've mentioned JabRef, we think that reference management software is something that you should know about (if you don't already). It can be a very powerful tool and something to start using early on. Here is a comparison of them from Wikipedia ([link](#)). Besides JabRef we like Papers ([link](#)), which is probably better, but isn't free. At the time of this writing CNS does not have a network-licensed copy of Papers. We wish it did.

You may want to think about a system for noting the extent to which you've read a specific paper. One of us color codes our papers in this way: red (not read, want/need to read), orange (read a small part, such as the abstract), yellow (read most but not all), green (thoroughly read entire paper). You can set these colors as 'label' from within the file information in Mac OS X. This gives a quick, easy, and sortable way to keep track of where you are in terms of studying your papers. You could also note your progress from within your reference management software of choice. You could also make different Excel, Numbers, or Google Docs spreadsheets of relevant papers, maybe with different spreadsheets for different projects.

add in the future (how to read papers, which papers to read, making bibliographies)

Matlab



We believe that nearly all CNS students use Matlab as a tool for doing their research, as well as in other parts of their academic life, such as for their required coursework. You may already be an expert in Matlab, in which case you might want to skip this section.

For those starting out, we believe that a good way to learn Matlab is by using it. Try to do whatever projects you've worked out with your advisor. If you have questions, ask the people in your lab. Besides each other, we've found the resources we list in the following subsections to be useful. We suggest you use these to teach yourself, and or to refresh your knowledge of Matlab, in parallel to using it day to day.

books

'Mastering Matlab 7' by Duane Hanselman and Bruce Littlefield is good for getting a comprehensive understanding of particular topics ([amazon.com link](#)). Think about spending a Saturday morning reading the chapter on cell arrays and structures. It's also a good idea to try to work the numerical problems in this, which will significantly advance your abilities.

'Getting Started with MATLAB 7: A Quick Introduction for Scientists and Engineers' by Rudra Pratap is also good ([amazon.com link](#)). This book provides nice examples, with sample code. It's good for beginners, maybe because it doesn't present as much material. And it feels particularly relevant to the sorts of things we work on.

websites (helps, tutorials)

MathWorks online help ([link](#)). An incredible amount of information about Matlab here. You could use this to learn everything you'll ever want to know. Demos. User guides. PDF versions of the guides.

MATLAB Central Newsgroup ([link](#)). This is a good place to submit any difficult questions you may have. Someone (or some people) in the world are usually cool enough to help you out. We think it's best to ask your lab mates or other resources before going this route.

MATLAB Channel on YouTube ([link](#)). A nice place for tutorials. You can obviously get them whenever you have access to youtube (such as from your iPhone while sitting in an airport terminal).

MIT tutorial ([link](#)). UFL tutorial ([link](#)). Utah tutorial ([link](#)). Some overlap with other resources, but can be useful for shorter and more applied lessons.

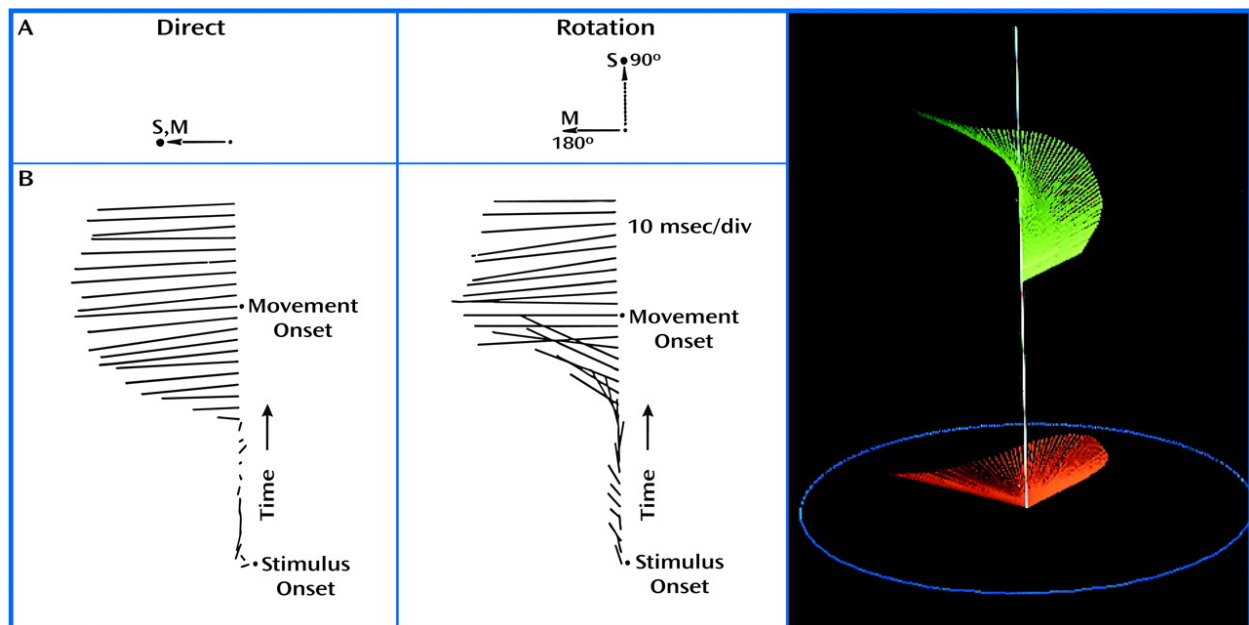
guides (pdfs)

'MATLAB Primer Third Edition' by Kermit Sigmon ([link](#), [link 2](#), [link 3](#)). Similar to the other tutorials. Easy stuff though. The third link has a pdf.

'MATLAB Programming Style Guidelines' by Richard Johnson ([link](#) , [link 2](#)). Very useful set of suggestions on how to write Matlab code. Gives you a system for naming things, for example. Following their suggestions will help make your code more readable, less buggy, and faster.

add in the future (general thoughts on matlab{startup.m, etc.}, versions, speeding up code (GPU stuff with jacket, etc.), organizing files (project folders))

Figures



It's a good idea to sketch out, and to outline, the figures you want before you make them. Think about what to include, what you're trying to convey. If the figure contains something you generated in Matlab we think you should make the plot in Matlab as similar to the final figure as possible. For example, you should use the functions 'get' and 'set' to adjust all elements of the plot. Make the axes as you want them in the actual figure. Add labels,

adjust the figure's size, smooth things. Also, remember that Matlab figures almost never look the same after you export them. We think it's good to export your plot as a .eps file. There are many ways to do this. One of us uses exportfig.m, which you can download here ([link](#)).

Once you have the .eps file you'll probably want to (or need to) open it in something like Adobe Illustrator (or some other vector-based drawing program ([link](#))). It's at this point that you may revise the figure in meetings with your advisor and other collaborators. You might have to go back to the Matlab script and generate a new .eps file, but you'll want to avoid this. It's a good idea to save the figure as a .ai or .pdf and to version them, such as 'stimulusv01.ai'. From a .ai you can export to .pdf and use that to import it into slides (keynote or powerpoint) or to place it within a larger file for a poster. You should also be thinking about size. Is the figure for a talk (slides), a poster, or a paper? Think about your font sizes and make sure to make them readable. In general, you should standardize. Consider using the same fonts, colors, look, and approximate sizes throughout. Eliminate unnecessary elements.

Books by Edward Tufte ([link](#)) are useful for learning about the design of figures. He has written extensively on how to 'best display different forms of information with copious examples and commentary'. The place to start is with 'The Visual Display of Quantitative Information, 2nd edition' ([link](#)). Tufte also offers courses, which we've not taken, but are probably really cool ([link](#)).

Posters

Modelling how monkeys learn from their decisions

Brian Lau & Paul W. Glimcher

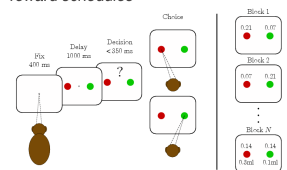
Center for Neural Science, New York University



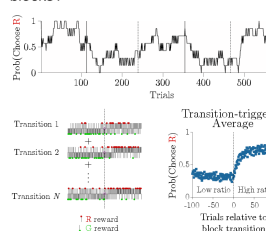
Choice is based upon a representation of the value of each of the available actions. To study the how value may be estimated and updated, we:

- developed a choice task where behavior could be varied according to the probability and magnitude of reward
- assessed the ability of various reinforcement learning model to predict individual choice behavior

Matching task Discrete concurrent VI-VI reward schedules



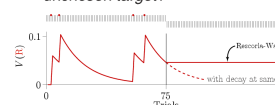
How does behavior change between blocks?



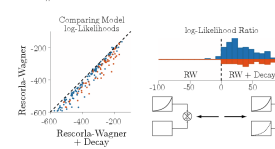
Modelling Single Choices

A decision-maker could choose based on estimates of the expected reward rates of each target.
In a non-stationary environment the data used for estimation should be local in time.
The Rescorla-Wagner (1972) rule uses a reward

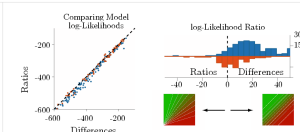
① What happens to the value of the unchosen target?



The probability of reward grows as $1 - (1 - p)^{n+1}$, $n = \#$ of trials since an alternative was last chosen.

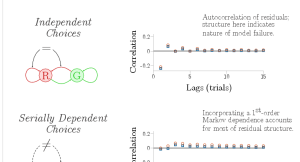


② Is exponential decay the right shape?



④ Do future choices also depend on past choices?

Check by examining model residuals, the difference between the data and the model predictions.



Posters, like other concrete manifestations of your research, are good for having around. You can show people the stuff you're working on at your computer with them. You can improve them and use them for your thesis. You can take them to the CNS retreat and show your local colleagues how impressive your data is. Also, this process is good for generating new thoughts, for exposing the weak points in what you've done, and for gathering useful feedback.

A first step can be to check the suggestions for poster presentation for the conference you're attending. It's a good idea to make your poster as large as you're allowed. This will, among other things, allow people who are passing by to see it more easily. We also suggest

that you ask people in your lab for copies of their posters. Study them. You can incorporate the elements of their posters that you like.

You'll probably take figures and start dumping them into a single document in which you've defined the page size to be that of your poster. We like Adobe Illustrator for this, but have known others who use Powerpoint, Intaglio, Canvas or even Latex. Endnote or JabRef for the bibliography. It can be useful to write the text in something like Pages, Word, or Latex. Then copy the text or a pdf of the text into the larger document. Work to keep text to a minimum.

Most CNS people print their posters on the HP poster printer on the 9th floor. In the days leading up to the Society for Neuroscience Annual Meeting, this room may get very busy, in which case you may need to schedule your printing. Otherwise the room should be relatively empty. Many people find printing their posters in CNS to be a very difficult process, in some cases demanding several hours of their time just before a flight. It should get easier with repeated attempts. We list a few things that may be helpful.

One side of the printer paper is 42 inches, so you should work on your poster from its creation with that as the lengths of two the poster's four sides. The other two sides can be of whatever length you prefer (although you'll probably want to match this to be the maximum width that you're allowed for your conference).

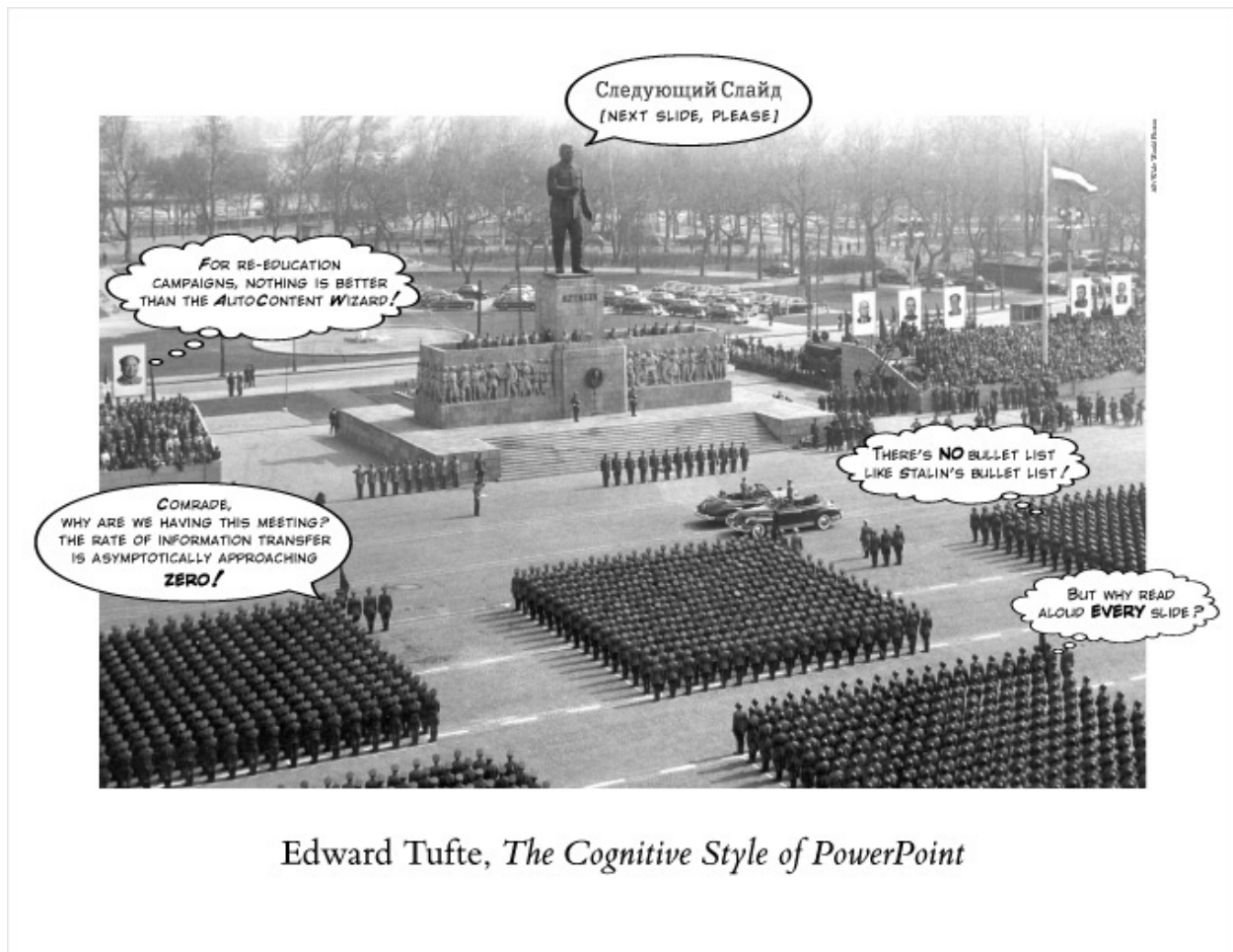
The software on all of the three computers in 975 Meyer Hall, where you'll probably print, is significantly outdated. Not much you can do about that, but it's a good idea to save your poster as pdf before going to print. Then print it from whatever version of Adobe Acrobat is there. This will, among other things, ensure that you've embed the fonts. Also, the outlined sequences for printing that you see around the room generally do not work. The previews that you see in many applications do not actually correspond to what it'll look like when you print. Here is an internal document about how to print your poster ([link](#)). One thing to do is to start printing and cancel it if it's not correct.

We have found it useful to define (and save) a custom paper size to be that of your poster. If your poster is 70x42 inches, put those in with 0 inch margins on all sides. Use this customer paper size when you print from within Acrobat. It's probably right to set the orientation to be landscape.

Before you leave for the meeting, make backup copies of your poster (on a USB or burnt CD, on the web or in an email). If something happens, like you lose it, print another copy at Kinkos. Also, it's nice to have a plastic poster tube for taking it on the plane as carry-on. We think that the ArtBin Telescoping Transport Tube is the right thing for this ([link](#), [link 2](#)).

add in the future (content, books or other refs on posters, design issues)

Slides



We think that giving talks at meetings can be a good way for a lot of people to see your work. Give them if you can. You have two options for creating slides for talks, Keynote ([link](#)) or Powerpoint ([link](#)). We won't compare them here, but that's discussed in this Macworld article ([link](#)). We like Keynote more, but we're devoted Mac users, and Mac OS X is one of the two platforms that's in use in our lab. Your choice between the two will likely depend in part on the sorts of machines you use in lab, whether they're lab machines or your own. Here is a tutorial about using Keynote ([link](#)). To include parts of papers in a presentation we like to use Adobe Acrobat to export a single page (the one containing a specific figure, for example). Crop that and save it, then drag it onto a slide.

We think that you should not use fancy effects, such as complicated transitions, which are distracting and only detract from your message. That said, transitions can be useful for sequentially highlighting aspects of a slide. One trick for that is to create a white box to cover something and then remove it in the action-flow within Keynote. This can be useful when it's impossible to build that part in, which essentially does the same thing. We also like simple themes, black or white backgrounds with white or black text.

One way to improve your presentation abilities is to give talks at SPF ([link](#)). This is usually less stressful and allows you to not only practice your speaking, but also your preparation for talks.

Here is a guide that you may find useful about speaking and presenting ([link](#)). You may also want to check out Greg Steinbruner's Ning, which is 'Applied Speaking and Presenting' ([link](#)).

Manuscripts

add in the future (application flow (latex, jabref; word, endnote) with google documents, resources: strunk and white; vernon booth, reading guides for authors, proofs)

Seminars

CNS has fantastic seminars, with talks from among the best in neuroscience. The CNS website includes a listing of seminars ([link](#)). Below is a table for a subset of those seminars. The CNS Events page includes links to other activities and calendar pages, such as the one for the NYU Psychology Department. You probably also get (or will get) numerous emails about special seminars or job talks, which you may be interested in. In our lab these are added to the lab's Google Calendar.

seminar	website	~day/time	location
NYU Neuroscience Colloquia	link	monday/ 1230-130 PM	Jurow Auditorium, 101A Silver Center
Neuroeconomics Colloquium	link	tuesday/ 230-4 PM	Room 517, 19 West 4th St.
Mostly Biomathematics Lunchtime Seminar	link	tuesday/ 12-1 PM	Room 1314, Warren Weaver Hall
Auditory Journal Club ('EARS')	link	thursday/ 1030-12 PM	Room 974, Meyer Hall

There are a number of seminars or meetings that are no longer active (or haven't been very active for a long time). These include: Fellows' Seminar, Workshop in Scientific Integrity, Neuro/Philosophy Discussion Group, Computational Neuroscience Forum, Cellular Neurobiology Journal Club, Vision Journal Club. You may want to ask around and work on reviving one of these.

add in the future (beyond NYU but in the city, ie VisioNYC; CNS symposia/retreat)

Lab meetings

Many labs hold regular meetings. We encourage you to search out these meetings, including those for labs other than your own. Ask lab managers or members of the lab if they can add you to their email list. These informal meetings can be important opportunities to see what a lab is like, what is going on in it, and what are people are working on.

We have considered including a table of meeting times and contact persons, but haven't gathered that information yet. It could be that maintaining such a table would be difficult considering that some meetings cycle through periods of inactivity.

Conferences and workshops

You are likely to attend, and present your research at, several conferences and or workshops during your degree. We believe that your advisors are more likely to support (and pay for) you to attend conferences and workshops that you are planning to present at. In other words, they are less likely to support you in going to conferences just to attend them. The following table includes a partial list of some of the conferences and workshops that may be of interest to you. We include national and international conferences and workshops within and beyond neuroscience. The rows of the table are sorted by the approximate submission deadline for abstracts or papers for the event in each row. We don't include descriptions of the conferences as we assume you'll check out the ones that you're interested in. Also, we have tried to use the most recent URL's for each meeting. But if they're out of date please google the name of the conference.

conference or workshop	website	~submission date	~meeting date	location
Computational Systems Biology (WCSB)	link	January	June	variable (Denmak?)
Synapses: From Molecules to Circuits & Behavior	link	January	April	Cold Spring Harbor, New York
International Conference on Pattern Recognition (ICPR)	link	January	August	variable (within Europe)
Computational Neuroscience Meeting (CNS)	link	February	July	variable (within Europe)
Detailed Modelling and Simulation of Signal Processing in Neurons (DMSN)	link	March	May	Germany
Neural Coding (NC)	link	March	May	South-east Asia
Research in Encoding And Decoding of Neural Ensembles (AREADNE)	link	March	June	variable (within Europe)
International Conference on Computer Vision (ICCV)	link	March	October to September	variable (within Asia)
European Conference on Visual Perception	link	April	August	variable (within Europe)
Asian Conference on Computer Vision (ACCV)	link	April	September	variable (within Asia)

Neuroinformatics (INCF)	link	May	September	variable (within Europe)
Society for Neuroscience (SfN)	link	May	October to November	variable (within US)
International Conference on Cognitive Neurodynamics (ICCN)	link	May	November	variable (within China)
Neural Information Processing Systems (NIPS)	link	June	December	Vancouver, Canada
Neurocomp	link	June	October	France
International Conference on Neural Information Processing (ICONIP)	link	June	December	variable (within Asia)
European Retinal Meeting (ERM)	link	August	October	variable (within Europe)
Cognitive Neuroscience Society (CNS)	link	November	March	variable (within US)
IEEE Computer Society Conference on Computer Vision and Pattern Recognition (CVPR)	link	November	June	variable (within US)
Computational and Systems Neuroscience (CoSyNe)	link	December	February to March	Salt Lake City/ Snowbird, Utah
Vision Sciences Society (VSS)	link	December	May	Naples, Florida
International Conference of Cognitive Science	link	--	March	Tehran, Iran
Mathematical Neuroscience	link	--	March	Edinburgh, UK
Information Processing in Cells and Tissues (IPCAT)	link	--	April	variable (within Europe)
Adaptive Motion of Animals and Machines (AMAM)	link	--	June	variable

Association for the Scientific Study of Consciousness (ASSC)	link	--	June	variable (within Europe)
Sensory Coding and the Natural Environment	link	--	July	variable (within US)
European Conference on Computer Vision (ECCV)	link	--	September to October	variable (within Europe)
Okinawa Conference on Mathematics and Biology	link	--	November	Okinawa, Japan
International Conference on Image Processing (ICIP)	link	--	November	variable

Conferences often have discounted registration prices for students. They may also have programs for discounted accommodation. There are usually a limited number spaces for these discounts. They fill up fast and you'll want to check for them early. Some conferences and workshops also have travel awards for students, which may be of particular importance to you if your lab (or CNS) is unwilling to support your attending them. NYU also has travel grants that you could apply for. Here is some information about the GSAS Dean's Student Travel Grant Program ([link](#)). Also, many conferences offer childcare. Check their websites for details on these things. We also suggest that you tell your lab members and other people within CNS that you're attending a meeting. They might not know about it. You might be able to share your hotel room.

Reimbursement

It's a good idea for you to discuss support (reimbursement) with your advisor, or in the case of first year CNS students with the DGS, before you submit something for, or register for, a conference or workshop. In our experience, you will be reimbursed for the costs of attendance (registration, etc.), travel (airfare, cabs, trains, etc.), lodging (hotel(s), etc.), and food. In general, you should keep receipts for everything from the start to the end of your trip. This will include getting individualized receipts from any restaurants you eat at. Our lab also requires us to keep all flight boarding passes to confirm that we were actually on the flights we submit for reimbursement. It's a good idea to hold on to these. Also, we suggest that during the meeting you do not tip anyone in excess of 15%, which may be the maximum amount that you're allowed to be reimbursed for.

When you get back to CNS, all of your receipts will become part of some paperwork, which will be submitted for you to get your reimbursement. It may take a day or two for them to prepare your paperwork. You'll sign and submit it. It normally takes a few weeks for you to get a check. This wait may be significantly shortened, however, since NYU has been working on a new system for reimbursement that will take advantage of direct deposit, assuming that you have it. You can check with Joanne or Amala about this.

Courses

These are short courses outside of NYU, which are typically offered during the summer or winter break, that may be of interest to you. Among other upsides, they are great opportunities to meet other people in the field.

course	website	~application date	~course date	location
Systems Neurobiology Spring School	link	February	March	Nakagyo-Ku, Kyoto, Japan
3rd Summer School in Computational Neuroscience	link	February	June	University of Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
Okinawa Computational Neuroscience Course	link	February	June to July	Okinawa, Japan
RIKEN BSI	link	February	July to August	RIKEN, Wako, Japan
Telluride Neuromorphic Cognition Engineering Workshop	link	March	June to July	Telluride, Colorado
Computational Cell Biology	link	March	June to July	Cold Spring Harbor, New York
Computational Neuroscience: Vision	link	March	June to July	Cold Spring Harbor, New York
14th Advanced Course in Computational Neuroscience	link	March	August	Freiburg, Germany
Methods in Computational Neuroscience	link	March	August	MBL, Woods Hole, Massachusetts
Theoretical Neuroscience and Complex Systems	link	April	August	Frankfurt Institute for Advanced Studies (FIAS), Frankfurt, Germany
Neuroinformatics	link	April	August	MBL, Woods Hole, Massachusetts

Housing



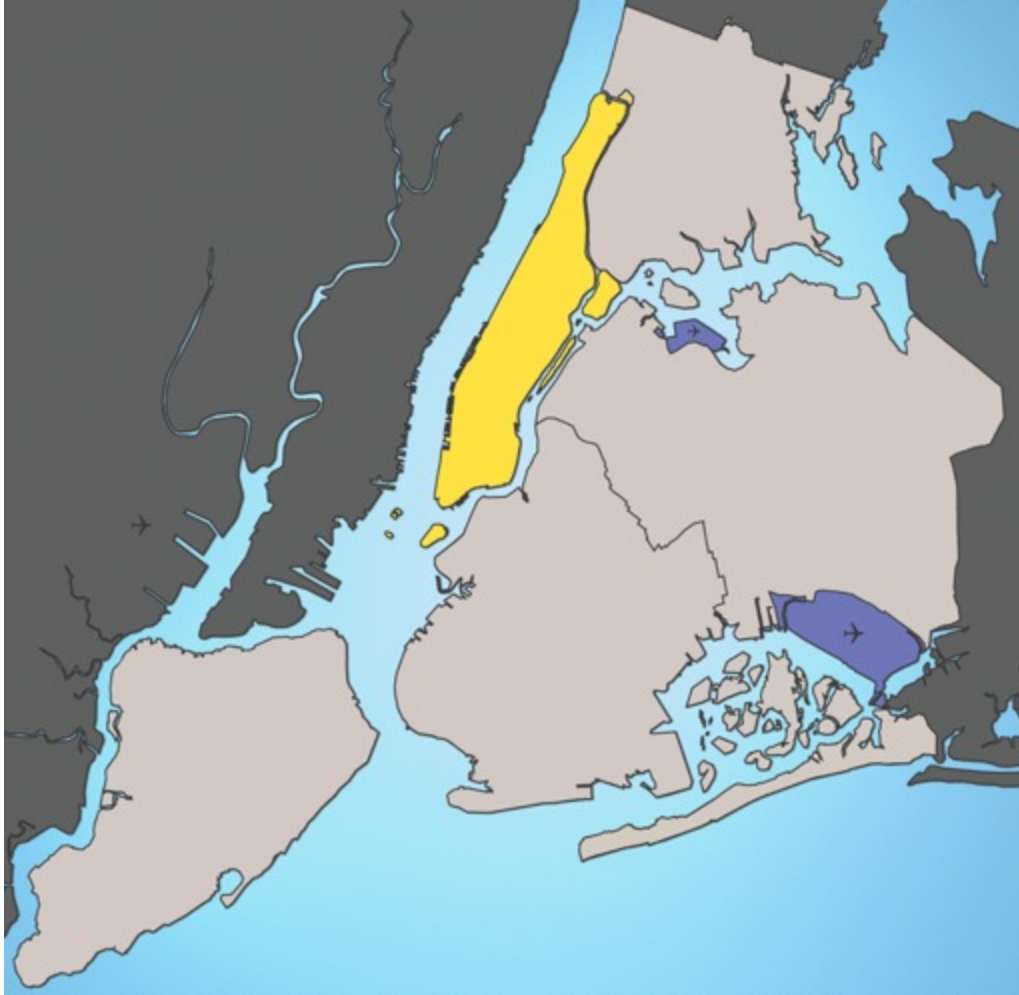
First year options

First year CNS students are provided with a subsidized housing option through the MacCracken program (this is the fellowship through which CNS students are funded). The available apartments are located in Stuyvesant (pronounced Stii-va-cent) Town ("Stuy Town"), which is "a secure enclave of 89 high-rise buildings set in a park-like environment amid lawns, numerous trees, and playgrounds," according to their website. It's actually a rather nice residential-like apartment complex, located fairly close to the CNS building. It's on the east side of Manhattan, between 14th and 20th Streets, and First Avenue and East River Drive, and it's about a 10-15 minute walk to CNS. You'll be fairly close to the 6 and L subways, which provides pretty easy access uptown or to Brooklyn, and there are free buses that go between CNS and Stuyvesant Town, which is helpful when it gets cold and you don't want to walk. The apartments are quite nice; all are furnished and are in elevator buildings, with a common room, kitchen, full bath with shower/tub, private bedrooms, utilities, air conditioning, dishwasher, microwave, internet, and 24-hour security. The cost is about \$1,090 per month, which is fairly reasonable for the area (see below for more comparisons). It's available starting August 30th of your first year, which is at least a couple weeks before classes start.

The main advantage of the Stuy Town housing option is that it lets you get your feet on the ground when you first arrive at CNS. Finding a non-NYU apartment yourself is not terribly difficult, but requires a concerted effort. You need to spend at least a couple weeks, usually more like a month or two, sending out emails, visiting possible options, arranging finances, etc. And if you get a place without furniture, you need to spend another week or so furnishing a new place. In contrast, you can show up at your new Stuy Town place two weeks before classes start and be totally settled in. After you're first year, you'll need to look for a new place, of course. But at that point you'll already be in New York, so it'll be easy. Stuy Town is especially useful for people coming from farther away (e.g. West Coast). For them, it might be non-trivial to spend a few weeks in New York the summer before their first year finding an apartment. But if are coming from a place near New York, and can make a few visits to check out apartments, or if you have friends in New York that you can stay with during the few weeks before you start school, finding a place isn't so bad.

Pros/cons of different boroughs/neighborhoods

If you don't take the Stuy Town option in your first year, or when you get beyond first year and need to find a place to stay, you have a lot of options. Most CNS students live in either Manhattan, Queens, or Brooklyn. A few live in New Jersey. Below are some pros/cons of these different places. Most of the price ranges assume you'd be sharing a place with a roommate or two, either someone you know already or someone you meet through the apartment hunt. In general, single-person apartments are 1.5x more expensive, but there are exceptions.



Manhattan

east village/alphabet city

Pros: Exciting, urban environment, with a lively night life. Literally hundreds of restaurants, cafes, bars, corner stores, all within a couple blocks. Depending on how far east you are, a pretty short walk to CNS, 10 minutes from 2nd/3rd ave, 20 minutes from avenues A/B/C. If you are very far east, there's not much in the way of subway access, but there are buses. You'll also be very close to the lower east side, which is a great area for good bars and concerts.

Cons: Expensive (usually between \$1000 and \$1500), or you live in a closet, sometimes both.

gramarcy/murray hill

Pros: This area is on the east side, but north of Stuy Town, between 20th and 30th streets at 2nd and 3rd avenues. It's a very chill environment, largely post-college crowd, less

bustling than the East Village, and probably cheaper (around \$1000), for slightly more rooms. Subway access is easy for 6 and L trains.

Cons: More like a 20-30 minute walk to CNS, kind of a dull neighborhood compared to the east village.

harlem/washington heights

Pros: Usually more affordable / larger compared to the other Manhattan options, in the \$800 to \$1000 range.

Cons: Not walking distance from CNS. You can bike, or take the subway. If you take the 1/2/3 or A/B/C/D, it's actually a pretty simple commute, because there are 1/2/3 and A/B/C/D stops only 10 minutes from CNS. But the train ride itself is about 30 minutes. This means getting up earlier for classes (in your first couple years), and planning ahead if your lab has strict schedules (e.g. due to animal requirements). But if your lab is flexible, and you can read a couple articles on the train ride (or play on your iPhone), this could be a good option.



Brooklyn

One pro to Brooklyn is that you can typically find an apartment without having to pay a broker's fee.

williamsburg/bushwick

Pros: Very fun neighborhood with tons of bars, restaurants, shops, coffee shops, etc. This area has many different vibes, but none of them lack vibrancy. Depending on how close you are to the train (most likely the L, but could also be the JMZ), the commute can be anywhere from 15-35 minutes. The region right in between Williamsburg and Bushwick is also called East Williamsburg (mostly just by apartment brokers) and boasts galleries and loft spaces for artists. From here, the commute can be 20-30 minutes. Many people will commute by bike over the Williamsburg bridge, but unless you're really tough, this is next to impossible in the winter. The farther you go into Brooklyn, the more affordable the apartments get (typically).

Cons: You have to take the subway to get to school (currently, the unlimited monthly pass costs \$81, but they are threatening to raise it to over \$100). The commute can be between 15-35 minutes depending on where you are and how far you walk to the subway.

prospect park/prospect heights

Pros:

Cons:

fort greene

Pros: Tons of bars, restaurants, cafes, shops. Very beautiful and green neighborhood.

Cons: Fairly pricey. Try neighboring Clinton Hill for more affordable apartments.

red hook

Pros: Lots of shops here. This neighborhood remains neighborhoody by being far from the subway. Ikea.

Cons: No subway real nearby. If you're really in Red Hook, you have to take a bus, ride a bike, or walk a good distance to get to a subway. Ikea.

carol gardens

Pros:

Cons:



Queens

astoria

Pros: Queens is pretty far from CNS, but Astoria is actually a great little neighborhood, so we're including it here. It's a very friendly, multi-cultural neighborhood located at the last stop on the N/W train. This is not a bad train to be on because it stops right outside the CNS building (at 8th street). The train ride itself is 30-40 minutes, but because Astoria is the first stop, you're guaranteed a seat when you get on. As with Harlem, if you have a flexible schedule, and can read a couple articles on the train, this is a reasonable option. The neighborhood of Astoria is great; very post-college, and plenty of cool stuff to do. Lots of good restaurants, bars, and cafes, with some of the best Thai, Italian, and Greek food in New York. Also extremely safe. And prices are much more reasonable than in Manhattan. Places can be as low as \$600, usually between \$700 and \$900, for fairly spacious rentals.

Cons: That 40 minute commute might be daunting, especially in your first couple years, when you might have an early class. And depending on where your friends / fellow CNSers live, you might be pretty far away from a lot of people you want to hang out with. 40 minutes might be fine every morning, but it could become a pain if you're partying in the lower east side until 3am and then need to spend almost an hour getting home.

New Jersey

Pros: As a New Jersey resident, you won't have to pay New York City taxes. Typically, you can expect a lot more bang for your buck as far as apartments go--bigger and cheaper. Different areas (Jersey City vs. Hoboken for example) will have different values and different lengths of commute.

Cons: You're stuck with the PATH train, which actually easily gets you in walking distance of NYU. Forget ever taking a cab home on a late night. Some PATH trains don't run all night, but you can more or less always get where you need to go. It could be difficult to find a place within walking distance of a PATH station, except maybe in Hoboken, and from what I've heard, rents are going up there.

How to find an apartment

When finding an apartment, the most important first step is to contact everyone you know. Literally, everyone. A lot of people get fantastic deals through friends/family/alumni connections, etc. Tell everyone you know that you are looking for an apartment in New York City. Your college's alumni network, and CNS, are good places to start. A friend, or a friend of a friend, might know someone who is already looking for a roommate, or looking for someone to rent their place, possibly at a reduced rate. Renting a place through a friend also makes the whole process easier, more enjoyable, and more safe (assuming you know the person reasonably well). And if you're going to get a place with a roommate (usually the only option unless you want to pay a lot or live far away), you might prefer living with someone you already know. The process is also easier if you are doing it as a team; you can take turns visiting places, split the load sending out emails, etc. Though, it can be potentially exciting and rewarding to strike out on your own and live with someone new. You might meet a whole new group of friends.

Unless you land a great deal through someone you already know, you'll likely end up playing the New York apartment game. A good thing to do is to set a price limit for yourself up front. If you don't do this, it's easy, once you start looking, to convince yourself to pay just a little more than you wanted to; and that "little more" can become "a lot more." If you set a hard (but realistic) limit up front, it'll make the decision making easier, and you won't end up with something that seems appealing at the time, but ends up beyond your budget. So think about your monthly stipend amount, think about how much you want to spend on food, bars, movies, shows, clothes, etc., and decide how much you can spend on an apartment. Some people spend a lot of money to live really close to CNS (e.g. the East Village), and just save on other stuff (e.g. cook all meals at home, avoid expensive bars, etc.). Other people make sure to get a cheap apartment because they don't mind a long commute and prefer to live expensively in other ways. It's whatever works for you.

Once you set a price limit, and some locations of interest, you should decide whether to go it alone, or to use a broker. Brokers will charge a fee (usually 12-15% of the year's rent), but will basically help you find a place that suits you, making it unnecessary for you to search for a place yourself. Typically, you will tell them what your needs are, and they will come up with a set of options, which you will proceed to check out with them. Compared to going it alone, the broker option is faster, and less hassle. But it's obviously more expensive, because you have to pay the broker's fee. Simplest thing to do is to factor the broker's fee into the monthly cost of the apartment, and adjust your price limit accordingly.

If you decide to go it alone, you save money on the broker's fee, but you need to devote a few weeks to the job of finding a place. This usually involves sending a bazillion emails to various apartment postings (usually off of craigslist.com), and waiting for replies.

Listings will generally break down into two categories. The first category will be very personalized, coming from people who are already leasing an apartment, and just want a new roommate, or want someone to stay at the place while they go elsewhere. This is typically called subleasing or subletting. The second category will be more professional, coming from a landlord or apartment agency that is looking for someone to sign a new lease on an apartment. Craigslist is great for subletting. Although there are listings for leasing on craigslist, you may want to consider a broker if you are looking to lease (see below for some reasons why).

In the first category, you usually get very few replies relative to the number of emails you send, so send a lot. Come up with a simple form letter (e.g. "Hi, I'm a first-year grad student looking for an apartment in X neighborhood, I'm clean, friendly, no pets, etc., I really like the look of your place, would love to come for a visit"), and just send it out every day to as many listings as you can. This only take about twenty minutes every morning, so it's not much of a time investment, you just have to remember to do it. If you are inquiring about a place where you would be joining existing people as a new roommate (category one), you might want to include a little more personal detail, like what music you like, what you do for fun, what your schedule will be, how often you'll have guests, etc. Also, be sure to get this information from them, if they didn't already post it. You are not exactly making a new best friend here, but you'll spend a lot of time with this person, so it's good to be compatible. If your roommate's a metal-head and you refuse to listen to anything but Paul Simon, you could be in for a rough time. Also, be wary of pets. If you like animals, then that's fine, but if you're not sure, err on the side of caution. People tend to exaggerate the friendliness / easiness of their pets. For example, a "cute, well behaved hypoallergenic dog" might end up regularly pissing all over the living room floor and barking hysterically at your door when you have date over (We're speaking from experience...). So, watch out. All that said, if want to sublet, you can usually get at least a few solid responses on craigslist that are from reasonably priced and reasonable comfortable living situations with decent people. We've been through this, and it works.

In the second category, where you'll be dealing with more professional listings, the main concern re: craigslist is that some neighborhoods get monopolized by a small set of brokers on the selling side. Many listings for lofts in Williamsburg, for example, are all run by basically the same group of people, who have a monopoly on the craigslist postings in that area, and charge excessive prices. Technically it's "no-broker," and you don't pay an explicit broker's fee, but it's way more expensive than it should be. This is why, if you are looking to lease, you might be better off getting a broker yourself, who can actually find you a reasonably priced place. If you go it alone, but end up paying high prices because the listings were basically brokered, you might end up screwed, and might of well have been paying for your own broker in the first place. So craigslist is good for subleasing, and finding roommates, but if you want to start a new lease, a broker might be your best bet.

If you are going the craigslist route, and have sent a bunch of emails, once you get a few responses to your emails, try to arrange a couple meetings, preferably all on the same weekend, especially if you're going to be visiting from out of town. It's possible to schedule five or six visits in a day, though more than that can become exhausting. You can usually feel super safe on these trips, but don't schedule anything late at night. If you like a place, you should say so. If you are hesitant, you should say so as well. These people will usually have several offers, so if you REALLY like a place, try to lock it down as soon as possible. Tell them it's your first choice, and that you can pay right away, if they're willing. Some

people will literally write a check on their first visit. But this is another reason to set a price limit. If you visit a place that's above your limit, and love it, it'll be very tempting to just take it, only to regret it later, because it was more than you could afford.

Most places will require some amount of money up front to seal the arrangement. You'll usually need to pay a security deposit, equal to one month's rent. This is money that you pay at the beginning of your stay, and get back when you leave, assuming you don't cause any damage. You'll also often be required to pay the first and last month's rent on top of the security deposit. This is just further insurance for the seller; this way, if you bail, they at least get something from you. Given the amount of money you might be paying, don't write a check without signing something! What you sign depends on the arrangement. If you are signing lease, you will sign a professional contract, through your broker (if you have one) and the leasing company (i.e. the landlord). If you are subleasing, the arrangement is less official, and there are no official contracts to sign. But do sign something! You and the person you are subleasing from (or joining as a roommate) should draft a contract yourselves, describing the nature of the arrangement, how much you paid for a security deposit, how much you agree to pay per month, etc. And then both sign it. It's a good idea to bring such a contract with you, because it will speed up the process if you want to finalize things on your first visit. Here's an [example](#). This doesn't have to be official, but having a piece of paper that you've both signed will give you a legal foot-hold in small-claims should anything go wrong.

Whether with a broker or on your own, when visiting an apartment, there are several things to look out for / ask about...

Past and future of this guide

This update of the CNSGSG was completed by Jeremy Freeman, Maureen Hagan, James Hedges, and Hillary Chava Schiff in the fall of 2009. For the most part, we wrote large chunks of the guide by ourselves, after agreeing on who'd write what. Our goal has been to make this guide useful for current and future CNS students. If you're interested in updating something the easiest way, at this point, would be to email one of us. We would add you to the Google document (we wrote this on the web) so that you can edit it. We believe that a relatively completed version of this will be linked to from the CNS website.

The previous version of this guide was updated on 6 February 2004. The one before that, 20 September 2000. Here is a list of CNS students who worked on earlier versions of the guide: Erica Alliston, Hanna Bayer, Leanne Chukoskie, Anita Disney, Jeffrey Erlich, Cynthia Hall-Haro, Elizabeth Johnson (Zab), Siddhartha Joshi, David Mechner, Scott Moulder, Hysell Oviedo, Nicole Rust, G. Elizabeth Stutzman (Beth), and Patrick Williams.

We (the four students that worked on the most recent update) have some parts that we'd like to add more to. And some subset of us will probably work on that at some point. Also, there are things, such as a subsection about international students, that we wanted to include, but will have to recruit someone to work on. We have also omitted sections on health care and child care at NYU. One final thing, we wanted to say something about the history of CNS, but never got around to asking someone, or some people, who could tell us about it.

We would also like to make this into a wiki ([link](#)), so that anyone can edit it. There are many details on that that we've not yet worked on. We have also thought that a CNS Google Calendar would be a good thing, but have likewise not worked on it.

