



HARVARD 101

A guide compiled by your beloved 2020 FOP leaders

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HARVARD 101

List of “Harvard” vocab

- **Concentration** -- major
- **Secondary** -- minor
- **Gen-Ed** -- general education requirements, [a handy link for you](#), 4 Gen-Eds (Aesthetics and Culture; Ethics and Civics; Histories, Societies, Individuals; Science and Technology). Sometimes people still use the term Gen-Ed to also refer to the distribution requirements as well.
- **TF** -- teaching fellow, what we call our teaching assistants
- **CA** -- course assistant, similar to a TF, but sometimes undergrads
- **Proctor** -- a residential advisor for freshmen, sometimes they will also be your academic advisor
- **Section** -- a smaller class meeting, also called a discussion section, where you meet up with teaching fellows and other peers to further discuss material
- **Comping** -- some of the clubs on campus require you to audition or try out to get in; a lot of clubs have a “non competitive comp” where if you complete the comp, you will get in
- **PAF** -- Peer Advising Fellow, An upperclassman who works with a specific entryway to provide advice and assistance to first-years
- **Blocking Group** -- When you enter the sophomore housing lottery in the Spring of your freshman year, you can either enter as an individual or with a group of up to 7 other people known as a "blocking group". Those 7 other people will be placed into the same upperclassman house as you
- **Linking group** -- During the blocking process, you can also choose to "link" with a different blocking group. A pair of linking groups are assigned to the same neighborhood of upperclassman houses (so you'll be nearby), but they are not assigned to the same house
- **The Quad** -- The Radcliffe Quadrangle, This is where 3 of the 12 upperclassman houses are located. If you start in Harvard Yard, you can get to the quad by walking past Cambridge Common and down Garden Street



List of FOP leaders best advice :)

APPLY TO BE A FOP LEADER!!! And you can become a part of this community that helps shape what FOP will look like for future classes! And lead them into the woods! Or Zoom!

YOLO (you only live once)

"Learn how to be kind to yourself and intentionally self-care. Have as many fascinating/deep/enlightening convos you can with Harvard kids (they're incredible). Take that class (even if you think you ""shouldn't"" -- it might change your life)!"

Make friends everywhere you go!!

Choose extracurriculars that recharge you, rather than draining ones that will look good on a resume.

If you have support systems outside of Harvard like friends from home or parents or other family members, stay in touch with them -- Harvard can be a bubble and its good to get an outside perspective. CAMHS is far from perfect but it is still helpful so use it if you think it might be helpful to you.

1) take seminars 2) join clubs that you're actually interested in (not just pre-professional orgs) 3) find someone to work out with

remember that your experience of Harvard will be the experience of the space you make for yourself: the people and groups you choose to hang out with, the classes you choose to take, etc. it might take some time to find what fits you and for everything to fall into place, but I promise you will find the space that makes you happy and fulfilled and able to grow :)

SELF. CARE. if you're not doing things that are life-giving to you, Harvard will be so much harder!

Don't feel like you need to "keep up" with other people or compete to prove yourself

Make time to get off campus! Explore Boston, take the Bluebikes for a spin, go apple picking, really whatever floats your boat that gets you out of the Harvard bubble.

Put on blinders- don't compare yourself or your achievements to those around you

Stay organic!

Don't forget to appreciate where you are and enjoy it

Take advantage of as many opportunities as possible! Apply to anything you might be even slightly interested in! Pursue your passions and explore new interests, you never know where it may lead you at Harvard. Lean on close friends and enjoy the up's and down's of each year!



ACADEMICS AT HARVARD

It should come as no surprise that academic life plays a central role in your time at university. Featuring 50+ concentrations and thousands of courses, Harvard academics can seem incredibly daunting. We hope that the following resources will give you a better picture of the general terms you might encounter your first year at Harvard.

General Academic Vocabulary

- **Graduation requirements:** You will need to take a certain number of classes, split over a variety of disciplines, in order to graduate. You will have a set of requirements set for all students (the General Education and Divisional Distribution requirements), as well as additional ones for specific fields of study.
 - For more information on GenEd: <https://gened.fas.harvard.edu/>
- **Concentration:** Harvard's word for major. You do not declare your concentration until halfway through sophomore year, so your first year can be a great opportunity to intentionally explore many options.
 - **Secondary:** Harvard's word for minor. Like a major, except with fewer requirements and not necessarily related to your primary field of study.
 - **Joint concentration:** A combination of two fields of study which requires some additional paperwork. Note that Harvard does not accept double majors; you will have to combine two fields in some synergistic way.
 - **Special concentration:** If none of Harvard's concentrations fit your interests, it is possible to create your own concentration as well.
- **Advisor:** A Harvard employee who will be assigned to you during your first year and will serve as one resource as you're making your academic plan. Note that you will receive a new advisor your third semester, and a second new advisor in your concentration after you declare at the start of your fourth semester.
- **Shopping week:** A period at the start of the school year where you can try out many different courses. A great opportunity to explore!
 - **Flexible add-drop:** For a period of several weeks after you enroll in classes, you can drop classes with no penalty. You can also add certain classes with the approval of your professors.

Tools to start learning about classes

- The central hub of course selection is my.harvard.edu, where you will find, validate, and enroll in classes



- Most courses additionally have their own landing pages in Canvas, which is an online service where your class will be administered through. You can access a Canvas site by going to my.harvard.edu, finding a class in the course search, and clicking “Course Site”
- If a class hasn’t been taught in a while, the site isn’t yet active, or you just want to peruse the course catalog by keywords/professors/etc., you can use the [syllabus explorer](#)
- One of your best resources to learn about classes is student feedback. This is routinely collected for every class in the [Q-Guide](#), which will allow you to see useful information like course difficulty, time commitment, and general thoughts from students. They are usually brutally honest, but realize that opinions are often quite heterogeneous.

Class Structure

- Classes at Harvard vary significantly by structure and pedagogy. Here are a couple of terms that can be helpful.
 - Lectures: larger courses--up to hundreds of people at once--which feature an instructor delivering a presentation in class. Tend to be accompanied by sections.
 - Sections: smaller breakout sessions, usually fewer than 15 people, led by an instructor or a TF (Harvard’s term for a Teaching Assistant). More discussion-based.
 - Office hours/help sessions: this can be a valuable opportunity to meet other students in large classes and to get one-on-one time with instructors in smaller seminars. They will be scheduled by week at a specific time (though most instructors are also very happy to find other times by appointment). You don’t have to just talk about class during office hours!
 - Homework: Harvard’s homework usually falls into either “problem sets” or “essays.” Problem set courses generally have weekly worksheets that you submit at a specific time each week. Essays are usually more sparse and due a few times a semester.
 - Midterms: Harvard’s word for “test.” Some classes do these exams every few weeks, so they aren’t necessarily only once a term.
- Some Harvard courses are lotteries, meaning that they have restricted space and students are not guaranteed a spot. These courses will either ask for students to apply or have some random/semi-random process by which spots are allocated. Many courses tend to favor re-applicants, so it can be helpful to put your name in early and often.



Virtual School Advice

Schedule in no-screen time (i.e. walks, reading, exercise)

Turn off all notifications -- they'll distract the shit out of you

Get an ergonomic mouse lol. Don't get carpal tunnel like me

TAKE BREAKS IN BETWEEN CALLS—don't stay online 24/7. Come prepared to zoom sessions with water, snacks, etc. And definitely go to office hours to try and get to know your prof better.

take seminars!!! cannot emphasize this enough. the seminar experience is much better translated to zoom than most other classes, and you get some semblance of interaction with your classmates/professors

make time to care for your body and move your body and get outside (can just be taking a walk by the Charles every day); avoid using screens if you know you have lots of class coming up! bookmark important/frequently-used links! it saves a bunch of time

Enjoy time with your family/whomever you're living with!

Get out of your PJs. I know, so hard. But it helps, I promise. Also, go outside!

TAKE IT SERIOUSLY. I basically pretended that my online classes were not real from mid March - May and I got absolutely NOTHING from them. Be invested!

Email professors when times get tough.

Keep to an actual schedule. Don't let yourself get lost in tiktok until all of your classes are done for the day

Try to keep distractions out of reach. Don't forget to stay connected with friends from school and extracurricular groups. Remember to take care of yourself!



Our Class Gems 🥰

- **ENG-SCI 23:** Art & Science of Making
- **USW 35:** (might be a Gen-Ed now) Dilemmas of Equity and Excellence in K-12 Education
- (History of Science) History of Neurosurgery
- **Government and politics of China**
- **Astro 16/17** (not easy but amazing)
- **EPS10**
- **Sociology 1130:** Student Leadership in Higher Education
- **Incas!!**
- **GHHP 70:** Global Responses to Disasters and Refugee Crises
- **HIST 1001:** The War in Vietnam
- **FRENCH 80:** French Theater Across Time
- **ENGLISH 190N:** Writing Nature"
- **SLS 26:** Infectious Disease and Social Justice - FANTASTIC class for non-STEM kids who need to fulfill a req or are interested in the history or epidemiology. The profs are also great
- **Classes taught by Orlando Patterson and Anne Harrington**
- **Gened 1133** (Civil war, low workload and actually interesting)
- **Gened 1033** (Conflict resolution; not easy but honestly best course you can take Period)
- **Gened 1094** (great environmental/climate change course)
- **Neuro80**



EXTRA-CURRICULARS

Ask a FOP leader about these clubs!

Name	Extracurriculars	Email address	Phone
Olivia Tai	Harvard Design Collective (President, AMA pls), Theater (acting or backstage tech), WHRB (radio), Signet (Arts Org), Learning Lab Undergrad Fellow @ Derek Bok Center (paid job), FOP	oliviatai@college.harvard.edu	(650) 799-9174
Gennie Weiler	Climbing Club, Fleur-de-lis, Callbacks Acappella, harvard mountaineering club	gcweiler@college.harvard.edu	(612) 309-0465
Serena Wurmser	Astro research, club climbing, STAHR, HOC, mountaineering club	swurmser@college.harvard.edu	(862) 220-3908
Conlan Olson	Mens lightweight rowing, Climbing Club, Gender Inclusivity in Mathematics	conlan_olson@college.harvard.edu	(612) 353-7144
Rebecca Cadenhead	The Crimson, The Advocate, some IOP stuff	rebeccacadenhead@college.harvard.edu	(914) 400-8111
Nina Pasquini	Fifteen Minutes (The Crimson's magazine), PBHA's Chinatown Afterschool Program	npasquini@college.harvard.edu	(845) 467-3848
Cooper Tretter	a cappella, ROTC (1 year lol), Harvard Undergraduate BGLTQ Business Society (also only 1 year lol), HEB research, HSA bartending	coopertretter@college.harvard.edu	(814) 254-6042
Morgan Whitten	HOC (Harvard Outing Club), WHRB (Harvard Radio Broadcasting), HOPE (Harvard Organization for Prison Education and Advocacy), Resource Efficiency Program, Harvard Sailing Club	morganwhitten@college.harvard.edu	
Becca Buehler	Harvard International Review Harvard CIVICS Program	beccabuehler@college.harvard.edu	(413) 923-7760
Gabby Schultz	Harvard World Model United Nations, HNMUN, HNMUN - LA, HMUN, HMUN India; Harvard Undergraduate Political Consulting; Harvard Outing Club	gschultz@college.harvard.edu	(989) 619-4359
Maya AlMoussa	Ultimate Frisbee, Harvard UNICEF, Harvard HARTZ/PBHA	malmoussa@college.harvard.edu	(412) 953-4737
Ellie Eisenberg	FOP!, Harvard Outing Club, Network of Enlightened Women, PreVet stuff (work at vet and volunteer at zoo), RSOs, Hillel	ellaeisenberg@college.harvard.edu	(516) 426-8803
Matthew Mardo	PAF, FOP, Club Soccer, TEDxHarvardCollege, MEDLIFE, The Harvard Crimson, Expressions Dance Co., Harvard MEDLIFE, PBHA ExperiMentors	mmardo@college.harvard.edu	



Piroz Bahar	Club Soccer		
Ella Frigyik	Harvard African Students Association		

[List of active clubs for 2021](#)

Pre-Professional

There are a few pre professional clubs that you may have heard of. Some of the most common ones are Women in Computer Science, HFAC, HCCG, CBE, HSA, Harvard Premed Society, Women in Business. The great news is that there are very many clubs other than the main ones that can expose you to whatever professional field you may be interested in. Pre-professional groups are a good way to learn about different professions and meet people who may be a couple of years older than you that can help you through the various recruiting processes for different professions. Ultimately, those connections you might make with upperclassmen can be the most important part of joining these clubs. The various work you'll do at HCCG or HFAC and what will be interesting and may give you a sense of what doing consulting or finance might look like. However, the exposure you might get to the material is only one part of the experience. Talking to people who have gone through these steps before you is a really important part of joining these clubs and an important part of being at Harvard in general!

Sports

Club sports typically have tryouts in the fall and will be at the annual club fair explaining their tryout dates and the format. There is pretty much a club sport for any sport people want to do (running, field hockey, lacrosse, cycling, etc.) and even some you may never have heard of! If you don't make a team that has tryouts, don't worry. There are plenty of other ways to play sports such as intramurals! There are also plenty of club sports like club running or club futsal that are open to everyone and no tryouts. Club sports are a great way to make friends and have a social life throughout college. Many of the clubs are incredibly close groups of people which can mean a lot as you transition to college.



MENTAL HEALTH

Peer support groups

[Room 13](#)

From 7pm to 7am, Room 13 is staffed by two undergraduate students nightly during the school year. We take people and their concerns seriously; we will listen and respond non-judgmentally. When you call or drop by, no one will pressure you to talk about anything you don't want to.

[Student Mental Health Liaisons \(SMHL\)](#)

SMHLs are student leaders who work collaboratively with the Wellness Proctors/Tutors, and other student groups to promote a supportive student community at Harvard.

[Eating Concerns Hotline and Outreach \(ECHO\)](#)

ECHO provides a confidential, non-judgmental, non-directive space for undergraduate students to receive support about any concern. ECHO counselors have specialized training to address concerns about exercising, body image, food, eating, eating disorders.

[INDIGO](#)

Peer counseling focused on how your race, class, citizenship status, sexuality, and any other identity affects your mental health.

[Contact](#)

Contact is peer counseling that strives to create a supportive space for Harvard undergraduates to talk about feelings and experiences around mental health and Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual (BGLTQIA+) identities.

[RESPONSE](#)

RESPONSE is a group of undergraduates professionally trained to provide peer counseling on issues of rape, abuse, intimate violence, psychological and physical harassment, and relationships.

CAMHS

[Counseling and Mental Health Services](#) at Harvard, a clinical mental health service. All counseling is occurring over Zoom at the moment. You can make an appointment for an initial



consult either in person or by phone through the [patient portal](#). You can always call 617-495-5711 to reach Urgent Care and ask to speak to the mental health clinician on call.

Finding a therapist

If you're working through CAMHS, they'll match you with a clinician, [here's a list](#) of clinicians currently practicing at CAMHS. CAMHS might also refer you to a clinician in the community, which means an outside clinician usually in the greater Boston or Cambridge area. In light of the ongoing pandemic, CAMHS might be able to work with you to find a telecounseling service closer to your time zone.

Self-care strategies

Different things work for different people! A therapist can also suggest strategies and work with you to figure out what your preferences are. The great thing about self-care is that it builds your toolkit to be able to handle stress in your life. Here's a very general, by no means definitive list of possible strategies, but it's important to do something that feels good for you:

- Relaxation exercises (meditation, deep breathing, etc.). There are plenty of guided meditations or mindfulness practices available for free on YouTube/online in general
- Journaling
- Creative outlets (drawing, singing, dancing, etc.)
- Movement in whatever form feels good for you!
- Taking regular breaks
- Calling a loved one
- Spending time in safe/comfortable locations
- Nothing at all! Some unstructured time for you to do whatever you want (nap, go on your phone, stare blankly at the wall) and *here's the important part* not feel guilty about it!



HARVARD PROGRAMS

Study Abroad- Semester

Harvard offers many opportunities for international study, including semester long exchange programs in foreign countries. Some programs and countries require language skills, others are meant to teach you a foreign language, and some have no language requirement at all. The best place to find information about semester long study abroad programs is Harvard's Office of International Education (<https://oie.fas.harvard.edu/>). The OIE also has peer advisors, which are students who have studied abroad either over the summer or during the semester. OIE peer advisors are fantastic resources as they are generally experts in their program (application processes, etc.) However, the study abroad application is due months (or a year, in some cases) in advance, so make sure you keep an eye on those deadlines. I studied abroad during my junior spring and I would be happy to talk to any FOPpers with questions- gschultz@college.harvard.edu or 9896194359.

Research

A great place to start if you're interested in pursuing research in college is the **Office for Undergraduate Research & Fellowships (URAF)**. Whether on-campus, at-home, or internationally, there are programs and funding opportunities available for whatever you're looking for. The world of research can be a confusing one to navigate, but I'd recommend *talking to your academic advisor, and reaching out to professors whose work you're interested in*. Always worth going through faculty directories in Harvard departments you think are cool and sending out some emails :)

The general flow is:

1. Find something you think is cool
2. Find someone who is doing that cool work (professor, post-doc at a lab, principal investigator (PI) = head lab honcho, etc.)
3. Email that person and the lab PI!
4. Hear back and set up a potential research project (this step can take a couple emails and convos to accomplish. It's normal to not hear back from some labs.)
5. Find some funding!!
6. Apply to grants/fellowship/program
7. **Do the work!**

Once you've got a lab you're interested in doing some work with, you'll probably want some form of \$\$\$\$. For funding apps, go to the **Centralized Application for Research and Travel**



([CARAT](#)). Apart from applying to grant applications, there are TONS of research programs offered through Harvard. Some of the most commonly referred to are:

- *Summer Humanities and Arts Research Program (SHARP)*
 - summer program at Harvard.
- *Program for Research in Science and Engineering (PRISE)*
 - summer program at Harvard.
- *Harvard College Research Program (HCRP)*
 - any term and/or summer program at Harvard.
- *Summer Undergraduate Research Fund (SURF) from Harvard University Center for the Environment (HUCE)*
 - summer program, offers funding for independent/faculty projects OR can also pair you with a Harvard faculty/lab for a project

There are also a bunch of [fellowship](#) opportunities which can potentially involve studying with institutions other than Harvard in countries outside of the U.S..

I've been involved in research since my freshman summer, and conduct independent off-campus research at the Broad & JAX Labs. If I can answer any questions, drop me a line at nfuentes@college.harvard.edu (Natalia Fuentes).



CAREER

OCS

OCS is a great resource for a variety of reasons. You can set up 1 on 1 meetings or go into drop in hours, and it's more and more helpful as you get older and have a better sense of what you want to do. OCS will not be able to get you a job, but they will provide you with the tools/resources/exposure you need to move forward with and go after the jobs of your choice.

FINANCIAL AID

- Resources from PRIMUS, the first-gen students advocacy group on campus: [here](#) (old-ish but still relevant)
- New PRIMUS website: [here](#)
- PRIMUS resources specifically for fall 2020: [here](#)

Work Study

<https://seo.harvard.edu/federal-work-study-program>

Campus jobs

See this database for job listings: <https://seo-harvard-csm.symplicity.com>

- Course assistants and teaching fellows:
 - More common as you are in higher years but you can definitely CA/TF as early as sophomore fall
 - Applications are department-specific
 - Pay is generally \$18-19/hour