How to handle your fifth year like a total champ

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One year ago, I was faced with the daunting realization that rather than graduate, I would be at university for a fifth year. Whether you failed classes, took a reduced course load or change your program more often than apple releases new iPads, many of you will find yourself in the same position now. Well, don't worry. I'm here to help you avoid eight months that could be the going to great time of your life.

First up, you've got to spin it right. Don't call it your fifth year, call it your "victory lap." You've been through the academic cycle four times now and you've seen a seasoned veteran. This one's just for fun. Don't spend the summer beating yourself up about getting your life on hold for another year of academics. Instead, get yourself a sweet summer job and just get flat-out pumped. For the last time in your life, you have a summer to enjoy. Make the most of them.

When you arrive in September, don't forget about all the extra-curricular activities you finally have time for. Hit up the big gardens and get your mysterious fifth-year-siren firmly established among those you batch with. But you have to walk that fine line between cool, and being a loser or just creepy. For that, you'll need a cover story. I used the "I work for the paper," excuse, but you'll need something different. Say you took a semester off to build houses for starving orphans in Vietnam, or something. If it sounds legit, nobody's going to check up on you.

But the premise for your continued presence is only the start. A good story will get you points right away but you have to sustain it. The most important thing here is you have to make it look easy. Nobody's going to be impressed if you're struggling right along. In fact, they'll think less of you because it implies you struggled for the previous four years. You have to sell every deadline without extensions, you have to contribute to seminars like you actually read the material and you can never, ever complain about the difficulty of the work.

Luckily, as long as you didn't screw up catastrophically, you shouldn't have more than two or three classes per semester. If you're really lucky you still have 200-level options left, classes you barely have to attend. Get yourself a beer at Davey's, show up bruised, dominate discussion and go straight back to the bar. You won't even break a sweat. If anyone notices you're a little slumpy, they're just going to think you're bad ass, and that's fine. And if you're just cropping up those first-year courses you didn't have time for the first time around — looking at you, Rick Santorum — maybe just stay in the bar. There ain't shit you don't already know about rocks that that course will teach you. "Geology" means a volcano made it done.

Let's say you are an academic disaster, and you're knee deep in 300 and 400-level courses. You're actually going to have to work at it, and it's going to be a full-time job not to look like a failure. You need to spend every waking moment on your study habits, while spending at least two evenings per week at parties. But instead of drinking for real, get yourself a hick flip and fill it with water. Now you can reject offers of beer by explaining you're sipping on your own home-brewed whisky while you can't possibly share because it's a work-in-progress and you cannot rush an artist — only furthering your aloof and unusual persona in the process. Then, hurry home and get back to the books. Don't worry about staying up really late, because you can blame sleeping until noon the next day on your already wicked hangover.

If you manage your fifth year well, you'll come out of it loved and respected, rather than a broken, shrunken husk of a student.

I believe in you, kid.

Get something that you need to get off your mind! Either email us at threeforfree@gateway.athabasca.ca, tweet threeforfree, or message us at www.thegatewayonline.ca/threeforfree

Person who does not recommend the 200-level class: it would help if you name the class you know.
To the gent who turned in my watch at Phys. Ed: I HAVE YOU, FAITHFUL IN HUMANITY RESTORED! It wasn't about the value, but who it gave to me. May some good Karma come your way.
If you gonna eat at a computer - ok but try be neat and don't leave tornaisae on the keyboard.
Gross.
I call to register for a business ethics class. There's only one. Fall semester. Mondays at 6:30pm. Financial meltdown near here we come.
Feed places in CUB: quit burning things! It's going to cause all cancer, and makes the whole place stink.
door-doodle-doo doo

The sinners are less offensive to most, than the stalkers, and peanut butter lovers.
I'm organizing a wet riot. Only those with useful degrees, or personalities for success are welcome to attend. They call me a "gaggio" like you call a gargoyle, or a write-in refering to thickness/diameter. Did you mean "gaggoed?" Get your own terminology right if you're going to complain.
I had ore on every square inch of campus, walls included.
Wear the same shirt for a week and a half. You people start to notice.
To the couple making out every day in CAB: You're disgusting a large number of people, stop doing that.
Historic event: All of my classes, on time Congrats, ETS.

Santorum gives an apocalyptic view of the future through a viral video called "Obamaville." Rick Santorum: Prophet? Or Ass of the Week?