

Top Ten Tips for New Faculty at U of T

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1. The buddy system worked in kindergarten. It works here too. Find a buddy or buddies with whom to commiserate, be confused, and share the ups and downs of your first year here. Being lost alone is simply being lost. Being lost with a friend is an adventure.
2. Be organized. Use a personal planner such as a Palm Pilot, MS-Outlook or even an old fashioned diary. U of T is a busy place and keeping on top of all your appointments and responsibilities will make it seem less overwhelming.
3. Get to know your students. Invite them to your office hours. Have lunch with them. Arrange a field trip. We have amazing students here at U of T and your interactions with them can be some of the most rewarding experiences you'll have.
4. Exercise. It will give you energy, keep you healthy, and give you a break from sitting at a computer all day.
5. Volunteer. Find a cause you're passionate about and give freely of your time, knowledge and energy. This may be working with sick children at a hospital, coaching a hockey team, being involved with your local church, mosque, temple, synagogue or other place of worship, or helping an international development agency.
6. You're good – become better. Attending sessions offered by the Office of Teaching Advancement, the Resource Centre on Academic Technology, the Library and other organizations within the U of T is fun, puts you in touch with other motivated faculty members, and is a great way to improve your own skills.
7. Set aside time for research and writing. It's so easy to get caught up in the whirlwind of responding to e-mails, attending meetings, and teaching classes that often research is left on the back burner. Consciously zone off a time or times during the week during which you will do nothing but attend to your own research and writing.
8. Throw away your TV set...or at least turn it off more often. Rather than becoming a couch potato, go dancing, sing at a karaoke bar, play hockey, go out for a coffee with friends, read a novel, or sit and meditate quietly for a bit.
9. Consider buying a place rather than renting. If you plan on being here long term, buying offers many financial advantages, not to mention the feeling of stability that it gives you.
10. Take time to think about life. Throughout history, thoughtful people have wondered about the meaning of life. Undertaking a personal search for answers could be the most important thing you ever do.



Dr. Shafique N. Virani is a scholar of Islamic Studies who joined the University of Toronto in the academic year 2006-2007. He was previously on the faculty of Harvard University and was later the Head of World Humanities at Zayed University in the United Arab Emirates. He holds a BA and MA from McGill and an AM and PhD from Harvard. His most recent publication is through Oxford University Press and is entitled *The Ismailis in the Middle Ages: A History of Survival, A Search for Salvation*.