

# Everyone Can Have a Successful ILP, IRP, Capstone, or Other Research Paper Experience

These tips are based on experience with thousands of papers written by Cambridge College students. You can succeed, too!

Note: All the tutorials referred to below can be found by going to [www.cambridgecollege.edu/library/](http://www.cambridgecollege.edu/library/), click e-global *Tutorials* on the CCOL HOME page, and select the appropriate tutorial:

## Learn to do research and academic writing:

- Take an online tutorial on writing research. Select the *Research Papers 101* tutorial

## Learn to use the tools for research:

- To learn to use the Cambridge College Online Library, see Quickstart to Library Services on the Research Resources page <http://www.cambridgecollege.edu/library/research.cfm>
- To learn to use an academic library, select *Libraries 101* tutorial.
- Visit a local academic library and take a tour. Call and ask when orientation tours are scheduled
- To choose which local library to use: if you know the specific books or journal articles you need, use the Worldcat database to find which local library has what you want. WorldCat is on the Research Databases page of the Cambridge College Online Library.
- To learn to search the whole internet more effectively, select the tutorial *Internet 101*. Also read an excellent book with a terrible name, *Researching Online for Dummies* by Reva Basch
- If your campus site has an Academic Support Center, get help from tutors. They can help you with all aspects of online and library research as well as writing
- If your campus site does not have writing tutors, your seminar advisor is responsible to help you learn research and library skills

## Set up an organizational system for storing your documents, articles, books, computer files, outlines, plans, and drafts:

- For documents, articles, and books: use project shelves or box, slash file pockets, looseleaf notebook
- For computer files: plan folder names and filenames, keep paper records, keep disk backups, label disks
- For outlines and plans: make an organized looseleaf notebook with slash file pockets as dividers
- For drafts of writing: print filename as header on drafts; print each draft on different colored paper; store in slash file pockets

## Keep to a schedule for getting tasks done:

- List tasks and keep list on disk so you can easily add/delete. Keep updating
- Plan sequence for doing tasks. Recommended sequence:
  - Do Lit Review first and always before doing interviews or surveys.
  - Do Introduction last so that you don't promise more than you can deliver!
- Estimate date for completion of each task. Ask your advisor for major deadlines, then set your own subdeadlines

## Be accountable to someone, such as your instructor, tutor, buddy, or group:

- Find out what support your instructor is willing to give
- If on campus, schedule writing tutor session. Distance students work with advisors
- Find a buddy or writing group for motivation, support, feedback, resources

## Learn the required format of the paper:

- For ILP or IRP, get the appropriate manual or other instructions from your prosem advisor or department office.
- The M.Ed. ILP Manual, which may be helpful for other programs, is near the bottom of the Research Resources page <http://www.cambridgecollege.edu/library/research.cfm>

- For Capstone or Research Paper, ask your instructor

**Choose an appropriate researchable topic for your paper:**

- Make sure it is relevant to your degree program
- Do research to make sure there are sufficient credible documents to both support and challenge your thesis statement.
- Ask your advisor how many articles, books, and documents you will need to cite

**Construct a working thesis statement to help you research and organize:**

- Brainstorm about your topic:
  - What opinion do you hold about the topic?
  - What do you want to persuade your reader to believe?
  - What are at least three best reasons why the reader should agree with your opinion? Or, what are at least three main points you want to make about the topic?
- Construct a thesis statement that has a topic, your opinion on that topic, and three best reasons or main points you want to make. For example,
  - If your topic is decreasing school violence
  - If your opinion is that only some anti-violence programs can work
  - If you believe the best anti-violence programs respect the students' privacy; teach students to value non-violent solutions, and stress improving students' negotiation skills, then your thesis might be:

*“An effective school anti-violence program must respect students' privacy, teach students to value non-violent solutions, and stress improving students' negotiation skills.”*

- Turn your thesis statement into a set of research questions. For example, research
  - Which anti-violence programs don't invade students' privacy?
  - How can students be taught to value non-violent solutions?
  - How can students be taught better negotiation skills?
- Use the research questions to guide and limit your research. Use them to organize your writing. Each might become a chapter or section of your paper.

**Make sure your plans are acceptable to your instructor or advisor by submitting a proposal that demonstrates that:**

- your topic is relevant
- your topic is researchable (provide an annotated bibliography)
- your goal is clear (provide a thesis statement)
- you have a plan for research such as reading, interviews, survey, case study
- your paper will be organized (provide a preliminary outline)
- you can do it in the time available (provide a task timeline)

Ask your instructor for their recommended format for proposals.