

SURVIVING AN HONORS THESIS...

Suggestions from the University Writing Center

⇒ Scheduling

- At the beginning of your project, find out the schedules of EVERYONE on your committee (especially your advisor). Knowing what faculty have planned for that semester will allow you to plan your own work and deadlines. Some questions to ask...
 - Will the faculty member be on campus for the entire semester (and possibly the semester after in case the project is postponed)?
 - Does the faculty member have any professional meetings or conferences that will affect various deadlines—especially the final due date and defense?
 - Does the faculty member have any other MAJOR commitments (teaching more than a few classes? serving on other thesis committees? finishing their own major publication?) that will conflict with their availability to work with you?
 - What general schedule does your advisor usually use or imagine using for your project? (For example, you might think weekly meetings are necessary, but she might only be willing to meet monthly. Sorting out expectations early is critical to the success of your project.)
 - What is the faculty member's preferred style of working with an honors student? Is that style compatible with your needs? (*Editor? Micro-manager? Hands-off? Mentor? "Show it to me when you have an entire draft?" "Everyone on the committee has to see every chapter?" "Give me 5 pages every week?"*)
- Develop a plan for completing the work. Set aside specific hours each week when you do nothing other than work on your thesis. (*We'll be happy to help you setup a schedule that is realistic and includes all the steps you'll need to produce a polished product on time!*)



⇒ Pre-writing

- Take time to review several recent theses in your discipline. (All undergraduate theses are shelved in Belk Library, and you can search for them in the online catalog like any other book.)
- A narrow topic is a good topic: a good topic is doable. If you try to answer all of the world's questions in one thesis, then you will probably end up NOT answering any of them thoroughly or convincingly.



⇒ Drafting and Revising

- Completing a thesis is a process—not a sudden burst of inspiration or something you can pull-off in an all-nighter. You will need to write several drafts in order to complete a quality thesis (even if you have never drafted before).
- No one else will complete the process for you: only you will write the thesis.
- Make sure that you select a topic that you can commit to for months.
- As you research and write, constantly ask yourself, "WHAT QUESTION AM I TRYING TO ANSWER?"
- Find an attentive and willing reader (other than your advisor) who you can share your writing with throughout the process. In addition, you should get an entirely NEW reader to help with your final proofreading; someone who has never read the thesis will often be able to spot those pesky lingering errors!

