

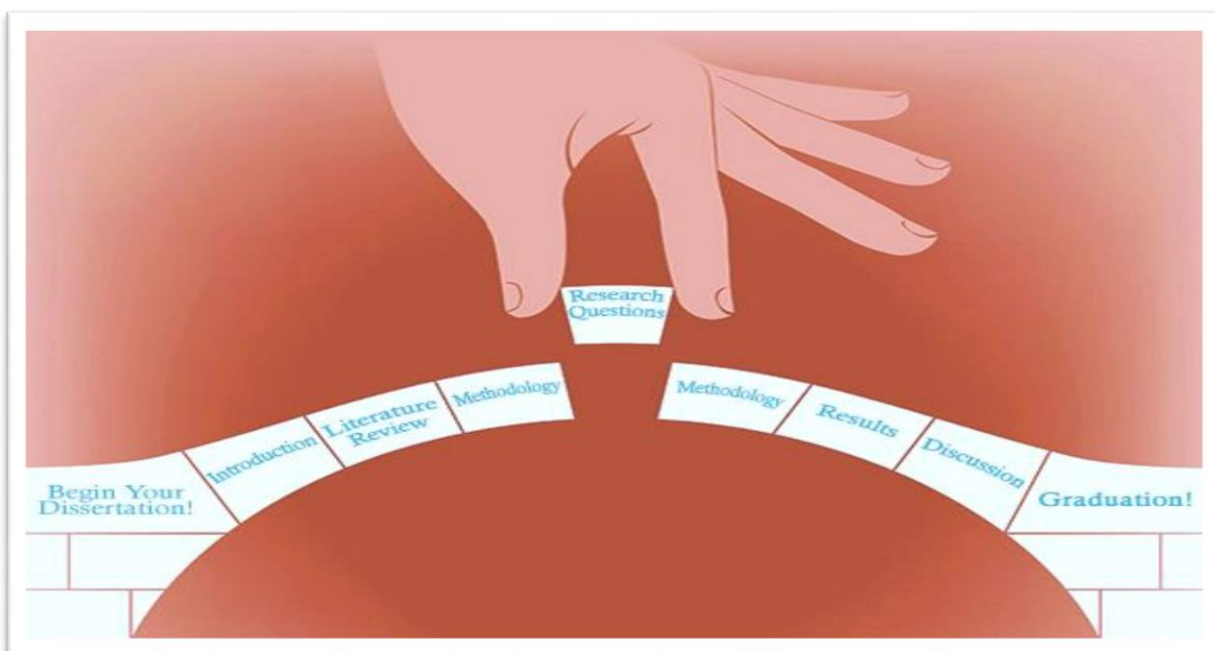
7 SECRETS TO COMPLETING A DISSERTATION IN ONE YEAR

Based on Dr. Lani's 21 years of dissertation consulting, these 7 secrets are your key to expediting your graduation time and moving on to your best life.

By Dr. James Lani

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In the picture below you'll see a bridge. This is not a normal bridge; this bridge represents your dissertation, and like all bridges, it's built around the keystone. The keystone of your dissertation bridge is your research questions, then you pendulum to each side of the research questions to flesh out the methodology, then to the literature review, then to the results, then ultimately off to graduation. Expect this back and forth—you'll build the bridge and you'll get to where you're going.



Secret 1. Start with the research questions and hypotheses. Research questions are the keystone and establish the whole project. They set-up your methodological approach, theoretical constructs, participants and sampling frame, and data collection procedures. The research questions take either a quantitative form (i.e., questions written in statistical language) or a qualitative form (i.e., phenomenological study revealing human experience, grounded theory seeking to build a theory, or case study).

Secret 2. *The methodology is the blueprint of the dissertation bridge.* I've heard the typical sequence for decades: Introduction, then literature, then methodology, right? Wrong. The methodology *is* your project. Gather all of the plans for your study, then imagine you can give your methods chapter to your next door neighbor who knows nothing about your research; can they now replicate your study? All science is based on the ability to replicate findings, and a clear methods chapter is the instruction manual for others to replicate your study. Develop the participants, instruments, and procedures sections--if you don't have these, you don't have a study.

Secret 3. *Consider participant recruitment and data collection very early on.* What are the potential implications (read "roadblocks") when submitting your proposal to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) if you are planning to interview vulnerable participants? Do you think they may be cautious in approving your application? Of course they will! As an institution they are opening themselves up to potential liability.

An idea to consider is working backwards from the data. What data can you secure (data from where you work or other secondary data)? Then seek to develop your research questions from that data.

You need to be aware of the common denominator in your data. For example, a recent student-researcher stated that she wanted to examine five teachers' leadership style on 150 students' achievement scores. Guess what her sample size is? Yep, its 5, and there is little you can statistically do with just 5 observations.

Secret 4. *Finding a good reference librarian is worth its weight in gold.* Find a reference librarian to identify relevant articles and learn how to read peer-reviewed articles for literature review (this is a helpful webinar on [how to search](#)) and examine them closely for possible methodological approaches and research questions.

Secret 5. *Hire a statistician, qualitative researcher, and APA editor.* The fact is we've been through the process a thousand times. Student's time is better spent on thinking through the implications of their findings rather than working through the nuances of statistical analyses to generate accurate results. We know which

assumptions can be violated while retaining trustworthy results. Also, Statistics Solutions Pro software is available to knock out the stats in 15 minutes (go here for a [free trial](#)).

Secret 6. *Plan appropriately.* Expect revisions from your chair, readers, and the IRB, and plan for them. For example, my advisor put a 3x-4x multiplier on the original timeline to complete a research project.

Secret 7. *Relax.* I know it's a challenging time during this process, but to be creative and to think well, you need to stay calm. It helps to maintain a strong vision of you completing your dissertation. Stay in balance in your life, and keep your attitude positive.

The Statistics Solutions Difference

Statistics Solutions has been providing dissertation services for 21 years. We have an experienced staff of literature review specialists, methodologists, and quantitative and qualitative analysts ready to serve you. Our work is peer reviewed and our company holds an A rating with the Better Business Bureau.

We have assisted over 5,000 graduate students in graduating, and we look forward to the opportunity to work with you to expedite your research.