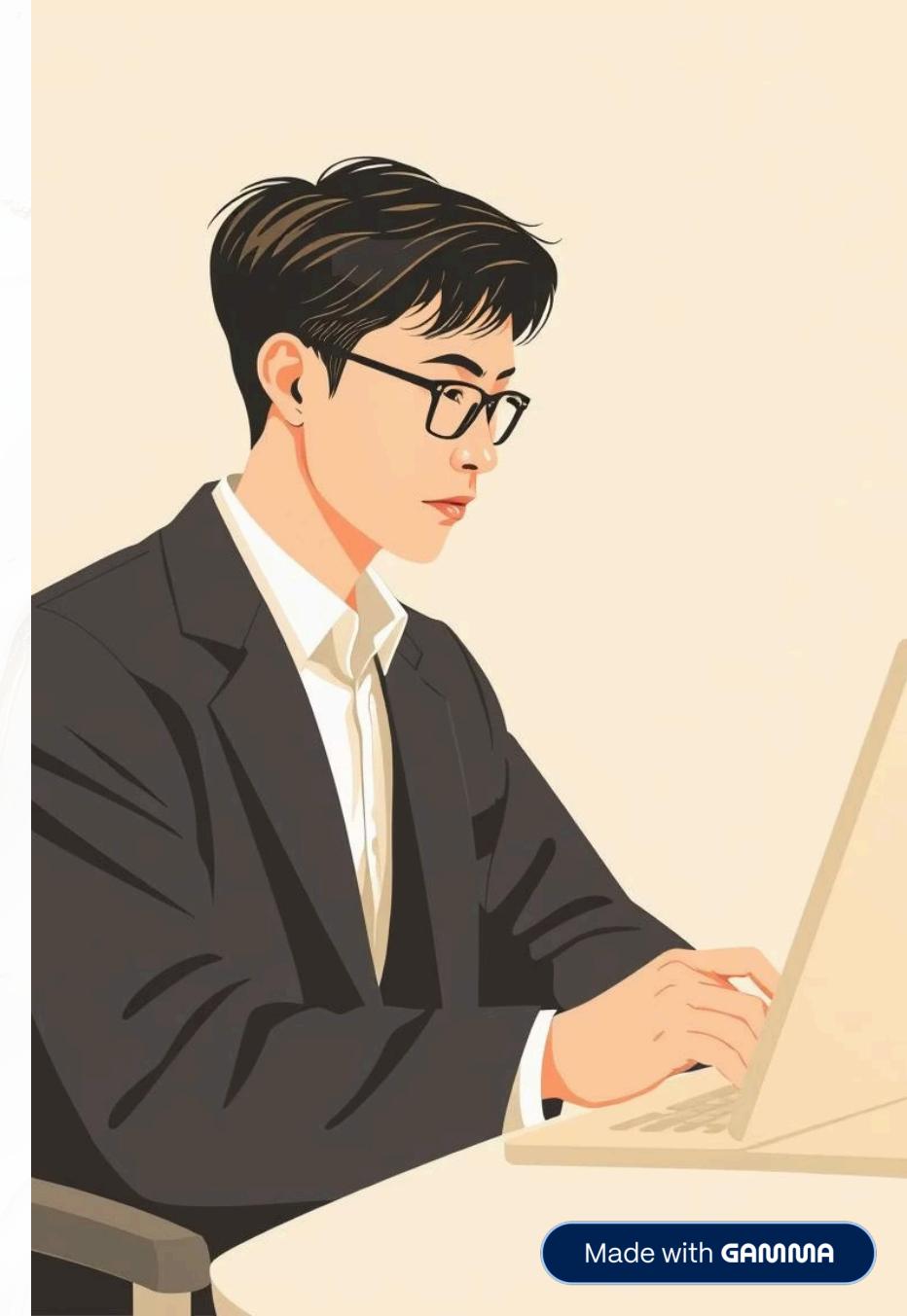


Flow of the Project: Your Playbook for the 11-785 Final Project

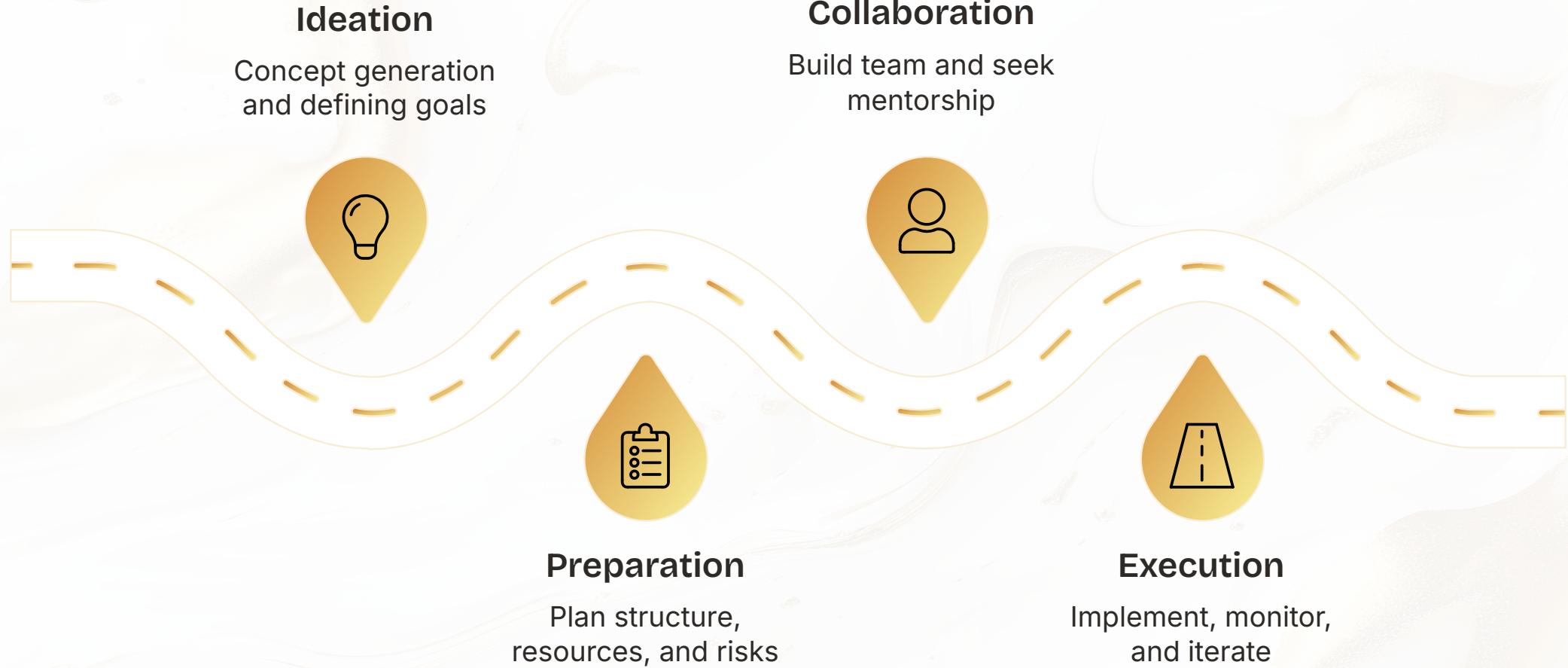
This guide provides a comprehensive framework for structuring, executing, and excelling in your Intro to Deep Learning course project.

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11-785 Intro to Deep Learning | Spring 2026



Execution Makes the Difference



Why This Matters: The Project is 25% of Your Grade

Your course project represents a significant component of your overall grade as graduate students. Understanding the breakdown is crucial for strategic planning:

 **Final Project Report: 40%**

 **Project Video: 35%**

 **Midterm Report: 20%**

 **Piazza Responses: 5%**



PHASE 1

Laying the Foundation

The choices you make in the initial weeks will profoundly influence the next three months of your project. Before you even write a single line of code, establish a robust foundation built upon three critical pillars:



Topic

Choose a problem that genuinely excites you and aligns with your interests.



Team

Assemble a dedicated and collaborative group committed to shared success.



Mentor

Seek guidance from an experienced individual who can provide valuable insights.



The Three Pillars of Success

TOPIC: Passion Fuels Perseverance

Focus on problems that genuinely excite you, offer potential for impact (publication or product), and align with current trends in top conferences like NeurIPS and ACL.

TEAM: Collaborative Commitment

Remember, "Bad teams kill more projects than bad ideas ever will." Non-negotiables include shared commitment, transparent reporting of blockers, and mandatory weekly check-ins.

MENTOR: Alignment and Availability

Alignment and availability are paramount. Ensure your mentor works in your field, has dedicated time to guide you, and approach them early with a specific idea.

The Execution Engine

This phase focuses on a structured, repeatable workflow to transform your raw idea into a polished output. Maintain continuous feedback with your mentor throughout.

- 1 Inspiration**
Identify a compelling problem.
- 2 Exploration**
Dive deep into existing literature.
- 3 Formulation**
Clearly define project scope.
- 4 Execution**
Implement your proposed solution.
- 5 Iteration**
Debug, pivot, and refine.
- 6 Output**
Deliver a paper, demo, or tool.

Connecting Your Work to Your Grade

Project deliverables serve as crucial milestones, marking your progress through the workflow and contributing directly to your final evaluation.

Project Proposal

Detail your topic, conduct a literature review, outline your baseline model, and clearly define team roles.
(Strict 2-page limit).

Final Report

A comprehensive document including an executive abstract, structured academic sections, and key visuals. (40% of grade)

Midterm Report

Present an enhanced literature review, showcase your implemented baseline with initial results, and outline individual contributions for accountability.

Final Video

A concise 5-minute video detailing your problem, implementation, comparison, and results. (35% of grade)

Run Your Project Like a Startup

"We'll all do everything together" is a surefire recipe for slow-motion failure. Embrace the startup playbook for efficiency and success:

1

Assign Clear Roles

Decide who leads, writes, and codes. Own your tasks and responsibilities.

2

Start Building Early

The sooner you begin, the faster you can identify challenges and learn from them.

3

Set Internal Deadlines

Prevent last-minute panic by establishing mini-deadlines throughout the project lifecycle.

4

Stay Organized

Utilize a single, consistent workspace or platform for all project-related materials.

5

Over-communicate

Silence often leads to more problems than open disagreement. Keep communication channels active.

Finishing Strong – Delivery and Dissemination

Transform your hard work into a compelling narrative with these four key principles:

- **Clarity**

Your writing must be easy to understand and follow.

- **Relevance**

Focus directly on your topic with strong supporting evidence.

- **Brevity**

Be concise; avoid unnecessary details or verbose explanations.

- **Accuracy**

Ensure all data, analysis, and formatting (e.g., IEEE) are correct and consistent.





Your Project is Your Story: Make it Worth Telling

Treat your project with the seriousness of a real product launch. Plan and execute relentlessly, building upon your strong foundation of topic, team, and mentor. Communicate effectively and take full ownership of your role —no one is coming to rescue you. This is your unique story; execute it well and share it with pride.