



# The Research Paper ToolBox

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# Project Development

- Initial Idea
  - supports major steps in creating a research paper
  - not a composition course
- Target Audience: TCID/IARCH/TECH grad students
  - customized for audience needs
  - program specific details





# Course Design

- Course Structure
  - open structure
  - recommended linear approach for beginners
  - usable as reference for advanced users
- Lesson Selection
  - methods and software tools
  - support major steps within process
- Lesson Structure
  - step-by-step
  - performance measurement





## Visual Design

- Visual identity
  - Tool icons
  - Color scheme
- Consistency
  - Header
  - Borders
  - Text
- Readability
  - Clean
  - Simple

The Research Paper  
**ToolBox**

Home Topic Research Data References Style Layout Modality Professionalization

### Research Paper Toolbox

Constructing a research paper is an integral part of being a graduate student in the Information Architecture, Technical Communication and Information Design, and Technical Communication programs at IIT. There is no right or wrong way to put a paper together, but there are a wealth of tools available to make the process efficient and manageable. In this course, you will find an explanation of the basic steps involved in writing a research paper, as well as a selection of tools that complement certain steps. If you are new to writing research papers, this course will guide you through each of the basic steps; even if you are an experienced writer, you can still refresh your knowledge with one or more lessons. To begin, choose a lesson by clicking one of the icons below. If you aren't sure where to start or in what order to complete the lessons, use the "Start-to-finish guide" by clicking the link at the bottom of the page.

[Choose a research topic](#)



[Perform realistic research](#)



[Format research data](#)



[Manage references](#)







[Use a styleguide](#)



[Lay out your paper](#)



[Change your paper's modality](#)



[Apply to professional journals](#)

Click any icon to start a lesson.





# Lesson 1: Finding a Topic

- Guides students through entire process of finding a topic:
  - Exploring interests
  - Finding a gap in literature
  - Developing a claim
- Flexible sequencing caters to varying experience levels
- Scenarios/examples provided throughout illustrate real-world applications
- Brief quiz reinforces content retention





## Lesson 2: Performing Research

- Guides student through the process of accessing research resources
- Running case study that mimics a real-life research scenario
- Occasional "Being Realistic" pointers to highlight important considerations
- Quiz that asks students to apply knowledge from the lesson to a research scenario





## Lesson 3: Formatting Research Data

- Gives students the tools (software, resources), knowledge, and confidence to analyze quantitative data
- Three-section structure emphasizes simplicity
- Prompts students to follow along using dummy dataset (self-assessment)
- Step-by-step procedure interweaves with explanation





## **Lesson 4: Managing References**

- Gives students a foundation on the importance of managing their references.
- Presents students with a useful tool, Zotero, to help them to manage their references.
- Guides students through step-by-step procedures on how to use the Zotero software.
- Provides an exercise at the end to test students' knowledge on how to use Zotero to manage their references.







## **Lesson 5: Using a Style Guide**

- Describes what kind of information can be found in a style guide, how to access CMS and APA, and how to use a style guide.
- Outlines the top five TC journals and the author guidelines they require for submission.
- Gives instructions on how to document sources in and out of text, followed by a short task testing their knowledge.
- Combines guided discovery (step-by-step instruction) with free exploratory discovery (links provided for student to explore further information).





## Lesson 6: Laying out your paper

- Introduces students to document markup language LaTeX
- Discusses advantages/disadvantages in comparison with a word processor
- Explains basic functionalities and command structure
- Step-by-step guide to layout, formatting and citing
- Provides exercises with sample solutions
- Enables students to explore more complex LaTeX functionalities





## Lesson 7: Changing Modality

- Exposes student to various forms of research paper modality: Conference presentations, take-away sheets, podcasts, websites, poster presentations, and course materials
- Provides specific how-to and step-by-step info where possible/relevant
- Detailed intro to introduce students to the key principles of modality
- Mid-lesson performance measurement activity





## **Lesson 8: Applying to Professional Journals**

- Explanation of why professional development is important
- Resources for use in self-evaluation exercise and as a reference
  - List of major conferences
  - List of major journals
- Emphasis on time management considerations
- Exercise that guides students in taking first steps toward professional development activities





# Evaluation

- Works both as self-guided and instructor-led course
- Conducted thorough needs assessment
- Each lesson begins with clearly-stated performance objectives and overview of subject matter
- Opportunities for the student to try out what they have learned
  - In-lesson instructions
  - Post- or mid-lesson performance measurement





# Evaluation

- Feedback provided through descriptions of successfully completed performance measurement, or quiz answers
- Instructor's guide provides additional material
- Room for improvement: More accessible instructor materials, increased cohesiveness

