

Virtual Defense: Top 5 Online Thesis Defense Tips

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A Master's or Ph.D. research defense is that momentous event you have been waiting for! It is that day when you want to proudly demonstrate your passion for research to everyone who have been a part of this long journey. It's your chance of fulfilling your dream and acquiring the degree you have worked ceaselessly for. While researchers until now were well versed with defending their thesis in person, the standstill brought by the pandemic has made us adapt newer methods to keep our work going. With advances in the technological field, it has now become easier for researchers around the globe to defend their thesis virtually.

Top 5 Tips for Effective Online Thesis Defense

Your supervisors, mentors, and colleagues are eager to hear the principle applications and significant implications of your research. Defending your thesis right from the comfort of a living room was not something researchers had ever envisioned! Several institutes have updated their procedures and examination policies to support virtual defenses. It is important that you carefully read and understand the structure, protocol, and requirements well in advance to help you plan your thesis defense skillfully. Here we present top 5 tips for effective thesis defense remotely.

1. Perfect Your Pre-Defense Preparation

- Universities and institutes have [revamped their thesis submission and defense protocols](#) to better suit remote requirements.
- Talk to your faculty administration department and the dissertation committee chair to decide the conferencing platform and how to structure the open research defense.
- Test your system prior to the actual defense from the same location you plan to use on D-day! Learn how to switch or share screens, control your microphones and camera, how to allow questions following your presentation, etc.
- Contact your university's technical and IT support team for tips to enhance the technological experience.
- Share your final presentation file with the committee a few hours before the thesis defense. This way you could get to correct some typos before presenting it during the defense.

2. It is All About the Research Defense Setup

- Ensure you set up your system in a quiet and well-lit room. It is always advisable to have a light source behind your camera, or to your side.
- Remember that it's a professional set-up. Dress formally and avoid over accessorizing.
- Sit against a plain, light-colored wall. Ensure there is no distracting artwork or bright windows in the background. You may also make use of blur-out or a subtle virtual background provided by the platform you are using. Test this in advance to check if it looks good.
- Create two rooms- a main room for public interaction and presentation, and a breakout room for private discussions with the dissertation committee or your supervisor.
- Presenting your work through a webcam is indeed different than [in-person presentation](#). Therefore, position your system and webcam to eye level ensuring a better face-to-face contact.
- It becomes easier to point out things on slides while presenting in person. However, it could not be done that remotely. Instead add subtle animations and highlight pointers on your slides that you want to emphasize on while defending your thesis.

3. Practice, Practice and Practice!

- Practice your talk with your colleagues, in-house mentors and supervisors. Their feedback will be instrumental in adjusting the pace of your presentation. You can also take advice from people who have previously defended their thesis using this mode. Furthermore, presenting your work to friends from other fields will help you get diverse perspectives on your work.
- Record your practice sessions to critique your presentation skills and improve based on your performance.
- [Anticipate questions in advance](#) and prepare your answers well. Some very frequently asked questions include:
 - 1) How does your work contribute to broader area of research?
 - 2) Do you plan to advance your current work?
- Read recent papers published by your examiners. Remember that your examiners are leading-experts in your field of research and it is definitely a plus if you let them know how your work can relate or sync with their research goals. For instance, if one of your examiners is developing a novel technique to deliver drugs within the human body, you could suggest some ways in which your research can be aligned with theirs.

4. Begin Your Thesis Defense Early

- Reboot your system, make all the essential updates, turn off applications that might pop-up unexpectedly to ensure a smooth run. Ensure that you have a strong internet connection to support video conferencing.
- Log in to the [video conferencing software](#) at least 20-30 minutes in advance to ensure the technology is working fine for everyone! Talk to your attendees about how you plan to proceed with the defense.
- Request the examination committee members to login 10-15 minutes prior to your actual [research defense](#) time to check for any technical issues on both ends.
- It is recommended that you use two screens to manage your slides and video panel. In case, you cannot have a second screen, check with your committee if you can keep your camera switched off while presenting.

5. Do You Have a Plan B?

- Even the best made plans may go for a toss! Rather than panicking in the moment, it is better to have an alternative technology solution ready if something goes wrong or stops functioning mid-way through your defense.
- Discuss plan B with your supervisor/committee members, mentioning the circumstances under which you may have to implement plan B.
- Keep a backup hardware ready to use in case there are some technical glitches.

Do you remember your first reaction when you learned about having to defend your thesis online? What do you think will be the major challenges? Let us know your thoughts in the comments section below. If you have any questions related to thesis defense, post them [here](#) and our experts will be happy to answer them! You can also visit our [Q&A forum](#) for frequently asked questions related to research writing and publishing answered by our team that comprises subject-matter experts, eminent

researchers, and publication experts.

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