Tips for thesis proposal meeting

While waiting for the committee to read the thesis
• Schedule the meeting and reserve the room, allowing two hours.
• Get the thesis approval form (Master’s topic approval – 6 hrs; follow link from Resources for Current Grad Students page), which you’ll bring to the meeting.
• Start working on an IRB application but don’t submit it until after the committee approves your method at the meeting. Use a template, which your chair can give you.

Outline of a typical proposal meeting
• Student gives a presentation (usually about 20-30 minutes) describing the existing literature, purpose and rationale for current study, and method. Student can ask committee for advice about manipulations, measures, etc.
• Committee members will ask questions during and/or after the presentation.
• Student may be asked to leave the room so that committee members can discuss the proposal privately.
• Committee will either approve the proposal so that the student can begin collecting data or request that the student spend more time developing the proposal.

Preparing for the meeting
• Be prepared to describe the existing literature. Why is this topic important? What do we already know about it? What don’t we know? How do the previous studies form a foundation for yours? Bring copies of previous studies and notes to consult so that you can answer specific questions about them, but it’s best to have a good general understanding so you can avoid wasting time looking up information.
• You must present your research questions/hypotheses in a clear way, but also you must emphasize why they are important.
• Describe your methodology in detail. Who are the subjects and how many will there be? Make sure committee members have copies of your stimuli and DVs. Explain each step of the procedure. Be prepared to explain how you will analyze the data.
• You can present slides during your presentation, but make sure each one adds clarity and has a purpose. Also be aware of the equipment available in the room (e.g., bring handouts rather than PowerPoint if there’s no computer).
• Be prepared to be interrupted with questions during your presentation. This is normal.
• It may help you to know that, from the committee’s point of view, the purpose of the meeting is to be sure that you know what you’re going to do and why.
• Be aware that the committee is usually not trying to be adversarial...part of their job is to help you figure things out, such as how best to measure your DV, manipulate your IV, etc. Let them help you, and ask for their help. Write out any specific questions for them.
• Spend a little time practicing what you’re going to present so you can be smoother and more articulate.

After proposal is approved
• Submit an IRB application asap, but let your chair review it first.
• Submit the thesis approval form to the Graduate School.
• While waiting for IRB approval, use the time to get your materials ready.
• Discuss with your chair which semester(s) you’ll register for THES 698. You need to complete 6 credit hours of it before you graduate. Have your chair give permission.