

GAVIN BROWN

HOW TO GET  
**YOUR PHD**

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*A Handbook  
for the Journey*

OXFORD

## Preface

Wow, doing a PhD is **hard**, isn't it? I assume you're here because you agree, and are finding it tough. I hope I can help. At the time of writing, I've supervised seventeen PhDs, and been an examiner for more than twenty-five others, across the UK, the USA, and Europe. Several of my students have won local, national, and international prizes for their work—but, just like you, they still found the PhD process very tough. This book contains all the useful tips and tricks that I've collected over the years. I say these things to my own students, and I had them said to me. Here's the first thing they get bored of hearing me say:

*If PhDs were easy, everybody would have one.  
But they're not. So, they don't.*

Moral: PhDs are not *meant* to be easy. So, not everybody has one. This seems obvious, but it's difficult to appreciate. I repeat, PhDs are *meant* to be hard—they are the pinnacle of formal education—if it were easy to get a PhD, you'd probably be disappointed. If you're finding it tough, please don't think that's necessarily because of a lack of *intellectual* capacity. A PhD stretches you to your limits—not just *intellectually*, but also **emotionally**. This guide is meant to make you aware of some of the challenges ahead. It's not going to prevent them—there's no magic formula—but it **might** make some less painful when you meet them. Enjoy.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gavin". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style with a long, sweeping tail on the letter 'n'.