

Drafting and Writing The Thesis

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OVERVIEW

- Organizing the thesis
- Producing the complete first draft
- Re-writing the first draft
- A good thesis

Organizing the thesis

“How do you eat an elephant?”

One bite at a time.

Useful: large binder and dividers

Important Components

- Title page
- Abstract
- Acknowledgements
- Table of Contents
- Introduction
- Literature Review
- Methodology chapter
- Results/Findings chapter
- Analysis/Discussion chapter
- Conclusions and recommendations
- References

Introductory Chapter

- Reason for research, overview of contents
- Relevant information:
 - Contextual background
 - Research
 - Problem
 - Rationale

Literature Review

- What has been researched before?
- How will your study fill the current research ‘gap’?
- Why is it necessary to conduct your research?

Methodology Chapter

- How research was done and why you did it
- Factors shaping this chapter:
 - Methodological approach (e.g., feminist, action-oriented, critical, ethnographic, etc.)
 - Type of research (e.g., experimental or non-experimental?)

What readers want to know

- What data did you not collect (type, scope, problems)?
- Why a particular type of data and not others (alternatives, relevance, issues)?
- How was data collected (methods, tools, levels of measurement, sampling procedures)?
- How reliable and valid were the methods used?

- What are the limitations of the data and methods (scope, quantity, depth)?
- What were the techniques used to analyze the data (content, semiology, conversation analysis, etc.)?
- What claims/inferences can be made about the data (generalizations)?

Findings Chapter

- Dependent on nature of your research, may be unnecessary
- May be combined with Analysis and Discussion chapter
- Consult supervisor

Analysis & Discussion Chapter

- Based on data collected : no extraneous data or assumptions
- Must have frame of reference

Conclusions & Recommendations Chapter

- Do not introduce anything new!
 - i. Main findings of the research
 - ii. Relationship of your work to the literature
 - iii. Further research

The Abstract

- A summary of the whole research:
 - Purpose of the research
 - Methodology employed
 - Findings
 - Conclusions

Contents page (TOC)

- Avoid multiple numberings of chapters and sections : 3.1.1.2

Writing tips

- Outline!
- Use a word-processing template or planner
- Store any unused sections
- Record references *as you go*
- Keep research questions in view

Thesis style planner

Function	Style Name	Characters		Paragraph			
		Font	Size	Line spacing	Justification	Space before	Space after
<i>Chapter heading</i>							
<i>Main heading</i>							
<i>Sub-heading</i>							
<i>Text</i>							
<i>Quote</i>							
<i>Reference for quote</i>							
<i>Reference list</i>							
<i>Table or Figure caption</i>							

- Keep your readers in mind
- Be prepared to make changes
- Talk to others and get feedback
- Set aside time for writing (between 2-5 hours per week)
- Make your work manageable
- Constantly review your work

The First Draft

- Clear writing – conventions of academic writing
- Academic style of writing

Clear writing

- Formal academic writing (tone)
- Basic sentence and paragraph structures
- Choosing vocabulary

Sentences

- Good grammar, simple construction
- Complete sentence and idea: state precisely what you mean
- Express a single thought
- < 40 words in length; ideally 20 words

- Avoid fancy words and fancy-sounding or long sentences
- Use short, simple phrases and words
- Consistent use of verb tenses
- Active voice rather than passive → ensures clarity

Vocabulary

Perambulate

Walk

Utilize

Use

Commence

Begin

Ameliorate

Improve

Peruse

Read

Use words you are familiar with!

Example:

Passive voice:

The results were posted by the company.
(verb) (subject)

Active voice:

The company posted the results.
(subject) (verb)

Paragraph organization

- Follow:
 - **T** – Topic sentence/controlling idea
 - **E** - Explain, elaborate, define
 - **E** – Examples, evidence illustrations
- Between 100-200 words
- Avoid long paragraphs of 250+ words
- One main idea = one paragraph
- Signal and transition words → link ideas and paragraphs

Academic style of writing

- Present work clearly and succinctly
- Precise writing
- Straightforward expression

Rewriting the First Draft

Coherence and internal consistency

- Complete reference list (information match)
- Correct page number/s for quotations
- Chapter numbers, titles, and subheadings; cross-check with contents page
- Overall consistency of elements throughout

Proofreading, Editing and Formatting

- Grammar and typo errors, punctuation, spelling
- Academic content (expression)
- Read aloud for coherence of meaning
- Reference list – consistency in punctuation and referencing style (all essential details)

- *At least 2 full drafts*
- Have someone other than advisor read some sections (particularly the Introduction and Conclusion)
- Revise/refine as best you can → set a deadline for submission

A Good Thesis

- Well Presented
- Style & Structure
- A Clear Argument
- Knowledge of Relevant Literature

First impressions: Well presented

- Title – catchy and attention-grabbing
- Table of Contents – gives sense of organization and logic
- Abstract
 - Good clear summary of thesis
 - Captures reader's attention
 - Examiner can tell if it's quality and well-presented
 - Most widely published and read part of thesis

Characteristics of a good thesis

- Clearly defined research question : aim, objectives, hypothesis
- Sound knowledge and deep understanding of:
 - General subject area and specific study area
 - Key debates
 - Relevant literature

Revision Process Checklist

- Do your argument and purpose remain clear throughout the paper?
- Is your tone appropriate?
- Have you given your reader a sense of the current views on your topic so that s/he has a context in which to consider your argument?
- Does your paper's introduction clearly introduce your idea? Explain its significance? Provide background information? Attract the interest of your audience? Provide a clear plan for the paper? Present your thesis clearly?

Revision Process Checklist

- Does the body of your paper cover your major points in a logical order?
- Is each of your major points supported by the appropriate amount of evidence and analysis?
- Do you make clear transitions as you move from point to point?
- Does your conclusion follow logically from your introduction and body?

Guide to the Presentation of the Thesis

<http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/fms/Library/Documents/Publications/guide-to-presentation-of-theses.pdf?3B5B069A6B2999D194993BE7C1D5ABE9>

Finally...

- Save frequently and print copies
- Save multiple copies



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