

WRITING YOUR DISSERTATION: SOME GUIDELINES



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Three Stages in Writing a Dissertation



❧ **Getting started (Planning)**

- ❧ Selecting a Supervisor
- ❧ Choosing a Topic

❧ **Putting it all together (Research)**

- ❧ Find Information
- ❧ Draft a Thesis Statement
- ❧ Make a tentative dissertation outline

❧ **Writing it out (Writing)**

Supervisor 's Expectations



- ❧ conform to accepted methodologies, university policies, and style of presentation
- ❧ submit typed/printed manuscripts only
- ❧ have regular meetings

Choosing a Topic



Choice of topic likely to be influenced by factors such as:

Relevance

Supervision

Interest

Choosing a Topic



Some tips

Keep the following guidelines:

- Narrow down your topic into a specific title

- Be Concise

- Avoid waste words

Choosing a Topic



❧ Do not put the titles in sentence forms.

Change

“How Virginia Woolf Influenced Jeanette Winterson”

to

“The Influence of Virginia Woolf on Jeanette Winterson”

Short and Long Titles



- ❧ A two- or three-word title may be too vague.
- ❧ A 14- or 15-word title is unnecessarily long.
- ❧ “Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, June Jordan, Maya Angelou, and Rita Dove: A Critical Study of Black Consciousness, Negritude, Black Feminism, Cultural Divide, and Crafted Art”

Some vague titles



- ❧ Women's Detective Fiction
- ❧ The Poetry of Richard Crashaw
- ❧ Tennyson and after
- ❧ South-Asian Diaspora Writing in Britain and America
- ❧ Shakespeare's Domestic Tragedies
- ❧ Middle English lyric poetry
- ❧ Creative Writing

Acceptable Topics



- ❧ A Reappraisal of the Short Stories of Mary Lavin
- ❧ Ted Hughes and Seamus Heaney: A Study of Similarity and Contrast
- ❧ The British Boy Detective: Origins, Forms, Functions, 1860-1930
- ❧ Hospitality in Shakespeare's Problem Plays 1597-1603
- ❧ Domestic Iconography: Representations of Family Life in the Mid to Late Victorian Period
- ❧ "Such Genius as Hers": Music in New Women 's Fiction
- ❧ Roland Barthes and English-language Avant-garde Poetry, 1970-1987
- ❧ The Forging of Identity and Community in India and Welsh Writing from a

Some Areas of Research in English Literature



❧ You can choose to write about literature belonging to different countries

American literature

❧ African-American literature

❧ Indian writing in English

❧ Commonwealth Literature

Some Areas of Research in English Literature



- ❧ You can write only about one author.
- ❧ You may have to research on the life of the author
- ❧ his typical styles
- ❧ his famous literary works

Some Areas of Research in English Literature



- ❧ You can research on the different characters in a particular novel.
- ❧ You may study the different themes in a novel.
- ❧ You can write about the different literary devices used in a work of literature.
- ❧ You can discuss the same literary term used differently in different novels.

Research



Find Information

Check out print and other materials

- Books
- Periodicals (for articles, critical essays, reviews, abstracts)
- Readers' guide to periodical literature
- Computer-based materials and on-line resources

Research



The Broader Survey

✎ **Typically includes more general works.**

Should help you in several ways:

- ✎ to decide on the issues you will address
- ✎ to become aware of appropriate research methodologies
- ✎ to see how research on your topic fits into a broader framework

Research



- ❧ Look at bibliographies of established scholars
- ❧ Look at recent research, constantly updating your notes
- ❧ Use electronic sources

Research



❧ Jot down full bibliographical information:



For books--author, full title including subtitle, place of publication, publisher, date of publication, volume number, edition, and page numbers.



For periodical articles—author, full title of the article including subtitle, full title of the periodical, volume number and issue number (if any), date of issue, inclusive page numbers of the article.

Research



Drafting a Thesis Statement

- ❧ The Thesis Statement marks the transition from the research process to the writing process.
- ❧ is the core essence of the dissertation.
- ❧ can be defined as a statement advancing an original point of view as a result of research—expresses the controlling idea of

Guidelines for Writing a Thesis Statement



The thesis statement must be adequately limited in scope.

❧ “Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn* is a great American novel.”

❧ “In *Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain develops a contrast between life on the river and life on the shore.”

❧ “Through its contrasting river and shore scenes, Twain’s

Guidelines for Writing a Thesis Statement

A thesis must contain a point or an assertion.



The North and South fought the Civil War for many reasons, some of which were the same and some different.

While both sides fought the Civil War over the issue of slavery, the North fought for moral reasons while the South fought to preserve its own institutions.

While both Northerners and Southerners believed they fought against

Guidelines for Writing a Thesis Statement



A thesis on a controversial subject should not be wishy-washy.

❧ Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is a play about a young man who seeks revenge.

Guidelines for Writing a Thesis Statement



❧ A thesis should reflect understanding of a subject based on fairly extensive reading.

Obvious: “There is a lot of symbolism in *The Scarlet Letter*.”

Opening words for thesis statements



The current study investigates the relationship between . . .

The focus of this study will be on . . .

The objective of this research is to determine . . .

The purpose of the present study is . . .

This research concentrates on . . .

This thesis will deal with . . .

My thesis is

Sample thesis statement



The present study endeavours to investigate how Gwendolyn Brooks' inscrutable mind evolves from ego-centricism to ethno-centricism, and how this evolution settled the subject matter of her poetry, especially her perception of race, sex, and aesthetics of art, as delineated in her poetry

Outline



An outline

- ❧ Helps you achieve a unified, supported, well-organized thesis.

The Writing Process



✧ Writing the First Draft

- ✧ Write this draft as quickly as possible
- ✧ Put down everything you know about your topic
- ✧ Do not stop to make corrections, check facts or look

Writing the First Draft



Tips

- ❧ Start with the easiest material first.
- ❧ Write as much as you can initially, then refine it later

Revise Your First Draft: What Makes a Good Thesis



- ❧ Review your rough draft and make any changes or corrections before writing the final copy.
 - ❧ Arrange and rearrange ideas
 - ❧ Get someone else to read over what you have written.
 - ❧ Fresh thoughts on texts are essential.
 - ❧ Quotations, should appear as an integral part of writing
 - ❧ Use good Standard English

Organization of the Thesis



- ❧ The text of the thesis is divided into chapters
- ❧ Most theses are five chapters long.
- ❧ Begin with an introduction stating your thesis

Introduction



- ❧ **Presents an overview**
- ❧ **Includes a *rationale***
- ❧ Usually
 - ❧ Serves as the frame within which the reader reads the rest of the thesis
 - ❧ Provides background information
 - ❧ Builds an argument for the research and presents research question

Reviewing the Literature



❧ The purpose of the literature review is

- To show that you are familiar with issues and current debates in the field
- To show that there is an area in this field to which you can contribute

Reviewing the literature



- ❧ The reviews should be integrative (broad summaries) rather than detailed examinations
- ❧ Don't simply provide a long list of separate descriptions of weakly related studies.
 - ❧ "Smith (2007) did this,"
 - ❧ "Jones (2009) did that ..."
 - ❧ "Raines (1990) found ...," etc.

Each section should draw on previous ones

- ❧ "Using an older group of students, Brown (1986) found ..."
- ❧ "Walton (1982), however, failed to replicate those results with small classes."

Reviewing the Literature



- ❧ What should you include in a literature review?
 - ❧ Refer only to research projects which are *closely related* to your own topic
 - ❧ Focus on the *most recent* papers.

The Body of the Thesis



- ❧ The remaining chapters should clarify and amplify the thesis with well-researched statements, documented wherever necessary.
- ❧ Each stage of the dissertation should focus on an individual aspect of the topic and build an argument leading to a summation and synthesis of thought in the conclusion.
- ❧ Each chapter should open with a brief discussion of the portion of the problem to which the chapter is devoted and on

The Body of the Thesis



- ✧ Every point you make must be supplemented by evidentiary support
- ✧ Using quotations effectively is important
- ✧ Focus of the thesis must be your argument, based on primary sources.

Conclusion



❧ The Conclusion

- ❧ Draws all arguments and findings together
- ❧ Summarizes major findings; does not merely restate the thesis
- ❧ Provides answers or solutions – to the extent this is possible – to the questions or problems raised in the introduction
- ❧ Presents limitations

The “Works Cited”



❧ The list of sources used in the of the thesis.

Usually, it

➤ is written in alphabetical order

Type the Final Draft



- ❧ Implement all the changes to transform your rough draft into a final copy.
- ❧ Good writing is hard to define. Bad writing is easy to spot.
- ❧ A badly-written thesis will have:
 - ❧ Misspelled words

Type the Final Draft

While writing the final draft



- ✧ Arrange and rearrange ideas to follow your outline.
- ✧ Correct all errors that you can spot
- ✧ Know the conventions of thesis layout
- ✧ Consult *MLA Handbook* to find the correct forms of use
- ✧ Proofread the final copy carefully
- ✧ Ensure that the final draft is clean, tidy, neat, and attractive.

Presentation of the Thesis



- ❧ Double space the text throughout
- ❧ Each page should have at least 27 (9 inches) typed lines.
- ❧ Observe well-balanced margins of one inch at top, bottom, and right side of the paper and one and half inch on the left.

Presentation of the Thesis



- ❧ Short quotes (fewer than four lines) should be located within the text and enclosed by double quotation marks.
- ❧ Single quotation marks are for quotes within quotes.
- ❧ The source of the quote must be written in

Presentation of the Thesis



- ❧ Leave one space after all punctuation as follows:
 - ❧ after commas, colons, and semicolons
 - ❧ after punctuation marks at the end of sentences
 - ❧ after periods that separate parts of a reference citation
 - ❧ after the periods of the initials in personal names

Presentation of the Thesis



- ❧ Commas and periods are placed inside the closing quotation marks; colons and semicolons are placed outside the closing quotation marks.
- ❧ Question marks and exclamation marks, not originally in the quotation, go outside the quotation marks; when they are part of the quotation, they go

Presentation of the Thesis



- œ Hyphens, dashes, and minus signs are each typed differently.
 - œ *hyphen:* use no space before or after
(e.g., *trial-by-trial analysis*)
 - œ *dash:* type as two hyphens with no space before or after
(e.g., *studies--published and unpublished--are*)
 - œ *minus:* type as a hyphen with space on both sides
(e.g., *a – b*)

Little Writing Tips: Some Dos and Don'ts



Use appropriate verb tenses.

❧ Keep the verbs you use in the same tense.



eg. Mrs. Mallory sees her returning son and, in her excitement, twisted her ankle rather badly. Her sister calls the doctor immediately.

Writing Tips



❧ When you quote directly from a text or allude to the events in a story (as in a brief plot summary), use "the literary present." Quoting an essay, you would write,

❧ Annie Dillard wrote *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* when she lived in Virginia's mountains. In the book's chapter

Writing Tips



- ❧ When you write about fiction, use the present tense.
- ❧ At the end of *Of Mice and Men*, Lennie sees an enormous rabbit that chastises him, making him to think of George.
- ❧ Mrs. Mallard, in "The Story of an Hour," whispers "'free, free, free!'" after learning of her husband's supposed death.

Writing Tips



❧ Use the active voice

❧ *Poor:* The shelter is owned by the town, but the facility is run by members of the humane society and supported, in part, by funds raised by them. Most of the operating expenses, however, are paid by the town.



Better: Although the town owns the shelter and pays most of the operating expenses

Writing Tips



- ❧ Use first person when it helps to keep your meaning clear and to express a purpose or a decision.
- ❧ Jones reported xyz, but I (or we) found . . .
I (or we) present here a detailed study . . .
My (or our) recent work demonstrated . . .

Writing Tips



- ❧ Avoid informal wording, don't address the reader directly, and don't use jargons, slang terms, or superlatives
- ❧ Be brief

Writing Tips



❧ Omit phrases such as



As already stated

It has been found that

It has long been known that

It is interesting to note that

Writing Tips



✎ Use single words instead of phrases

a number of
a small number of
are in agreement
are found to be
at present

many, several
a few
agree
are
now

Writing Tips



❧ Use simple short words. “Use” not “utilize,” “several” not “diverse.”

❧ Eliminate Redundancies and Repetitions

❧ (already) existing

introduced (a new)

❧ (alternative) choices

mix (together)

Writing Tips



❧ Cliches, slangs, and jargons are to be avoided in writing. Cliches are hackneyed, worn-out, over-worked words or phrases



quick as a flash (quickly)



last but not least (last, finally)



as plain as day (clear, obvious)



the modern business world (business today)

Writing Tips



- ❧ Do not try to impress people by using words most people have never heard of.
- ❧ *Do not* use contractions: for example, "*don't*" must be "*do not*" and "*isn't*" must be "*is not*" etc.
- ❧ Ensure quotation marks are paired.

Writing Tips



✎ Don't say:

- a. "a lot of"
- b. "absolutely"
- c. "are going to"
- d. "in real life"
- e. "in recent years"
- f. "in today's world"
- g. "nowadays"

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- ❧ Avoid numbers starting a line
- ❧ Avoid starting a paper or section by quoting material
- ❧ Don't start a sentence with "Also," "And," "But," "Especially," "So," "Specially," "Whereas," "Yet," "Then," ...
- ❧ When starting a sentence with "Therefore," "However," "Moreover," and "Hence," follow this word with a comma.

Writing Tips

❧ "et al." needs a full stop after the "al."



❧ For numbers less than hundred, write the number out in words, especially numbers less than twenty; for example, write "two items" rather than "2 items."

❧ If you're quoting, keep the citation outside the quote, e.g. Bloggs says, "blah blah" (93).

❧ Make large numbers easier to read by inserting a small space after every

Writing Tips



- ❧ **Do not use another thesis/dissertation as a model for your work since a particular style or example in a previous year may not meet current guidelines.**

Finally,



Thank You