

Writing your Dissertation: Tips and Pointers

There's no need to start writing Chapter One first.

The most productive approach in writing the dissertation is to **begin writing those parts of the dissertation that you are most comfortable with**. Then move about in your writing by completing various sections as you think of them. At some point you will be able to spread out in front of you all of the sections that you have written. You will be able to sequence them in the best order and then see what is missing and should be added to the dissertation. This way seems to make sense and builds on those aspects of your study that are of most interest to you at any particular time.



Keep your drafts organised

Just as soon as you print a draft of a chapter there will appear a variety of needed changes and before you know it another draft will be printed. And, it seems almost impossible to throw away any of the drafts! After awhile it will become extremely difficult to remember which draft of your chapter you may be looking at. **A good tip to avoid confusion is to print each draft of your dissertation on a different colour paper.**

Don't stress over graphs and tables in the early stages

If you are using graphs and tables don't waste valuable time trying to make them look perfect in the early stages. Concentrate on your writing and perfect your graphs towards the end of the process. A simple rule - if you are presenting information in the form of a table or graph **make sure you introduce the table or graph in your text**. And then, following the insertion of the table/graph, make sure you discuss it. If there is nothing to discuss then you may want to question even inserting it.

Adopt a clear and unambiguous writing style.

Dissertation-style writing is not designed to be entertaining! To keep your writing simple and clear, prepare a list of key words that are important to your research and then use this set of key words throughout your writing.

There is nothing as frustrating to a reader as a manuscript that keeps using alternate words to mean the same thing. For example, if you've decided that a key phrase for your research is "educational workshop", then **do not** try substituting other phrases like "in-service program", "learning workshop", "educational institute", or "educational programme."

Always stay with the same phrase - "educational workshop." It will be very clear to the reader exactly what you are referring to.

Review two or three well organised and presented dissertations.

Examine their use of headings, overall style, typeface and organisation. Use them as a model for the preparation of your own dissertation. In this way you will have an idea at the beginning of your writing what your finished dissertation will look like.



Understand the purpose of different sections

If you are including a Conclusions/Implications section in your dissertation **make sure you really present conclusions and implications**. Often the writer uses the conclusions/implications section to merely restate the research findings. Your reader will have read these already in your main text. Use the conclusions/implications section help your reader understand what it all means. This is a key section of the dissertation and is sometimes best done after you've had a few days to step away from your research and allow yourself to put your research into perspective.