

Writing has never been easy

Compare the work in progress of two writers:
First, in the next slide, there's Charles Dickens,
Esq. (1851) and the opening page of *Bleak House*
and, second, there's the tracked work of an
academic who is a concurrently both a masters
and PhD candidate.

He's also a glutton for punishment!

(Black Horse and the East End) 1851

Chapter I



In January.

London, the first of the year, was a scene of general gloom and depression. The streets were empty, and the shops were closed. The people were all in mourning, and the air was filled with a sense of sadness and despair. The winter was a long and dreary one, and the people were all in mourning. The streets were empty, and the shops were closed. The people were all in mourning, and the air was filled with a sense of sadness and despair.

Manuscript page from BLEAK HOUSE: First page of Chapter I. Written in November 1851.

▪ **3.2. Findings of from a systematic literature review of research on interventions for relationships between couples with interpersonal distress or conflict. (A couple of points here: first, I'm critiquing the work, not you; second, I tend to provide a great deal of detail for the first iterations – a strategy for prompting you to think critically about what you want to say to your reader and why; third, I'm quite confident that you will look back on this first iteration in the future and want to revise it well beyond any comments I make here simply because you will have grown an appreciation of what it is that you intend this review to achieve. So here goes – mainly by way of comments but some very minor editing too. Cheers, Jens.)**

3.2.0 Introduction to literature review:

This literature review serves the intention of better assisting couples who are interpersonally distressed or in conflict, with the intention of improving their relationships so that the relationship can be sustained. 'Interventions' are defined as interventions which are educational, skill-building, expressive, awareness-raising of self and others, to the extent that they can be applied in a therapeutic context, programme or structured encounter, thus the use of such interventions as the police or statutory welfare organisations is not considered. 'Interpersonal distress' is defined as stress which is considered by clients to be destructive to their relationship because, although the stress may originate between partners or external to the relationship, it nevertheless is perceived as causal to the distress between the partners.

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Comment [JJH4]: You have used the term interventions twice in the same sentence. What synonym can you use for the second time? HINT – right click and choose 'Synonyms'. How about 'strategies'?

Comment [JJH5]: Perhaps this sentence be revisited and made into two sentences? How does it sound if you read it aloud?

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Well, well, well...so you have to write a DBA thesis...oh dear! And to think, it's only for the two examiners. My, my. Tut, tut!

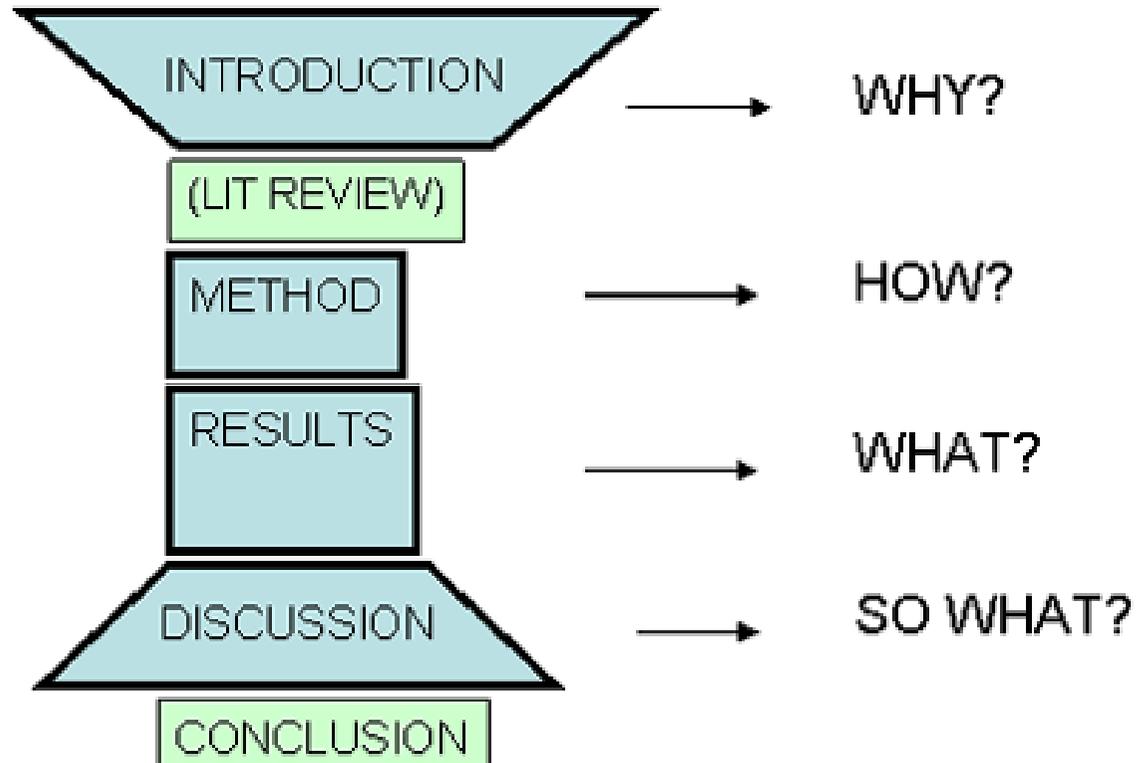
Some encouraging words and some words of encouragement from
Dr Jens J. Hansen,
Director, Woodhill Park Research Retreat, August, 2011



Woodhill Park Retreat

www.woodhillpark.com

Here, more or less, is what you have to achieve



Source: Swales, J and C. Feak (2000) English in Today's Research World: a Writing Guide, Michigan: Ann Arbor

Traditional Thesis Structure

	BEd Hons	MEd (minor thesis)	MEd (research)	EdD	PhD
Chapter 1 Introduction	2,500	2,500	6,000	12,000	10,000
Chapter 2 Literature chapter(s)	4,000	4,000	10,000	20,000	35,000
Chapter 3 Methodology chapter	3,000	3,000	8,000	16,000	10,000
Chapter 4 Data chapter(s)	4,000	4,000	10,000	20,000	35,000
Chapter 5 Conclusion	2,500	2,500	6,000	12,000	10,000

Source: Gale, (n.d.)

So what does a DBA involve and how is it different to or similar to this? What manner of six chapter Gorgon do you need to create?

But a thesis is more than a mere picture and/or table: here's what Prof. Trevor Gale, Monash University, (n,d.) has to say

- An argument by another name:
 - *argumentum* (from *auguere*) (Latin); literally 'to give reason or proof' that is, a coherent series of statements leading from a premise to a conclusion;
 - Thesis: *tithenai* (Greek); literally 'to put or lay down'; a position or proposition that advances an argument;
 - Hypothesis: *hypotithenai* (Greek); literally 'to put under, to suppose'; that is, a tentative assumption or proposition to be proven or disproven (null hypothesis).

Trevor Gale continued...

- Analysis: *analyzein* (Greek); literally ‘to break up, loosen’; separation of a whole into its component parts; to pull things apart and name the (most important) parts, in ways that frame an argument (Note: the names of the main parts often make good headers in an academic paper or chapter);
- Synthesis: *syntithenai* (Greek); literally ‘to put together’; the combination of (sometimes diverse) parts or elements to form a whole; to select and order these parts into a (new) coherent whole, supported by the evidence (Note: it’s important to name this sequence in the academic paper’s or thesis chapter’s introduction);
- Evidence: to provide academic references and/or empirical accounts(research) from the field, which give an argument authority (Note: it is important to list these sources in the academic papers or thesis references).

How do I get started? Here's what Canadian Dr Steve Easterbrook says:

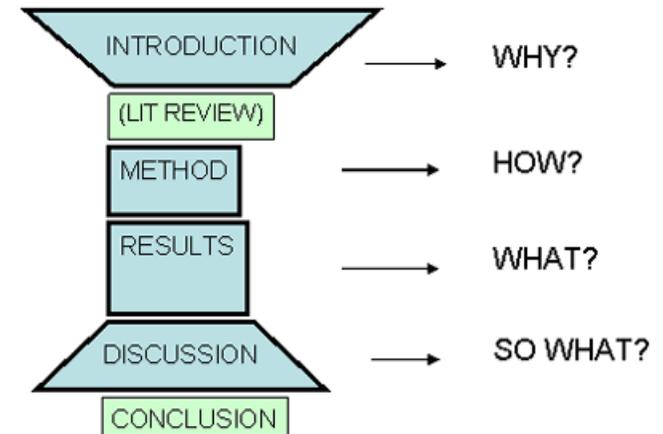
- **DO THIS TODAY:**
 - **Decide your title**
 - **Write your title page**
 - **Start a binder**
 - **(Look at some theses in your area)**
 - **Plan your argument...**
 - **You can change things later**
 - **But you can't change it unless you have something to change!**

My version of that is to start an A5 hard covered notebook or go to your finance person and get an I Pad!

Source: <http://www.cs.toronto.edu/~sme/presentations/thesiswriting.pdf>

Let's stock-take backwards for a moment

- Procrastination is not on – so begin today!
- Create your title, basic idea/question/argument – that's your first step to writing your thesis;
- You've got approximately 100,000 words to generate. They need to transmit originality with form:
- You'll need to edit/rethink/revise rework but avoid being anal and avoid strutting the revisionist's perpetual tread-mill!



But there's another crucial element to writing a thesis. You ignore it at your peril.

- As you start, you **MUST, MUST, MUST** get your whānau on board. Their support is not just crucial, it's crucially crucial amongst all the crucial things – second only to paying your fees;
- Do your family/work/household/social networks:
 - Know what's involved (do you)?
 - Agree that you can owe them for doing the dishes/ housework/ rubbish disposal, etc. whilst you're beavering away at your research?
 - Understand that you may get even more grumpy (than usual) and that sleeping habits and even thinking habits can and probably will shift?
- I call this 'family academic resilience'. Having it decreases the odds of conflict but isn't a guarantee that it (conflict) won't happen.
- See also Hansen (2001)

<http://www.woodhillpark.com/attachments/1/phd.pdf>

So now that we know more or less what we have to do and to what extent we have to do it, why not begin by seeing what SCU has to offer you in preparing your thesis – after all, you’ve paid them a very large sum of money!

- One of the things I like about the SCU site is that it’s a very useful springboard to a whole lot of other sites;
- So give yourself at least an hour or two of surfing time and add (selectively rather than with gay abandonment) to your list of favourites;
- As you surf, you might also begin to source useful PDF papers. But do (absolutely!) make sure that you insert them into your EndNote library. (Who does not know about EndNote?)
- Let’s have a look at the SCU link:

<http://libguides.scu.edu.au/content.php?pid=111632&sid=996320>

There's plenty of help at the SCU site but you need to get real about what you have to do: quality is paramount but should not dominate you to the point of ruination...

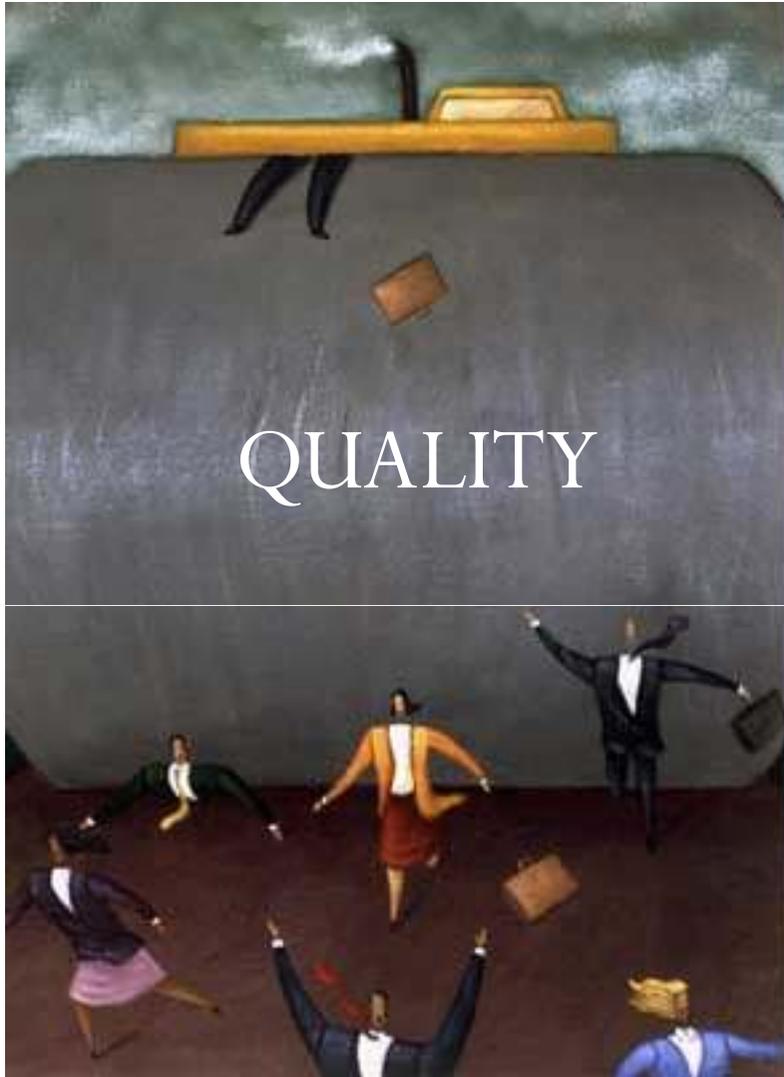
“For perfectionist postgrads, a trap that’s all too easy to fall into is the one of measuring your writing against the best in the field. Because you spend so much time reading books and journal articles, paying particular attention to the ‘big names’ and leading innovators in your discipline, you can begin to think that this is the standard; that this is the kind of work you need to produce in your thesis. Think again.”

- <http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/asu/download/Writing-Types-ThesisWriting-Flyer.pdf>

More from that same source:

“Don’t make the assumption that what you are writing is the equivalent of a publishable book. A thesis is an assessment tool, used by two examiners to gauge whether the candidate has satisfied the requirements of a research ‘apprenticeship’. As such, it’s a working document—often, with all the ‘working-out’ shown—rather than a polished publication. Have a look at some recent successful (passed) theses in your discipline and you’ll notice that they don’t ‘read’ as well as journal articles and books.”

- <http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/asu/download/Writing-Types-ThesisWriting-Flyer.pdf>



Don't let an obsession for instant quality overtake you. Quality will emerge over time. It won't happen overnight – but it will happen!

What about other moguls from other sites?

There's some very useful material on what makes for a good thesis sentence — yes — just one sentence:

“No sentence in your paper will vex you as much as the thesis sentence. And with good reason: the thesis sentence is typically that ONE sentence in the paper that asserts, controls, and structures the entire argument. Without a strong persuasive, thoughtful thesis, a paper might seem unfocused, weak, and not worth the reader's time.”

http://www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/materials/student/ac_paper/develop.shtml

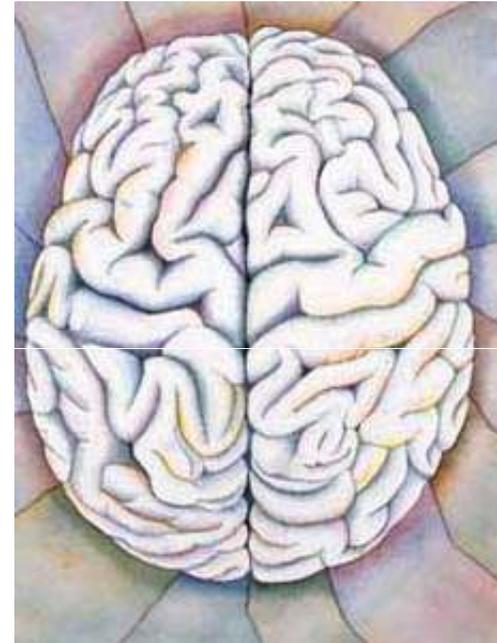
Let's face it, if you don't have a strong thesis (sentence) what you write may not have much purpose...sigh. And you can't expect your examiners to have to look for it for you.

There's got to be a thesis sentence up here somewhere...



This next snippet from Purdue is quite cynical in the beginning but it improves as you get further into it all

- It traverses a range of topics including:
 - The General Idea [of a thesis];
 - What One Should Learn From The Exercise [of preparing one];
 - What not to do and what ought to happen;
 - Hints about grammar;
 - Suggested order/sequence of writing.
- It's not very well designed as a website but it's a useful enough piece of bedtime reading.
- They also have an Online Writing Lab (OWL) which might appeal to some of you.



What side is cynical and what side is quizzing and insightful?

How To Write A Dissertation

or

Bedtime Reading For People Who Do Not Have Time To Sleep

- **To The Candidate:**

- So, you are preparing to write a Ph.D. dissertation in (subject area). Unless you have written many formal documents before, you are in for a surprise: it's difficult!
- There are two possible paths to success:
 - Planning Ahead. Few take this path. The few who do leave the University so quickly that they are hardly noticed. If you want to make a lasting impression and have a long career as a graduate student, do not choose it.
 - Perseverance. All you really have to do is outlast your doctoral committee. The good news is that they are much older than you, so you can guess who will eventually expire first. The bad news is that they are more practiced at this game (after all, they persevered in the face of their doctoral committee, didn't they?). <http://www.cs.purdue.edu/homes/dec/essay.dissertation.html>

Melbourne, like many other universities, has some really useful stuff such as...

Writer's block

The problem

Everyone occasionally has trouble writing. Sometimes the problem is simply procrastination, or the lack of research means that you can't write because you don't have anything to say. You don't suddenly catch "writer's block"; it develops when you let minor problems get on top of you. This pamphlet offers some ideas on how to deal with that terrifying blank page (or screen), and how to get to the end when you've become stuck somewhere in the process.

Getting started

Your very first task as a writer is to make sure that you have something to say — a plan or 'map' of your intended paper, or at least some information about the topic which you want to include in your writing. If you haven't got to this stage yet, don't try to write sentences or paragraphs until you have had a brainstorming session and created at least an outline of what you want to say. (Watch for the LSU pamphlets on

'question analysis' and 'structuring an essay'.)

Assuming you do have a plan and a proposition or thesis to communicate, here are some ideas about how to begin the writing process.

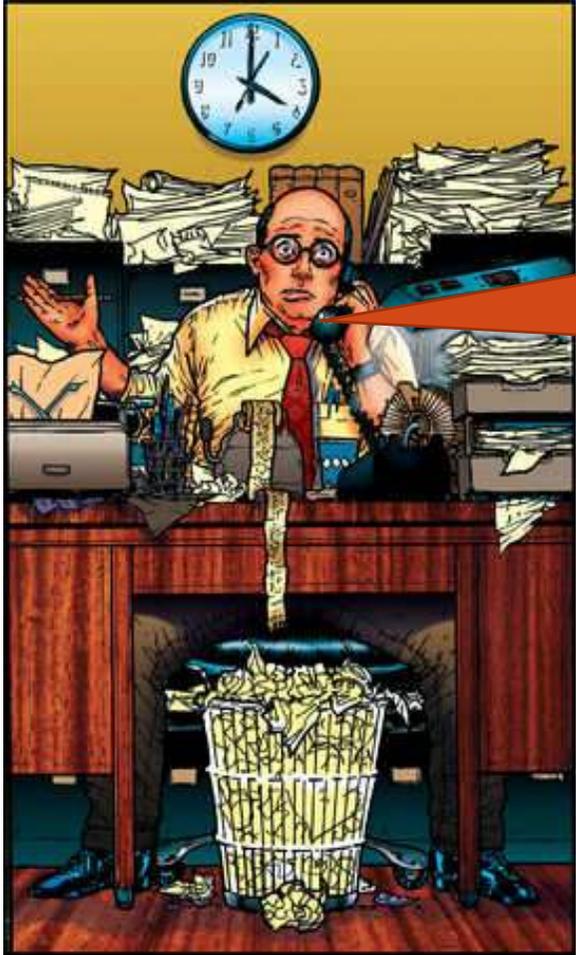
Beware of displacement activities.

These are things like cleaning your room, creating yet another colour-coded card system, playing *Tetris*, searching for that one perfect article which will make your essay complete. You can think of lots more — DON'T!

Start anywhere.

You don't have to start with the Introduction; in fact, you may like to write this last. For instance, for empirical research papers, it's often best to start with the Methods section, because it is the most straightforward — you should know what you did.

NO WRITING WITHOUT SKILL



Enough of this website trawling ... what about the writing? They can look at any number of URLs in their own time.

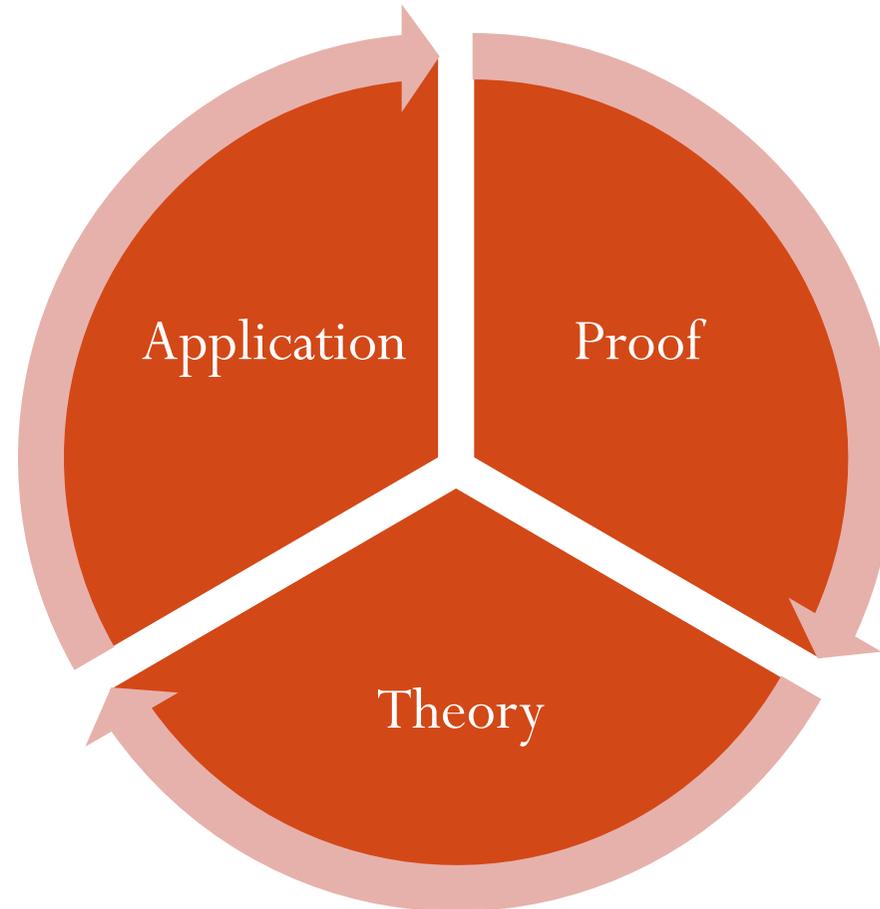
Actually, there's a dozen good URLs on the final slide.



There are three strands here to finish off:

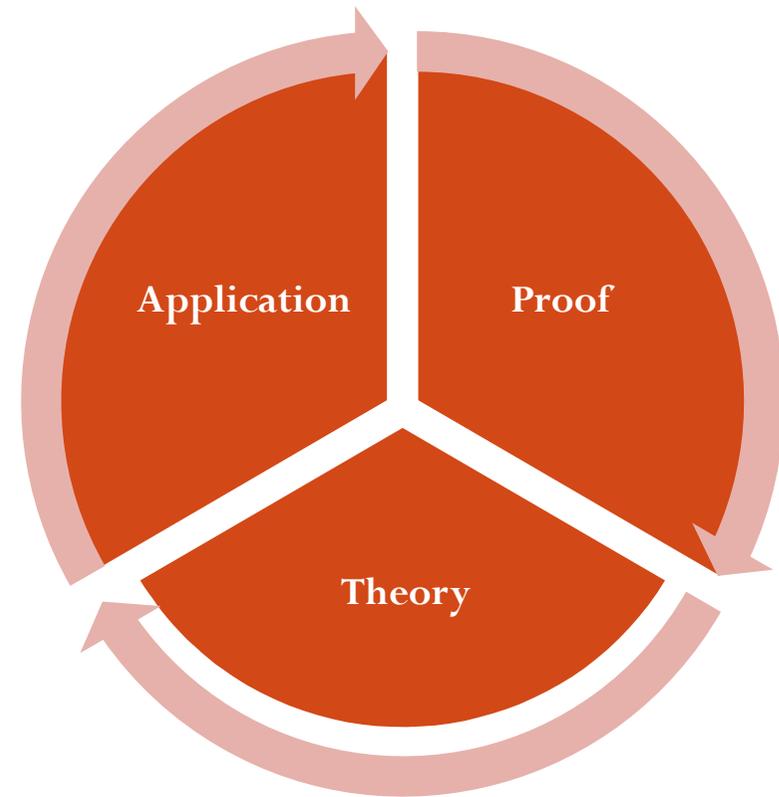
- First, I want to discuss the APT and TAP principles (Hansen, 2002);
- Second, I want to mention how you can use supervisors &/or examiners' criteria as an informative aid (e.g. Moses 1985); and,
- Third, I want to mention some more recent writing strategies which work.

APT, TAP, PAT, re-order it as you will...



Here's the deal

- You enter the circle in any sequence you wish;
- You make sure your written work considers and presents each element – you can do this in any order you wish – many sequences are possible;
- To Hansen's APT principle, add an invisible *chain of golden connectivity* and remember to insert your Wow factor;
- Also, assume the examiners are TAP!

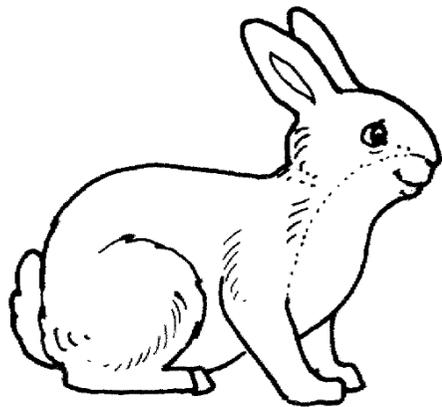


The supervisor's checklist and the examiners' instructions are useful aids for prescribing writing

- Moses (1985, pp. 28-30) suggests supervisors look for:
 - Evidence of originality;
 - Competence in independent work/experimentation;
 - Understanding of techniques;
 - Capacity to critically apply published work/source materials;
 - Relevance to wider field of knowledge/application;
 - Publication worthiness;
 - Originality;
 - Distinct contribution to knowledge.
- Her material is more detailed than what I've paraphrased here but I've found it useful for getting candidates to self-review their work.

Examiners' instructions

- I subscribe to the idea that you can/should ask for a copy of these but universities are sometimes reluctant to give them to you;
- If you know what the examiners are going to be looking for, you can treat them as customers and just remember that the customer is always right! Be warned, most academics know how to follow instructions.



There's a story about
a rabbit who was
doing a PhD....

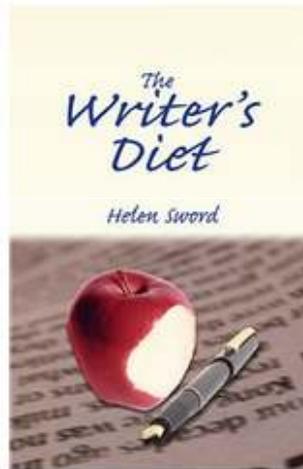


Some additional (fresh) strategies to use

- First, use mind-mapping strategies: Inspiration is easiest but MindManager is also very effective. Also, do get to know your word processing tools (e.g. Auto summarise);
- Use the three-by-one go rule:
 - Write continuously for a 25 minute block of time aiming for around 400 words of output (just do it and park the quest for quality until later: remember Dickens?); have a five minute break **NO MORE THAN THAT**; repeat that process for another two rounds → around 1,200 – 1,500 words will have been achieved;
 - Work (for up to two hours at a stretch) for three times in a day and for three days. Then have a day off and repeat the three sessions for three days process again, and again, and again.
- Do the writing at a café gig: arrive at a pre-specified time → natter for only five minutes → write non-stop for an hour → then relax and share celebrations of success. Try it – it works. (Idea comes from The Thesis Whisperer.)
- Oh, and do drop your stuff into Drop Box (do you know what that is? No? Then ask...)

Try this site for checking out your work

- The Writer's diet is a fabulous book by Helen Morse
- <http://writersdiet.com/>



The Writer's Diet

Is your writing flabby or fit? *The Writer's Diet* will help you energize your writing and strip unnecessary padding from your prose. First, diagnose your verbal fitness levels by taking the online [Wasteline Test](#). Next, follow the no-nonsense advice in each chapter of the book to strengthen and tone your verbal muscles.

Writers at every level, from students to professionals, will benefit from the Writer's Diet workout. Before long, you will find yourself producing stylish, energetic prose every time you put pen to paper.

[Buy this book](#)

- The Waste line test is a fabulous tool...
- <http://www.writersdiet.com/wasteline.php>

That's self-editing but what about professional editing?

- With English as a second language thesis writers becoming far more common-place, exposition quality has become a problem;
- Dr Tony English wrote about 'soft assessments' in the Australian (March, 2011) and was both vilified and applauded;
- Editing has its place but there are rules;
- Wollongong and Charles Darwin have very clear rules on their website;
- If you must use an editor, require quality and references from previous clients. Your supervisors are not your editors/proof-readers but they can, usefully, give you a reality check.

Ode to my spell chequer

Eye halve a spelling chequer
It came with my pea sea
It plainly marques four my revue
Miss steaks eye kin knot sea.

Eye strike a quay and type a word
And weight four it two say
Weather eye am wrong oar write
It shows me strait a weigh.

As soon as a mist ache is maid
It nose bee fore two long
And eye can put the error rite
It's rare lea ever wrong.

Eye have run this poem threw it
I am shore your pleased two no
It's letter perfect awl the weigh
My chequer tolled me sew.

“Sauce un known butt cent two me buy
a distributor of fun knees” Jens

▪ **3.2. Findings of from a systematic literature review of research on interventions for relationships between couples with interpersonal distress or conflict. (A couple of points here; first, I'm critiquing the work, not you; second, I tend to provide a great deal of detail for the first iterations — a strategy for prompting you to think critically about what you want to say to your reader and why; third, I'm quite confident that you will look back on this first iteration in the future and want to revise it well beyond any comments I make here simply because you will have grown an appreciation of what it is that you intend this review to achieve. So here goes — mainly by way of comments but some very minor editing too. Cheers, Jens.)¶**

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MARRIAGE vs. The Ph.D.



Marriage



Ph.D.

Typical Length:	7.5 years	7 years
Begins with:	A proposal	A thesis proposal
Culminates in a ceremony where you walk down an aisle dressed in a gown:	✓	✓
Usually entered into by:	Foolish young people in love	Foolish young people without a job
50% end in:	Bitter divorce	Bitter remorse
Involves exchange of:	Vows	Know-how
Until death do you part?	If you're lucky	If you're lazy

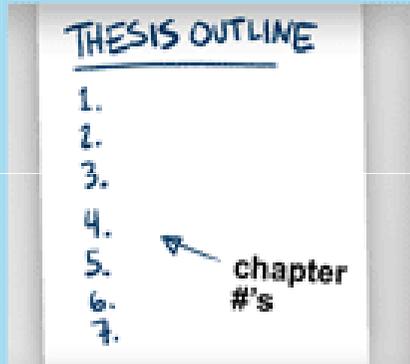
Source: "Piled Higher and Deeper," a wonderful cheer-up tonic for thesis writers...see next slide for the URL

Questions and Piled Higher and Deeper

WRITING YOUR THESIS OUTLINE

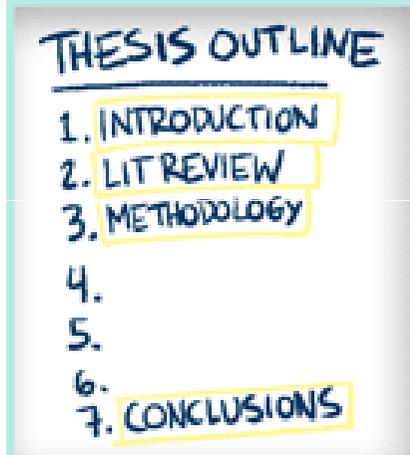
NOTHING SAYS "I'M ALMOST DONE" TO YOUR ADVISOR/
SPOUSE/PARENTS LIKE PRETENDING YOU HAVE A PLAN

STEP 1 Aim for a respectable number of chapters:



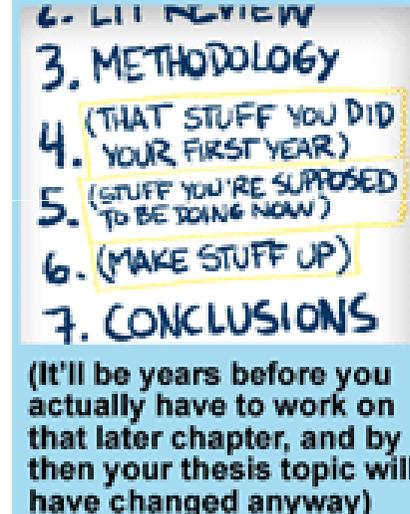
5 = "That's IT??"
6-7 = "Not bad"
8+ = "Are you crazy??"

STEP 2 Fill in the "freebies":



You're half way done!

STEP 3 Make up titles for the "meat" chapters:



STEP 4 Voilà! You just bought yourself another two years



www.phdcomics.com

What questions do you want to ask me?

Let Alexander Solzhenitsyn have the final word

- "Now listen to the rule of the last inch. The realm of the last inch. The job is almost finished, the goal almost attained, everything possible seems to have been achieved, every difficulty overcome - and yet the quality is not there. The work needs more finish, perhaps further research. In the moment of weariness and self-satisfaction, the temptation is greatest to give up, not to strive for the peak of quality. That's the realm of the last inch - here the work is very, very complex but it's also particularly valuable because it's done with the most perfect means. The rule of the last inch is simply this -not to leave it undone. And not to put it off - because otherwise your mind loses touch with that realm. And not to mind how much time you spend on it, because the aim is not to finish the job quickly but to reach perfection."

Taken from Alexander Solzhenitsyn "The First Circle", 1968.

Twelve URLs which might be useful (in no particular order except for the first one)

1. <http://www.woodhillpark.com>
2. <http://www.cs.toronto.edu/~sme/presentations/thesiswriting.pdf>
3. <http://www.uow.edu.au/research/rsc/supervisor/UOW017263.html>
4. <http://www.phys.unsw.edu.au/~jw/thesis.html>
5. <http://www.scu.edu.au/library/index.php/137/>
6. <http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/asu/writing/types/index.html#theses>
7. <http://www.waikato.ac.nz/library/files/thesis.pdf>
8. <http://www.learnerassociates.net/dissthes/>
9. http://www.ldeo.columbia.edu/~martins/sen_sem/thesis_org.html
10. http://www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/materials/student/ac_paper/develop.shtml
11. <http://www.writersdiet.com/wasteline.php>
12. <http://thethesiswhisperer.wordpress.com/about/>