



THESIS WRITING

What is a thesis?

A thesis is a formal and lengthy research paper, especially a work of original research, written in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a graduate degree.

The first steps in writing your thesis are to select a topic, design your study and write an appropriate and acceptable proposal. When writing the proposal, you must keep the following in mind:

- A very clear statement of the question is essential to communicating your intention of making an original and worthwhile contribution to knowledge.
- By making direct reference to a thorough literature review, you must demonstrate that your question (a) has not been previously answered, and (b) is worth answering.

Your finished thesis will have the following common format:

Materials preceding the text

Title Page

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

List of Tables/Figures/Illustrations

Abstract

The main text

Introduction

Review of Literature

Methodology

Results

Conclusion

References and appendices

References consulted

Other sources

When selecting a **Title**, choose one which is comprehensible to the non-specialist, indicates the main focus, is short and precise, and is a noun clause.

The **Abstract** is a brief but complete outline of the paper. It tells what the research is about and why and how it was carried out. It ends with an explanation of the main results.

When doing the actual writing of the thesis, however, you start with the main text. The materials preceding the text are written after the rest of the thesis has been finished.

The **Introduction** gives the background and provides the rationale of the study, moving from general to specific. This is done by establishing a research area and establishing a gap in that area. Then, the writer sets out to occupy that gap. The purpose and significance of the study are stated and research questions are listed.

The **Literature Review** aims to give a comprehensive view of current research and explain the grounds for study. It should help explain how your research adds to, contradicts, or augments this existing knowledge. A separate chapter may be devoted to the literature review or it can be placed at the beginning. Alternatively, the review of the literature may take place progressively throughout the thesis.

The function of the **Methodology** is to describe in detail the research / study and to answer the questions *when, where* and *how*. It includes the main components of design, population and sample, data collection and instrumentation, and analysis. It must be explicit enough to allow the replication of research.

The **Results** section describes the findings in a simple way and lets the data speak for itself. Figures and tables appear here.

The **Conclusion** critically assesses the study or research done. and makes generalizations, implications and recommendations. In other words, it responds to the question/s in the Introduction, interprets the results, and points out their underlying meaning and overall significance. The limitations of the study are also explained here. At the end, there should be recommendations for future researchers who will be working in the same area.

Some suggestions on writing

Pay special attention to opening sentences as they are crucial to guiding the reader.

Pursue both completeness and economy.

Do not rely on spell checkers, they can very often misguide you.

Use academic language and avoid informal, redundant and judgmental expressions.

Be generous in your use of headings.

Signal the upcoming content with bridging sentences and connectors.

Repeat purpose throughout the text.

Use verb tense consistently. In the first chapter and in the paragraphs at the beginning of the chapters you will probably use the present tense to inform the reader of the upcoming event. The rest of the thesis should be in the past tense, except for the suggestions for future research in the last chapter.

Some suggestions on process

Establish a routine as it eases process.

Clarify daily objectives and make sure you fulfill them.

Break everything down to small manageable parts.

Keep a journal of daily developments, ideas, references.

Keep a good record of sources to avoid plagiarism. Include as much information as possible and record the information in the format you intend to use for your final reference list.

Guidelines for avoiding plagiarism:

Plagiarism is copying somebody else's words (even if it is common knowledge) or somebody else's ideas (even if you have paraphrased them) and presenting them as your own.

You can avoid plagiarism by giving credit to other work by means of citing it using a suitable documentation style and by properly referencing in one of these ways: Quoting, Paraphrasing, Summarizing.