



## Resources for Dissertators and Thesis Writers

Compiled by Elizabeth Coughlin, Associate Director, UCWbL

Thesis vs Dissertation (USA): <http://guides.lib.purdue.edu/dissertations>

Elements of a Good Dissertation Prospectus or Research Proposal:

<http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic1258127.files/Prospectus.pdf>

Writing Thesis and Dissertation Proposals: <http://pwr.la.psu.edu/resources/graduate-writing-center/handouts-1/WritingProposals.pdf/>

Writing a Thesis or Dissertation in the Sciences: <http://writing.engr.psu.edu/workbooks/theses.html>

Dissertation & Thesis Writing Tips (General and by Discipline):

[http://www.library.illinois.edu/learn/research/writing\\_tips.html](http://www.library.illinois.edu/learn/research/writing_tips.html)

Writing a Thesis or Dissertation in Psychology and/or in the Social Sciences, APA focus:

[http://www.regent.edu/acad/schedu/pdfs/residency/su09/dissertation\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.regent.edu/acad/schedu/pdfs/residency/su09/dissertation_guidelines.pdf) – also:

<http://soe.chhs.colostate.edu/students/doctoral/files/SOEGuidelinesforAPAStyleforPapersThesesandDissertationsSOEPD32.pdf>

The Project and the Thesis in Computing and Information Systems:

<http://www.sce.carleton.ca/faculty/chinneck/thesis.html>

Scientific Papers & Projects, international graduate programs: <http://www.researchgate.net/> (for ex.:

[http://www.researchgate.net/post/What\\_is\\_the\\_main\\_difference\\_between\\_research\\_proposal\\_and\\_synopses](http://www.researchgate.net/post/What_is_the_main_difference_between_research_proposal_and_synopses))

American Graduate Education: <http://www.americagraduateeducation.com/articles/en/graduate-degrees.htm>

### Writing Centers – *also, do not forget your own program's resources*

DePaul: <http://depaul.edu/writing>

Claremont Graduate University: [www.cgu.edu/pages/892.asp](http://www.cgu.edu/pages/892.asp) & <http://www.cgu.edu/pages/11179.asp>

Minnesota: <http://writing.umn.edu/sws/quickhelp/graduate.html>

Penn State Graduate Writing Center: <http://pwr.la.psu.edu/resources/graduate-writing-center>

UCLA: <http://gsrc.ucla.edu/gwc/>

University of North Carolina Chapel Hill: <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/dissertations/>

Harvard: <http://gsas.harvard.edu/writing>

### Handouts and . . .

“Writing in the Humanities and Arts,” UCLA Graduate Writing Center: <http://gsrc.ucla.edu/gwc/resources/writing-in-the-humanities-and-arts.html>

“Writing and Presenting Your Thesis or Dissertation,” Joseph Levine, Professor Emeritus Adult Education/Extension Education, Michigan State University: <http://www.learnerassociates.net/dissthes/>

“Guidelines for the Differentiation between Treatises, Dissertations, and Theses,” from Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University:

<http://ebeit.nmmu.ac.za/ebeit/media/Store/documents/Research%20Guidelines/TopicAndTitle/Research-Differentiation.pdf>

“Completing Your Dissertation without Tears,” Columbia University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Teaching Center: <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/tat/pdfs/dissertation.pdf>

*The All-But-Dissertation Survival Guide* Newsletter: <http://www.abdsurvivalguide.com/>

And when all else fails and you really need a laugh: <http://phdcomics.com/comics.php>

# Some Recommended General Resources

- *Writing Through Graduate School Resources:*  
<http://ctl.yale.edu/writing/graduate/writing-through-graduate-school>
- *Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods Dissertations:*  
<http://dissertation.laerd.com/getting-started-p2.php#qualitative>
- *Writing and Presenting Your Thesis or Dissertation:*  
<http://www.learnerassociates.net/dissthes/>
- *Thesis/Dissertation Process: From Proposal to Defense:*  
<http://web.uri.edu/graduate-school/files/ThesisDissertationProcess.pdf>
- *Laying the Groundwork for the Thesis and Dissertation:*  
[http://www.corwin.com/upm-data/52190\\_Joyner\\_Chapter\\_1\\_Laying\\_the\\_Groundwork.pdf](http://www.corwin.com/upm-data/52190_Joyner_Chapter_1_Laying_the_Groundwork.pdf)



## Citation Manager Comparisons

A comparison among Docear, Zotero, Mendelay:

- Article (1/2014): <http://www.docear.org/2014/01/15/comprehensive-comparison-of-reference-managers-mendeley-vs-zotero-vs-docear>
- table comp: [http://www.docear.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/img\\_52d7b3147574c.png](http://www.docear.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/img_52d7b3147574c.png) /
- DePaul Library, Other Resources: <http://libguides.depaul.edu/cite/citing-other-resources>

“Organizing My Research Life”:

- princeton blog: <http://blogs.princeton.edu/librarian/2012/06/organizing-my-research-life/>
- Update 5/2013): <http://blogs.princeton.edu/librarian/2013/05/organizing-my-research-life-updated/>

DePaul Library Research Consultations: <http://library.depaul.edu/get-help/ask-a-librarian/Pages/Make-an-Appointment.aspx>

Help Resources: <http://library.depaul.edu/get-help/Pages/default.aspx>



## Some Valuable Advice from . . .

UNC Chapel Hill (<http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/dissertations/>), or, “A Good Dissertation is a Done Dissertation”: **Things to write when you don’t want to write**

Okay, so you’ve figured out what you can do to manage the external stresses in your life, and you’ve done your best to fight your procrastination demons and do battle with feeling that you’re not worthy. You’ve got your workspace set up and time scheduled and you sit down to write and...nothing. Not a word is coming to you. Here’s what to write when you don’t feel like writing:

- Make a list of all the little things you need to do for a given section of the dissertation, no matter how small. Write down everything that you need to do to get it out the door. Then when you don’t feel like tackling something big, like relating a key point in your argument to the relevant literature, you can insist that you do something else, like photocopying an article you’ve been meaning to consult or checking your citations. You don’t have to do everything on the list during the time you’ve allotted for dissertation work, but tell yourself that you DO have to do SOMETHING. You’ll be surprised that the habit of getting something (no matter how small) done on the dissertation every day can be addicting.
- When you don’t feel like writing, do “big picture” stuff that the graduate school needs you to do. Reformat margins, work on bibliography, and all that.
- Work on your acknowledgements. Remember all the people who have helped you and the great ideas they’ve helped you develop. You may feel more like working afterward.
- Write a part of your dissertation as a letter (or e-mail) to a good friend who would care. Sometimes setting aside the academic prose and just writing it to a buddy can be liberating and help you get the ideas out there. You can make it sound smart later.
- Free-write about why you’re stuck, and perhaps even about how sick and tired you are of your dissertation/advisor/committee/etc. Venting can sometimes get you past the emotions of writer’s block and move you toward creative solutions.

### Boosts to keep you going

So let’s say you DO feel like writing. How do you go about it in a consistent way?

- First, leave your work where you can see it and easily access it. If it’s out of sight, it’s out of mind. However, if you leave the next book you need to read on your desk, it’s much more likely that you’ll read it. Similarly, if you keep the chapter you need to edit active on your screen and don’t have to dig through a bunch of files to find it, chances are it will be edited more quickly.
- If you’re really feeling disorganized, clean your workspace. A clear desk and an organized set of notes can go a long way toward clearing your head and getting you back on track. Don’t make the office-cleaning-ritual your number one choice for procrastination, though.
- Don’t be afraid to work in “the wrong order.” Some people like to work on one chapter at a time. That’s the model that a lot of us have for writing, but not everyone works like that. Some people find that they have to write up big ideas first, and then see how they fit together. Some people do lots and lots of freewriting. The way to write a dissertation is the way that gets pages produced. If that means breaking the “rules,” then break them.
- Give yourself permission to write the junkiest dissertation ever floated past an unwitting committee. That can be very liberating and help you get pages produced so that you can then edit them later. Get something on paper and then worry about making it perfect.
- Remember, when you feel anxious about the quality of your work, that dissertations aren’t master works. They are your FIRST TRY at this, and no one’s is really all that good, frankly. (Want proof? Order your advisor’s dissertation from interlibrary loan.)
- Be reasonable. A lot of people beat themselves up with expectations to work 10 or 12 hours a day—many people recommend a max. of 4 or 5 hours. You simply can’t write productively all day long, and trying will just burn you out. Schedule in breaks and time for procrastination. Your brain needs a rest every now and then—better to schedule one than to have your brain mutiny on you and take one anyway.
- Find the people in your department who are serious workers and emulate them.
- Similarly, find the non-workers in your department and try NOT to emulate them..
- Write your dissertation in single-space. When you need a boost, double space it and be impressed with how many pages you’ve written! Then add the page numbers—it’s even longer!

- As you print out chapter drafts, bibliographies, and such, put them in a notebook with dividers for each section. You'll see the notebook get thicker and thicker as time goes by, and it will encourage you to keep working.

## **Feedback, rewards, and punishments as motivators**

Many people use rewards, feedback, and punishments as motivators in the dissertation process.

- A writing group, your advisor, trusted friends, and loving family members can all give you feedback that can be a motivator. When you are looking for motivational feedback, choose people to ask who you know will give you the sort of feedback you need to keep you going. Grandmothers are great at telling you you're brilliant, for example.
- And tell them what kind of feedback you want. It's okay to tell a reader, "I know this is rough, but I just want to make sure that you can understand my main argument." Then when they come back and say, "Yes, I understood," you can feel great!
- Give yourself rewards along the way. Some people schedule daily motivational rewards. (Punishments can also work, but be careful.)

## **FEELING LIKE A PROFESSIONAL**

One of the most important parts of becoming a scholar is feeling like one. The transition from student to scholar is a huge mental step toward completion. Here are a few tips that can help:

- Some people find it helpful to think about the dissertation as a regular, full-time job.
- Attend conferences and read broadly in your field.
- Deliver papers on your research (if writing up papers for conferences helps, rather than hinders, your progress on the dissertation).
- Start conversations with scholars at other schools who do similar work, and engage in exciting, intellectual conversations. Guest lecture in a friend's classes.
- Dress the part.
- Essentially, do things that help you feel like you have a legitimate place in academia.

## **and from . . .**

National Association of Graduate-Professional Students: <http://nags.org/>

Dissertation News: Dissertation Motivation for Grad Students "*Helpful articles provide dissertation motivation for students pursuing their doctoral dissertations or Master's theses*": ([http://www.asgs.org/thes\\_nws.html](http://www.asgs.org/thes_nws.html)), published by the Association for Support of Graduate Students: <http://www.asgs.org/>

PHinisheD (a discussion group for those trying to finish): <http://www.phinished.org/>

Claremont Graduate University 2013 Summer Dissertation Boot Camp - Faculty Speaker Prof. Tarek Azzam (<http://cgudissertations.blogspot.com/2013/06/2013-summer-dissertation-boot-camp.html>):

**Pay attention non-judgmentally to discover your optimal writing patterns.**

**Some Places to Go for Advice**

<p><b>Writing Centers</b></p> <p>DePaul: <a href="http://depaul.edu/writing">http://depaul.edu/writing</a></p> <p>Minnesota: <a href="http://writing.umn.edu/sws/quic_khelp/graduate.html">http://writing.umn.edu/sws/quic_khelp/graduate.html</a></p> <p>Claremont: <a href="http://www.cgu.edu/pages/892.asp">http://www.cgu.edu/pages/892.asp</a></p> <p>UCLA: <a href="http://qsrc.ucla.edu/qwc/">http://qsrc.ucla.edu/qwc/</a></p> <p>Harvard: <a href="http://qsas.harvard.edu/writing">http://qsas.harvard.edu/writing</a></p> <p>Your Department's resources</p>	
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