

# *Writing Your First Year Report*



**UNIVERSITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE**

*Researcher Development Programme*

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## **Writing your report**

Your first year report allows your supervisor, adviser and Departmental/Institute Graduate Education Committee to assess the progress you have made. Along with a discussion with your examiner, it will form the basis for the decision to recommend you (or not) to continue your graduate studies and register you for a PhD. It is therefore crucial that what you write is fit for purpose, presents you and your work in the best way and is clear and readable for your target audience, i.e. your supervisor and examiners.

This report is neither a research paper nor a thesis. It is likely to contain more preliminary results and also commentary on and critical appraisal of your approaches in the discussion, as well as a clear plan for your future work. If you are fortunate enough to have a large amount of data or results then you may need to be selective about what you include, on the advice of your supervisor. However, more often, students are concerned about whether they have sufficient results. Your aim should be to provide an honest assessment of your work to date and its context, and to demonstrate that you are ready to undertake the remainder of your PhD research.

One section of this handout has tips on planning both the project of producing your report and also the writing of the document. In each case, the best advice is to break it down into manageable sections. An hour spent writing one small section can be far less daunting than the whole thing, and each of those small parts will gradually build up into the final document.

It's important not to neglect the crucial final stages of producing your report. In particular, you need to leave plenty of time for you and others to review your writing and for you to edit, re-edit and proof-read your whole document. Follow your Department's guidance on submitting and double check the deadline early on. A bit of planning initially can save you a last minute scramble.

You are also likely to save yourself time and stress if you make the best use of IT to assist you in producing your document. Before you start, it can be helpful to go on one of the Computing Service's courses on your chosen software package (e.g. Word), and ensure you are familiar with all of its functions, especially how to create a document template. This can save time towards the end of the process in terms of ensuring your formatting is consistent. Likewise with referencing software (covered later in this handout).

## **Reviewing the literature**

One important element of your report is a thorough review of the literature. This is the reading and synthesising of a collection of relevant published research to set your own work in context. The starting point is to obtain literature to read by conducting a search. You will have some literature already, and your supervisor and colleagues will be able to suggest more.

You will also need to conduct database searches. It is good practice to monitor the literature regularly throughout your PhD, so reading should not be something you only do when it comes time to write a report, paper or thesis. Many journals have systems for alerting you by email to tables of contents, and you can set up regular tailored database searches as well.

Organisation is crucial, as you will quickly generate lots of potential reading material that you will need to filter and keep track of. Taking notes as you read can help you to remember and synthesise information. You will need to develop your own system for capturing your ideas. Most people won't read the whole of each paper they obtain, at least initially. Abstracts, and specific sections of the paper can help you to quickly identify whether it is worth reading on. Good review articles can provide references to follow up and you can follow up references from any relevant papers to lead you to further information. Try to remain focussed at all times on why you are reading, and what your research is centred around. It's all too easy to become lost in a huge pile of interesting literature, reading far too much that is not relevant to the task in hand.

Your examiners will be looking for you to demonstrate that you have a good knowledge and understanding of your research field (all appropriately referenced). However, your writing must go beyond a dry summary of what has been done. You need to create a "research space" for your own work (Swales, 1990). The way you explain what has gone before can lead the reader to the gap that your research will fill.

### Further reading

*Planning a search strategy*, University of Edinburgh:

[http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/resbysub/PDF/search\\_skills\\_A4\\_booklet.pdf](http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/resbysub/PDF/search_skills_A4_booklet.pdf)

*Academic Writing for Graduate Students. Essential Tasks and Skills* by Swales & Feak (2004)

### **Future work**

This is another key section. Here you will demonstrate to your examiners that you have a plan and a focus for the remainder of your PhD research. It will also give a framework for the discussion at your viva.

### **Further reading**

*How to Write a Paper* by Mike Ashby:

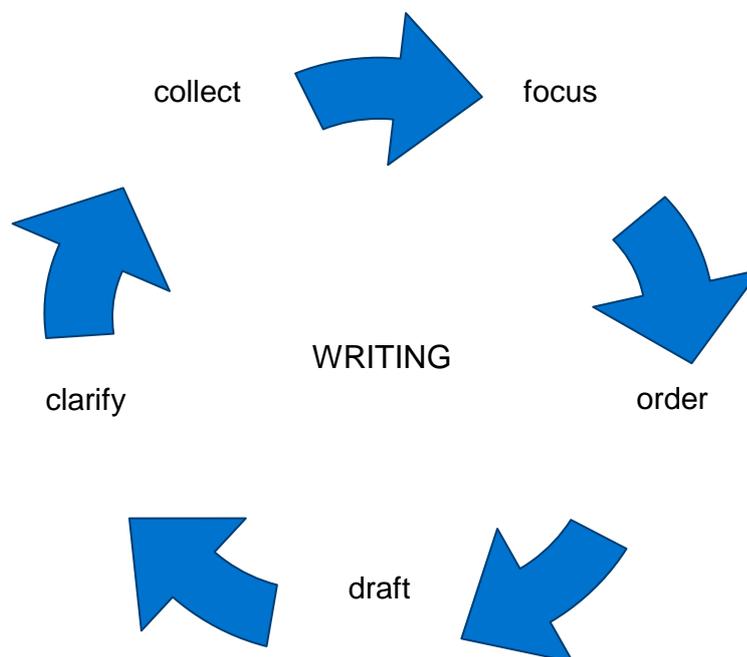
<http://www-mech.eng.cam.ac.uk/mmd/ashby-paper-V6.pdf>

Rowena Murray, How to Write a Thesis (Open University Press) Second Edition 2006

## The Writing Process

- **Incubation** – research, data collection, thinking (conscious and unconscious)
- **Planning** – brainstorming, mapping out the piece of writing
- **Drafting** – first piece of text produced
- **Redrafting** – refining of sentences, word choice, restructuring
- **Presentation & checking** – format, grammar, spelling
- **Publication** – stage at which intended reader sees finished piece

Anthony Haynes, The Professional & Higher Education Partnership



Donald Murray, *Write to Learn* (NY: Holt, Rinehart Winston, 1984)

## Planning your writing

There are 2 elements to planning a writing project:

1. The timings for completing the various elements towards the final deadline
2. The content and structure of the piece

### Project planning

If you analyse the process, then it's apparent that creating a document involves more stages than simply writing the words themselves.

Project planning is a discipline that we can use to help us to make sure that we do what is needed, in a sensible order within the time and resources available.

You might find it helpful to start with the end product you would like to achieve (i.e. a published research paper) and work backwards through the stages you will need to get there. This is particularly helpful when working towards a deadline, to make sure that you don't run out of time for the later stages, such as editing, getting input from colleagues and proof-reading. Don't forget that if you want others to review your work they will need time to do this, especially as looking at your work may not be the only thing they need to do. A simple chart, such as a Gantt chart (example below) may help you allocate your time.

	Week 1					Week 2							
	T4	W5	T6	F7	S8	S9	M10	T11	W12	T13	F14	S15	S16
Task1													
Task2													
Task3													

Don't forget that you will need to incorporate spare time (by overestimating the time needed) to allow yourself redundancy for when things don't quite go to plan!

### An aide to coherence: techniques to help plan your writing

A number of techniques can help authors to plan their ideas and arguments for their writing. Some people always use one, others a mixture of several, and others find one technique helps on one occasion and another the next. Use what you find helpful.

#### 1. Brainstorming

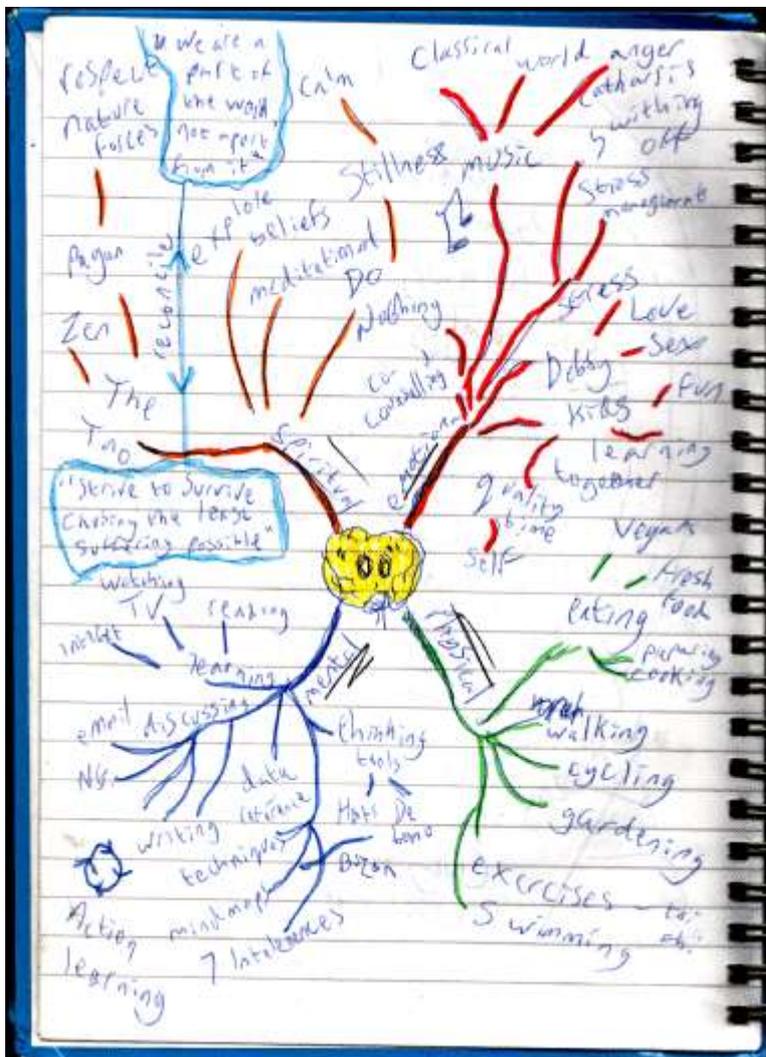
Whilst traditionally this technique is used in groups, often it can be helpful to begin by getting all of your thoughts, arguments and ideas out of your head and onto paper. For some people, doing a simple "brain dump" onto a blank page or post-it notes is a great place to start before they even consider organising their thinking. Anything that enhances your creativity whilst you do

this is helpful. Try choosing an unusual location (e.g. outside in Summer) or listen to music. Don't feel constrained into writing a list. Do whatever helps you, e.g. draw pictures or use different coloured pens. Your focus should be on generating your ideas and arguments without evaluating them. Once you have plenty of material, you can begin to combine parts of your thinking and categorising your thoughts (see "bite-sized" chunks section below).

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brainstorming#Approach>

## 2. Mind mapping

A mind map is a diagrammatic representation of ideas that are interlinked and generally arranged around a central starting point. It can look a bit like a complex web. There are no restrictions on the types of links you can use and you should be guided by your own train of thought in a creative way.



[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mind\\_mapping](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mind_mapping)

### 3. Story boarding

More commonly used with creative writing or in the film/television industry, this technique can offer a visual method of planning out your piece. Basically you use pictures (or you can adapt the method to use diagrams) to represent elements of your piece and then arrange them in order to make an overall story for it. Drawing, rather than using words, helps to stimulate the brain to think creatively.

### 4. "Bite-sized" chunks

A logical extension of brainstorming is to organise your thoughts, concepts, arguments or even quotations, key conclusions etc etc onto small cards or post-it notes. You can then move these chunks around dynamically to begin to shape these elements into a structure for your document. This may enable you to spot gaps or inconsistencies and also slot in additional material as you decide to include it. It can be a living plan that you use and update as your drafting progresses. It can be a helpful tool for keeping the "big picture" in mind as you work through the detail.

### 5. Planning by headings

Many authors find it helpful to plan out a document by reference to the structure they envisage. One of the simplest ways to do this is by devising a structure based around sections and headings. Often there will be a hierarchy as well as thematic elements. This technique can work well for those with linear thought processes, or as a next step after one of the more creative techniques above.

## Reviewing and editing your own work

It can be hard to be objective about your own work, especially a piece that has taken much effort and a long time to prepare for and write. Often our own writing can involve significant emotional investment, making it hard to step back. As the author, we know the piece better than anyone, and may even be a little fed up of it. We know what is meant by the words we have written and can become over-familiar with the text.

### Tips for critiquing your work

- Try to leave time between writing a piece and editing it. At the very least, take a break by going for a walk or having lunch before looking at it afresh.
- Before you begin, remind yourself of the target audience and purpose of the piece. Try to place yourself in the reader's shoes. Prepare well before editing for the first time, as later edits are harder because you will become even more familiar with the text.
- Bear in mind your known weaknesses.
- When you are reading, imagine that you are 'hearing' the words in your head or even try reading it out loud. This may help you to spot long sentences (you run out of breath!) and poor grammar.
- When you start to lose concentration take a break.
- Remember to look for inconsistencies in style and formatting, as well as focusing on the words and punctuation. Some people find it helpful to keep a "style guide" to refer back to that defines how they will approach particular spellings, capitalisations and formatting (e.g. % or percent, **bold** or *italic*, realise or realize).
- Try skim reading your document – most readers won't pore over every word, and reading quickly may enable you to pick up structural and coherence issues. Look at your headings & choose the best structure for your reader, not you.
- Do at least one edit on screen as well as on paper. Different things may jump out at you by reading your work in different ways.
- When proof-reading, be methodical and take one line at a time. Use a ruler to guide you if necessary so that you don't skip lines. Read slowly, and try to avoid skimming over words.
- Ask someone else to look at your work. They may notice mistakes that you have become blind to.

## **Making your text more concise**

1. Look at the length of your sentences.
  - A length of 15-20 words per sentence is usually clearest, although in formal or technical styles of writing 25-30 may be acceptable. Count the words if necessary, and seriously consider shortening or splitting any sentences at the upper end of this range.
  - Varying your sentence length can help to make writing more interesting. Short sentences add emphasis.
  - Long sentences are sometimes necessary and that is fine, provided they are balanced by shorter ones. Sometimes people fall into the trap of using commas where they should use a full stop. If you see long sentences broken into short sections by several commas, try reading them aloud to see whether they make sense, and whether you can get through it without running out of breath.
2. Are you writing in the passive or active voice? What is the convention in your discipline? If you can use an active verb (subject before verb) then this is likely to be clearer.
3. Consider your use of nominalisations, e.g. 'completion' from the verb 'complete'. Often these are used instead of the verb, when the verb itself would actually be clearer. If you have used them, are they genuinely necessary?
4. Simple language can express complex ideas. Often this is preferable to a complex idea expressed in complex language – that might be rather impenetrable. Strive for clarity for your reader.
5. Look for superfluous words. Connecting words such as “hence”, “thus”, “therefore”, “indeed” etc at the start of sentences may serve a specific purpose, e.g. adding emphasis. However, sometimes they are unnecessary padding and no meaning is lost by deleting them.

## **Sources/Further reading**

“Editing and Revising Text” by Jo Billingham (OUP)

<http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/>

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/> - excellent detailed resource with lots of tools and advice on all aspects of writing. Highly recommended.

Specifically on paraphrasing (includes exercises & sample answers):

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/619/01/>

## Referencing

Stylistic conventions vary between Departments. Each will have guidance that you must follow.

Referencing software can prove very useful. Two main examples of this software are **Endnote** and **BibTeX**.

**EndNote** is a commercial reference management software package, which can be used with Microsoft Word. It is not free (the student license costs about £65), but it is a good investment if you use Word. Citations are grouped in "libraries" and can be added to the Word document while you write the paper. To add a citation to a library, users simply choose the type of the source they are citing (e.g. book chapter, article) and then fill out the given fields (author, date, publisher etc.). Many online journals now offer to export citations to EndNote, so that the user doesn't have to type in the reference manually. It is also possible to choose a specific citation style and EndNote will automatically re-format the references in your text and bibliography.

More information is available on Wikipedia:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/EndNote>

There are also online tutorials on the manufacturer's website:

<http://www.endnote.com/training/>

**BibTeX** is the reference management package for LaTeX documents. Just like LaTeX, it is freely available and very convenient if your dissertation includes many mathematical equations. It is possible to choose different citation styles (you might have to download and install the package for the style you need). References can be organized in one database (similar to libraries in EndNote) and cited while you write the main document in LaTeX. Similar to EndNote, references in the text and the bibliography at the end of your document are automatically formatted according to the style you've chosen. Many journals that are available online let you export references directly to BibTeX, but the EndNote format might be more common, depending on your field of study.

More information is available at

<http://www.hep.manchester.ac.uk/u/jenny/jcwwdocs/latex/bibtexbasics.html>,

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BibTeX>

## University statement on plagiarism

In general, plagiarism can be defined as: **the unacknowledged use of the work of others as if this were your own original work.**

In the context of an examination, this amounts to: **passing off the work of others as your own to gain unfair advantage.**

Such use of unfair means will not be tolerated by the University; if detected, the penalty may be severe and may lead to failure to obtain your degree.

### *The golden rule*

**The examiners must be in no doubt as to which parts of your work are your own original work and which are the rightful property of someone else.**

### *The scope of plagiarism*

1. Plagiarism may be due to:
  - **copying** (using another person's language and/or ideas as if they are your own);
  - **collusion** (where collaboration is concealed or has been expressly forbidden, in order to gain unfair advantage).
  
2. Methods include:
  - **quoting directly** another person's language, data or illustrations without clear indication that the authorship is not your own and due acknowledgement of the source;
  - **paraphrasing** the critical work of others without due acknowledgement - even if you change some words or the order of the words, this is still plagiarism if you are using someone else's original ideas and are not properly acknowledging it;
  - **using ideas** taken from someone else without reference to the originator;
  - **cutting and pasting** from the Internet to make a 'pastiche' of online sources;
  - **colluding** with another person, including another candidate (other than as might be permitted for joint project work);
  - submitting as part of your own report or dissertation **someone else's work** without identifying clearly who did the work (for example, where research has been contributed by others to a joint project)
  - submitting work that has been **undertaken in whole or in part by someone else on your behalf** (such as commissioning work from a paper mill or 'ghost writing service', or buying work from an essay bank);

- submitting work you have submitted for a qualification **at another institution** without declaring it and clearly indicating the extent of overlap;
  - **deliberately reproducing someone else's work in a written examination.**
3. Plagiarism can occur in respect to **all types of sources and all media**:
- not just text, but also illustrations, musical quotations, computer code etc;
  - not just text published in books and journals, but also downloaded from websites or drawn from other media;
  - not just published material but also unpublished works, including lecture handouts and the work of other students.

### ***How to avoid plagiarism***

The stylistic conventions for different subjects vary and you should consult your course director or supervisor about the conventions pertaining in your particular subject area. However, the main points are:

- when presenting the views and work of others, you must give an indication of the source of the material; conventions for this vary, but one approach would be to write: '*... as Sharpe (1993) has shown*', and give the full details of the work quoted in your bibliography;
- if you quote text verbatim, make this completely evident; again conventions will vary but you might say: '*The elk is of necessity less graceful than the gazelle*' (Thompson, 1942, p 46) and give the full details in your bibliography as above;
- if you wish to set out the work of another at length so that you can produce a counter-argument, set the quoted text apart from your own text (e.g. by indenting a paragraph) and identify it in a suitable way (e.g. by using inverted commas and adding a reference as above). NB long quotations may infringe **copyright**, which exists for the life of the author plus 70 years.
- if you are copying text, keep a note of the author and the reference as you go along, *with the copied text*, so that you will not mistakenly think the material to be your own work when you come back to it in a few weeks' time;
- if you reproduce an illustration or include someone else's data in a graph or table, include the reference to the original work in the legend, e.g. '*(figure redrawn from Webb, 1976)*' or '*(<sup>1</sup> = data from Webb, 1976)*';
- if you wish to **collaborate** with another person on your project, you should check with your supervisor whether this might be allowed and then seek permission (for research degrees, the permission of the Board of Graduate Studies must be sought);
- if you have been **authorised to work together** with another candidate or other researchers, you must acknowledge their contribution fully in your introductory section. If there is likely to be any doubt as to who contributed which parts of the work, you should make this clear in the text wherever necessary, e.g. '*I am grateful to A. Smith for analysing the sodium content of these samples*';

- be especially careful if **cutting and pasting** work from electronic media; do not fail to attribute the work to its source. If authorship of the electronic source is not given, ask yourself whether it is worth copying.

Information taken from Cambridge University guidelines

<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/plagiarism/students/statement.html>

### What is Common Knowledge? How to Avoid Accidental Plagiarism

As a general rule, a fact can be said to be 'common knowledge' when:

- it is widely accessible - you may not know the total population of China, but you would be able to find the answer easily from numerous sources.
- it is likely to be known by a lot of people
- it can be found in a general reference resource, such as a dictionary or encyclopedia.

For example:

**Pterosaurs were the flying reptiles of the dinosaur age**

'Everyone' knows this, so no citation is needed.

But...

**Even the largest pterosaurs may have been able to take off simply by spreading their wings whilst facing into a moderate breeze.** Wilkinson, M.T., Unwin, D.M. and Ellington, C.P. (2005). High lift function of the pteroid bone and forewings of pterosaurs. Proc. R. Soc. Lond. B

Within particular disciplines, the boundaries of what is 'common' knowledge and what is 'expert' knowledge can be ambiguous, especially the further you get into your studies. If it isn't common knowledge, you'll always need to reference your source. If you are in any doubt, ask your tutor or supervisor.

Information taken from University guidelines

<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/plagiarism/students/referencing/commonknowledge.html>

# Resources

## Texts

Swales & Feak Academic Writing for Graduate Students. Essential Tasks and Skills by (2004)

Claire Kehrwald Cook, Line by Line: How to Edit Your Own Writing (MLA, 1985)

Marian Field, Improve Your Punctuation and Grammar Second Edition (London: How to Books Ltd, 2003)

Laurie E. Rozakis, The Complete Idiot's Guide to Grammar and Style Second Edition (New York: Alpha Books, 2003).

William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White, The Elements of Style Third Edition (Needham Heights, Massachusetts: A Simon & Schuster Company, 1979)

R.L. Trask, The Penguin Guide to Punctuation (London: Penguin Books, 1997)

Lynne Truss, Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation (London: Profile Books, 2003)

Rowena Murray, How to Write a Thesis ( Open University Press)

## Internet Resources

Advice on academic writing

<http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/advise.html>

Free Rice

<http://www.freerice.com/index.php>

Hypergrammar

<http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/arts/writcent/hypergrammar/>

The Academic Phrasebank

<http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>

The Purdue Online Writing Lab

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>

Using English for Academic Purposes

<http://www.uefap.com/>

University of Cambridge Plagiarism Guidelines

<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/plagiarism/>

Mike Ashby Paper

<http://www-mech.eng.cam.ac.uk/mmd/ashby-paper.pdf>

## Organisations

The Language Centre:

For more details visit the Language Centre website:

<http://www.langcen.cam.ac.uk>

The Computing Service

<http://www.cam.ac.uk/cs/courses/>

## Top Tips from the Workshop on Writing your 1st Year Report

1. Check up on the requirements: ask your supervisor or a colleague if you can see a good example of a first year report.
2. Start writing now. Writing helps to focus your ideas.
3. Try 'free writing' - ideally three times a week for 10 minutes. The idea is to write without stopping, in sentences on a topic of your choice. e.g. 'what I have achieved this week', 'what I have learned from my reading', 'what I am going to do next'. This is private writing for your eyes only. Free writing can free-up a writer who is thinking about their research and can improve your confidence.
4. Most supervisors complain that 1st year reports are too long. They would prefer good quality. Evidence that the student is familiar with the key papers in this area and, more importantly, has a well-thought out structure and plan of action for the next two years. A Gantt chart is good, but not sufficient on its own. (The workshop on 'Planning and Managing Your Research' will be useful if you want more detail on this)
5. Literature Review. Always ask yourself 'Why am I reading this?' If you can't answer that question about a paper, you should not be reading it.
  - Read the title, the abstract, look at the figures, possibly read the introduction.
  - Do not read papers from the beginning to the end unless there is a very good reason for doing so.
  - Make a note of what it was that you found useful in that paper, and make sure you add the full details to your bibliography so you don't have to look it up again, unnecessarily.

The questions that your Literature Review should answer are:

- Why is this subject important?
  - Who else thinks it is important?
  - Who has worked on this subject before?
  - Who has done something similar?
  - What will I adapt for my study?
  - What are the gaps in the research?
  - How does my work relate to the Literature?
  - What will my contribution be?
  - What question will I answer?
6. Writing to prompts. This is a technique you can use to help with any piece of writing. Some useful prompts to start your writing are given below, but you can always make up your own if these are not suitable for you.

- My research question is.....(50 words)
  - Researchers who have looked at this subject are...(50 words)
  - They argue that....(25 words)
  - There is still work to be done on the issue of...
  - My contribution will be.....
  - If you don't find these prompts useful, then write your own.
7. Try to pair up with someone to meet regularly and read each others work.
  8. Consider forming a 'Writing Group'. If you are interested, information on writing groups and how they can help is given in Dr Rowena Murray's book 'How to write a Thesis'.

Dr Sue Jackson.

## Writing Your 1<sup>st</sup> Year Report

Dr Geraint Wyn Story

Researcher Development Programme

### Objectives

- Understand the purpose and requirements
- Look at structure and content
- Learn about the writing process
- Practice some writing and reviewing



### Questions

- Requirements/expectation
- Who reads it
- Purpose
- What should it include?

### A typical report structure

1. Title
2. Abstract
3. Introduction
4. Literature review
5. Methods
6. Results
7. Discussion/conclusions
8. Future work
9. References



# The Writing Process

## Writing Crystallises Your Thinking



## Writing Cycle: The 5 stages of writing



Donald Murray, Write to learn (New year: Holt, Rinehart Winston, 1984)

## Writing Groups

- Writing can be a social activity.
- Writing Groups help to:
  - Make you write
  - Make writing fun

## Reviewing Your Work

- Reviewing your writing is essential
- It can also help to get friends, colleagues and your supervisor to review your writing

## Good Writing Should Flow

- Disjointed ideas are hard to read
- If you can't link two ideas/paragraphs :
  - Rearrange
  - Rewrite
- Highlight connections between paragraphs
- Signpost – refer back/forward to sections
- Makes a difference, especially in the literature review section.

## Free Writing

- Writing for 5 min
- Without stopping
- In sentences
- Private
- Topic: whatever you want to write about next
- No structure required



## Writing to Prompts

- Use a question or fragment of a sentence to stimulate writing
- Helps to focus mind

## Abstracts and summaries

- Get readers' attention
- Summarises the document
- Has tight word limits
- Think about:
  - Purpose of the piece
  - Clarity of expression (how easy is it to read)
  - Logical order & story

## Writing to prompts: Summary

- My research question is:....(50 words)
- The work that has already been done indicates ...(50 words)
- The problem I am working on is....(50 words)
- My contribution will be ... (50 words)
- It is interesting because...(50 words)
- I am going to....



## Introduction

- Should include:
  - The problem / hypothesis
  - Specific findings by others
  - Main features of your approach
- Make an effort with the first sentence
- Avoid waffle

## Introduction Prompts

- What work has been done in this area?
- What is your research question?
- What work did you do?
- What did you find?
- What does this mean?
- What do you intend to do next?

## Literature Review

- Reveals whether or not a research question has already been answered
- Allows you to see what is known about the area
- Demonstrates any issues of controversy or debate
- Highlights gaps in research or where evidence is missing
- Uncovers areas where other researchers have suggested further work is needed

## Literature Review: Prompts

- Why is this subject important?
- Who else thinks its important?
- Who has worked on this subject before?
- Who has done something similar?
- What have I adapted for myself?
- What are the gaps?
- How does my work relate to the literature?

## Literature Review: Stages

1. Searching & identifying papers
2. Filtering and reading the literature
3. Synthesising the information into the relevant section of your report

## Literature Review: Tips & Pitfalls

### Tips

- Use citations to your advantage: look for highly cited papers and follow trails of references from papers that are relevant
- Don't always read all of each paper, filter & be selective
- Develop your own system for keeping track of what you've read so you can find things again
- Evaluate the results not the authors – stick to cold hard facts

## Literature Review: Tips & Pitfalls

### Pitfalls

- Trying to read everything
- Becoming diverted down interesting side avenues
- Reading, but not writing: taking notes is crucial for synthesising the information
- Being disorganised and not keeping bibliographic information
- Writing a summary or simply paraphrasing information rather than developing a coherent & relevant commentary

## Plagiarism

The Board Graduate Studies Golden Rule:

*"The examiners must be in no doubt as to which parts of your work are your own original work and which are the rightful property of someone else."*

The introduction and literature review are the most likely parts in which plagiarism may occur.

## Two Types of Plagiarism

### Word-for-Word Plagiarism

"A word-for-word example of plagiarism is one in which the writer directly quotes a passage or passages from an author's work without the use of proper quotation marks."

### Paraphrasing Plagiarism

"A paraphrased example must be cited. You cite a paraphrased example as you would a word-for-word quote. Paraphrasing is a condensed version of another author's work, or putting the author's words into your own words."

## Methods

Include the detail your audience needs

These are likely to be more detailed than you see in research papers.

Consider:

- Could someone repeat your work?
- Are the details in order?

## Results

- Report:
  - What happened?
  - What didn't happen?
- Don't repeat content of tables/graphs
- State findings leave discussion to elsewhere
- Get sound advice on statistics

## Figures

Make them:

- Clear and simple
- Appropriate to the data
- Sensible error bars / statistics
- Move most of the information onto the figure not in a legend
- Clear legend stating what this graph shows

*The Visual Display of Quantitative Information*

by Edward R. Tufte Graphics Press

## Discussion & Conclusions

In general, the discussion section:

- Extracts principles, relationships & generalisations.
- Presents analysis, model or theory.
- Shows the relationship between the results and analysis, model or theory.
- Mentions practical applications and theoretical implications
- Summarises your evidence supporting each conclusion
- You need to show your examiners that you understand the work you've done and its implications

## Future work

This is a crucial section:

- Tells you examiner what your plans are
- Provides evidence that you have a clear focus for the remainder of your research
- Provides a framework for discussion in your viva

## Referencing

There are different styles.....

- Your department may have a preference.
- Find out now and stick to it
- Be consistent
- Build a bibliography from today
- Annotate it
- Format it as you will for your thesis

## Submission

- Make sure you follow instructions to the letter
- Double check everything is complete (figures, legends, graphs etc.)

## Transitional

- **To add:** and, again, and then, besides, moreover
- **To compare:** conversely, whereas, nevertheless
- **To prove:** because, for, since, in addition
- **To show sequence:** first, subsequently, hence
- **To give an example:** for instance, in this case, as an illustration

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>

## Review Each Other's Work

In pairs swap summaries:

- Read the summary - 5 min
- Use the criteria on the handout to give constructive feedback (not spelling/grammar) - 5 min

## Other Workshops to Consider

- Writing Skills Summer School
- Information Management

## Contacts

For further information on the transferable skills training available to you please contact:

**Dr Geraint Wyn Story**

Researcher Development Consultant  
Graduate School of Life Sciences

gws24@cam.ac.uk

University of Cambridge  
25 Trumpington Street  
CB2 1QA

01223 (7)66240

Available courses include:

Starting Your PhD, MBTI: Understanding Personality in a Research Environment, I Don't Have Enough Time: Managing Your Priorities, Effective Communication - Verbal, Presentation Skills...

Additional transferable skills training opportunities are also available to graduate students and researchers across the School throughout the year. You will receive information about these sessions via email.

**Researcher Development Programme courses can be seen at:**

<http://www.training.cam.ac.uk/gdp/>

**Graduate School of Life Sciences courses can be seen at:**

<http://www.training.cam.ac.uk/gsls/event-timetable>