

Thesis Writing

专题 1

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Overview

1. **Writing**
2. Citing
3. Avoiding (Plagiarism)
4. Reading
5. Planning

Construction

- ▶ Introduction, Discussion, Conclusion (IDC)
 - ▶ Effective use of headings & paragraphs aids clarity
- ▶ Academic writing is the formal writing style
 - ▶ Develop some arguments
 - ▶ Analysis not description
 - ▶ Support those arguments
 - ▶ Evidence not assertion
 - ▶ Link the analysis and evidence
- ▶ Take time away from your finished essay, then revisit it
 - ▶ The 'can't see the wood for the trees' issue

Framing the question

- ▶ In all limited length writing, the structure of your analysis is key:
 - ▶ Not a great deal of room for scene-setting or description
 - ▶ No room for the extraneous, the verbose or the convoluted
 - ▶ Developing and sustaining a clear analytical framework is essential
 - ▶ Effective structure will showcase the underlying research
 - ▶ Poor structure will obscure it

Introduction (Tell them what you're going to tell them)

- ▶ Introduction to an essay tells the reader what to expect:
 - ▶ Information about the subject matter of the essay (brief background)
 - ▶ The argument statement that focuses the essay (thesis)
 - ▶ A summary of the essay's content (outline)
- ▶ It should be **brief** relative to the rest of the essay
 - ▶ Don't include unnecessary background information
- ▶ It can be thought of as funnel shaped moving from the general (background) to the specific (outline)

Body (Tell them)

- ▶ Body of essay develops the argument outlined in the introduction
- ▶ It will contain the key thesis points with:
 - ▶ Supporting evidence (data)
 - ▶ Explanation of why that evidence supports your thesis (warrant)
 - ▶ Any other backing material
- ▶ It should also include opposing arguments (counterclaim), and your reasoned argument against them (rebuttal)

Conclusion (Tell them what you told them)

- ▶ The conclusion should:
 - ▶ Match the introduction in terms of the ideas and the argument
 - ▶ Restate the main thesis, reminding the reader of its strengths
 - ▶ Indicate the significance of the thesis and the implications
 - ▶ State shortage of the thesis and possible future research areas
- ▶ It should not:
 - ▶ Be simply a repetitive summary
 - ▶ Introduce previously unmentioned ideas or claims
 - ▶ Conclude with an overly obvious/trite statement

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Referencing and citation

- ▶ Referencing is the most misunderstood area of student essay writing
- ▶ You should reference when:
 - ▶ Directly quoting from another's work
 - ▶ whether in books, journals, newspapers, or the WWW
 - ▶ Indirectly quoting from another's work
 - ▶ If you use another's ideas (even if you paraphrase them), they should be referenced
- ▶ The citation used should be sufficient to allow the reader to find the source of the material

Why we reference

- ▶ The key words here are **originality** and **attribution**
 - ▶ In academia, we prize original thinking, and expect that people are given appropriate credit for their original work
- ▶ The following are no good:
 - ▶ **Derivative work**: following the content/argument of a book or article too closely, even if attributed
 - ▶ This is considered to be poor scholarship
 - ▶ **Plagiarism**: presenting the content/ideas or discoveries of another as one's own, usually by non-attribution
 - ▶ This is considered to be cheating

Advantages of referencing

- ▶ When writing essays you are expected to have read around the subject you are examining
 - ▶ Referencing shows that you have done so, and the extent to which you have done so
- ▶ Effective referencing allows you to:
 - ▶ Acknowledge your sources
 - ▶ Add authority (weight) to your arguments
 - ▶ Enable your reader to follow up your source material
 - ▶ Avoid plagiarism, even when unintentional

When to reference?

- ▶ Whenever you use any source of information for:
 - ▶ A direct (verbatim) quotation
 - ▶ Paraphrasing an author's words.
 - ▶ Particular facts, theories, findings or ideas in an author's work
 - ▶ Specific data or statistics
 - ▶ Your inspiration
- ▶ If in doubt about whether or not to cite a source, cite it!

Citation systems

- ▶ There are numerous citation systems
 - ▶ The Author-Date System (also called the 'Harvard style' or 'APA style')
 - ▶ The Numeric System (also called the 'Vancouver style' or 'Oxford style')
- ▶ Once you have selected a system it is important to use it **consistently**
- ▶ 厦门大学本科毕业论文（设计）规范

The author-date Style

- ▶ The author-date style inserts author's surname and date of publication of the document in the text
 - ▶ e.g. "Researchers interested in this phenomenon have investigated various repurchase motivations, including the substitution theory (Moser, 2007) and the financial flexibility theory (Guay and Harford, 2000)."
- ▶ Complete references are placed in bibliography at the end of thesis
 - ▶ [1] Guay, W., & Harford, J. (2000). The cash-flow permanence and information content of dividend increases versus repurchases. *Journal of Financial Economics*, 57(3), 385-415.
 - ▶ [2] Moser, W. J. (2007). The effect of shareholder taxes on corporate payout choice. *Journal of Financial and Quantitative Analysis*, 42(4), 991-1019.

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What is Plagiarism?

- ▶ Plagiarism is a form of theft
 - ▶ Using any material without acknowledging it properly
 - ▶ e.g. text from a text book or web source, source code, the solution somebody else has produced to an assignment, an image, an idea
- ▶ Why?
 - ▶ If you don't acknowledge it, you are passing it off as your own work by default, which is cheating

But I didn't mean to copy, honest!

- ▶ Plagiarism can be intentional or unintentional
 - ▶ Regardless of whether or not you meant to copy, you are treated the same
- ▶ Plagiarism has an objective definition
 - ▶ Nobody can read minds and figure out whether somebody plagiarised intentionally or not
 - ▶ Anybody who is suspected of an offence will have a chance to explain their case, but the outcome will depend on the facts of the case
- ▶ Three very robust automated systems:
 - ▶ 知网、万方、维普

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Topic selection

- ▶ Filling the research gap
 - ▶ Novel solution/method for an old question
 - ▶ Differentiate from the previous studies
- ▶ Extending the existing research
 - ▶ Adding constructs and variables
 - ▶ Looking at new measures and methods
 - ▶ Making changes to the research design
 - ▶ Using new analysis techniques

Getting started with research

- ▶ Use a wide variety of tools
- ▶ Search the web
 - ▶ 财联社, 财新网, etc.
 - ▶ XMU on-line catalogue of books and journals
- ▶ Go to the library & browse journals, books
 - ▶ Try to identify
 - ▶ Major papers in the subject area
 - ▶ Current state of the art and open problems
- ▶ Always research with a purpose!
 - ▶ It's easy to get lost; most often due to applying blind search

Reading papers

- ▶ Papers can be read at many levels:
 - ▶ Abstract only
 - ▶ Abstract, introduction & conclusions
 - ▶ The above + opening/closing paragraphs of sections
 - ▶ Complete read-through, skipping details
 - ▶ Studying the paper in depth
- ▶ Appropriate level depends on your goal, and where you are in your research

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Why plan?

- ▶ Identify what is important & what to focus on in your write up
 - ▶ Organise your work into manageable steps
 - ▶ Tasks, milestones and deliverables
 - ▶ Monitor progress
 - ▶ Delay can be identified when it occurs and before it is too late to do anything about it
 - ▶ Adapt to unforeseen circumstances
 - ▶ Risk analysis and contingency planning

Milestones

- ▶ Milestones:
 - ▶ A checkpoint for progress of the thesis
 - ▶ Show the logical sequence steps to reach the final objective
 - ▶ Should be natural, well-defined, measurable, and at regular intervals
- ▶ How do delays occur?
 - ▶ Illness, machine crashes, unexpected technical difficulties, delay in arrival of software/hardware, unexpected interruptions, laziness
- ▶ Anticipate delays before they become serious, pick up the pace
 - ▶ Unexpected things WILL happen
 - ▶ Early reaction is essential

Good Luck with the Thesis!

Work with ChatGPT

- ▶ Brainstorming Ideas ✓
- ▶ Outline and Structure ✓
- ▶ Editing and Proofreading ✓
- ▶ Data Analysis ✓
- ▶ Reference and Citation Assistance ✓
- ▶ Literature Review X