Getting started on thesis writing!

Today:
1. What you should know about the writing process
2. Strategies for inventing and organizing text

24 February 2020
Hanna Glad
Academic Support Centre
+ so that a reader can understand!
Writing Processes

A. Brainstorm. Read. Write. Edit. Turn in.
B. Read. Read. Read. Read. Read. Write at the last minute. Turn in.
D. Usually starts with brainstorming → reading and note-taking → drafting → feedback → more reading and research → new ideas and more drafting → feedback → revising → focused reading → revising → feedback → eventually, editing and proofreading. Turn in.
The Writing Process

what people think it looks like

what it really looks like
“I write because I don’t know what I think until I read what I say.”

--Flannery O’Connor
Benefits of writing regularly

- 6 year study of 32 people
- 16 regular writers (30 minutes/day, consistently)
- 16 binge writers

**FIGURE 11.1 Effects of BDS**
Benefits of writing regularly

“The precondition for writing well is being able to write badly and to write when you are not in the mood.”

--Peter Elbow (1998)

- 6 year study of 32 people
- 16 regular writers (30 minutes/day, consistently)
- 16 binge writers
Different texts at different times

- Process writing (focus on thinking & content)
- Product writing (focus on its form)

Different types of writing generate different types of text:
- raw text (for your eyes only)
- draft text (for feedback during the process)
- reader text (the end product)

All are necessary in the writing process
But how?

From: https://bobsegarini.wordpress.com
Text invention strategies

1) Keep a writing journal
2) Take reflective notes & synthesize literature
3) Free write
4) Draw mind maps
5) Use metatext as a starting point
6) Tell a friend!
Keep a writing journal

**Before:** what will I do today?
- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...

**During:** What problems do I face? How can I solve them? Do I need to ask for help?

**After:** What have I done? How will I work further?

Formulate these as concrete, checkable goals
Keep a writing journal

Before: what will I do today?
➤ ... Formulate these as concrete, checkable goals
➤ ... 
➤ ... 
➤ ... 

Write 500 comprehensible words of my introduction, specifically about the gap my research fills in the scholarship. (estimated time: 55 minutes)

Fill-in synthesis matrix for the 14 articles I’ve read and determined relevant for my lit. review chapter. (estimated time: 2 hours)
Do you procrastinate?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I almost never put off school work. Thinking about it makes me anxious!</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It happens, but rarely, and usually because I have actively chosen to prioritize something else.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I procrastinate about half of the time and often feel like I'm not turning in my best work.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I procrastinate really often, thinking &quot;I work best under pressure,&quot; even if most work gets done in a panic!</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always procrastinate. Not just on school work but on almost everything. Sometimes I even miss deadlines...</td>
<td>3</td>
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</table>
Pomodoro technique

1. Choose a (concrete, realistic) task
2. Eliminate as many external distractions as possible
3. Work with intense focus for 25 minutes
4. Quickly note distractions on scratch paper
5. After 25 minutes, note what you have done
6. You’ve earned a 5-minute pause 😊
7. Work for another 25 minutes
8. After 4 pomodori, take a longer break
Text invention strategies

1) Keep a writing journal
2) Take reflective notes & synthesize literature
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6) Tell a friend!
Notes that rework the source ➔
better memory & better papers

TEXT CONTENT     and     REFLECTIONS

1) What type of text is this?
2) Problem-solution text? Question-answer text? Claim driven?
3) Note the main idea and how the author convinces you or not
4) What does the text help you understand about your topic?
5) What definitions does the text use?
6) Any helpful concepts or language?
7) What connections does this text make or not make?
8) Other reactions, questions, associations?
“A literature review requires a *synthesis* of different subtopics to come to a greater understanding of the state of knowledge on a larger issue.”

“Large-scale online collective behaviours occur frequently in China (Sullivan, 2013; Yang, 2009a, 2012).”

https://writingcenter.fiu.edu/resources/synthesis-matrix-2.pdf
## Synthesis matrix for an overview of the literature

**Example from:**
https://writingcenter.fiu.edu/resources/synthesis-matrix-2.pdf

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Idea A</th>
<th>Source #1</th>
<th>Source #2</th>
<th>Source #3</th>
<th>Source #4</th>
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**Topic:** ___________________________
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<tr>
<th>Alteration of women’s roles because of WWII</th>
<th>Cornelsen</th>
<th>Stewart</th>
<th>Bruley</th>
<th>Scott</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Women accredited the WASP program for opening new doors, challenging stereotypes, and proving that women were as capable as men (p. 113)</td>
<td>- WAAC (Women’s Army Auxiliary Corp) was 1st chance for women to serve in army, given full army status in 1943 as WAC (p. 28)</td>
<td>- Women given equal opportunities (p. 223)</td>
<td>- Women in the military given unskilled labor positions by government because only seen as temporary workers, therefore no reason to train them (p. 221-2)</td>
<td>- Women born in the 1920’s found new doors open to them where they once would have encountered brick walls (p. 526)</td>
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<td>- Women could compete with men as equals in the sky because of their exemplary performance (p. 116)</td>
<td>- Needs of the war were so great that women’s traditional social roles were ignored (p. 30)</td>
<td>- Women joined workforce as a break from the ordinary to help the war (p. 220)</td>
<td>- Even women not directly involved in the war were changing mentally by being challenged to expand their horizons because of the changing world around them (p. 562)</td>
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<td>- WASP created opportunities for women that had never previously existed (p. 112)</td>
<td>- Military women paid well for the time period and given benefits if they became pregnant (p. 32)</td>
<td>- Unconscious decision to cross into male-dominated roles (p. 221)</td>
<td>- War also brought intellectual expansion to many people (p. 557)</td>
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<td>- Women’s success at flying aircrafts “marked a pivotal step towards breaking the existing gender barrier” (p. 112)</td>
<td>- The 1940’s brought more opportunities to women than ever before (p. 26)</td>
<td>- Seized these new opportunities to bring about change (p. 230)</td>
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<td>- Women given less significant work and viewed as less intelligent and physically able (p. 224)</td>
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Ask:

- Are there differences in the scope of these texts’ main ideas?
- Any degree of disagreements between them?
- Do they engage with each other? How?
- Do they cover different aspects of my subject? How many different aspects? Any left out?
- How detailed/deep is each analysis?
- Any ideas in one text that you could reasonably expect to see in another, but don’t?
- Do they use similar methods to reach similar conclusions? Similar methods but different conclusions? Different methods but similar conclusions?
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Idea and example from: https://writingcenter.fiu.edu/resources/synthesis-matrix-2.pdf
Text invention strategies

1) Keep a writing journal
2) Take reflective notes & synthesize literature
3) Free write
4) Draw mind maps
5) Use metatext as a starting point
6) Tell a friend!
Free write

- To warm up your writing muscles
- To turn off your inner critic or editor
- To quickly generate raw text
- To break through writer’s block

1. Choose a time frame and starting sentence/theme
2. Write without stopping! (No backspace, no eraser)
3. Continue to write without thinking about what you’re writing, even if you don’t have anything to write about

If you free write on the computer, turn off the monitor!
How to free write: sentences

It’s a problem that... (*starting point*)
It’s a problem especially for....This could be used by....to.... (*whom does it concern?*)
The problem is caused by.... (*causes*)
I aim to.... (*your aim*)
To study the problem, I.... (*method*)
To understand the problem, you have to understand how X works.... (*theory*)
Some keywords and concepts are...
I will only deal with...because... (*delimitations*)
For now, I’ll work as if this section will have the following structure... (*organization*)
What can you do with a “free write” text?

• Find a starting point for a new free write
  – underline good ideas and formulations
  – write the best bits on a new page and free write from there
  – repeat until you have developed a working draft

• Find keywords and make a preliminary structure
  – note keywords and write them on a separate page
  – structure the keywords in a logical order → paper structure?
  – write additional comments on each point

• Find gaps in what you know to guide further reading
  – note questions or uncertainties in your text
  – formulate as questions to ask to other literature
  – group and prioritize the questions according to kind
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  – write additional comments on each point

Examples of additional comments:
- I want to talk about / explain / analyze / ........ because ........
- The relation between ............ and ............ is .................
- First I’ll write about ........ because ........ and then I’ll write about ........ because ........
Text invention strategies

1) Keep a writing journal
2) Take reflective notes & synthesize literature
3) Free write
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Health care finance convergence

Historical development

External causes

Internal causes

Effects of convergence

• to see the whole picture
• to see the relationship between the parts
• to find gaps in information
Can be adapted for many purposes:

- map out the structure of a text you’re reading
- map out themes across several texts
- map out your reflections on one or more texts
- map out the content of a text you have to write
1) Keep a writing journal
2) Take reflective notes & synthesize literature
3) Free write
4) Draw mind maps
5) Use metatext as a starting point
6) Tell a friend!
Use metatext

Metatext: text about text

Can start as process text for the writer: helps you understand the kind of content you need to write.

Can become product text for readers: helps them follow your text and understand it in the way you want it to be understood.

Examples:
• Focus statement
• Signpost text = directions
• Theory template
Focus Statement Template

I am studying [TOPIC] ____________ because I want to find out who/what/when/where/whether/why/how [QUESTION] ________________ in order to better understand ________________ (something the field doesn’t fully understand yet) and to make suggestions for how to change/fix/improve _________________. [SIGNIFICANCE]

[METHODS] To do this, I will conduct (a case study/an observational study/historical research/field-experiment) _________________. I will (collect/construct/gather qualitative/quantitative data/empirical material through interviews/observation/content analysis/questionnaires) _________________.

[METHODS & THEORY] I will analyze the data from ________________ (this theoretical perspective) or with ________________ (this framework/these concepts). This perspective is helpful because _________________.

[RESULTS SPECULATION] The results of this research will build on ________________ and have implications for ________________. Further research might focus on _________________.

In this chapter, I will begin by discussing the background to my topic. With that background in place, I will turn to an evaluation of the relevant literature on this topic. The next step will be a re-interpretation of my problem in light of this literature. I will conclude by considering the implication of my topic for the broader field.
In this chapter, I will begin by discussing the background to [my topic]. With that background in place, I will turn to an evaluation of the relevant literature on [my topic]. The next step will be a re-interpretation of [my topic] in light of this literature. I will conclude by considering the implications of [my topic] for [my field].
The first step in discussing [something] must be a consideration of [some sort of background issue]. To get a better feel for [this issue], we will need to look at [a particular aspect of the literature from two fields]. The synthesis of results from [literature in field X] and [literature in field Y] will provide a new way to understand the [current topic]. It is only when we see [this topic] in this new way that we can grasp its implications for the broader project of understanding [some issue facing the field as a whole].
In this book we draw on the work of Foucault to make our argument that psychopathology has become instrumental in schools and that schools play an instrumental role in expanding the new psychopathologies of children and young people. Foucault’s emphasis on truth, power and the constitution of the subject (Foucault 1983, 1997a, 2000) is especially useful to our analysis as it allows us to think through the ways in which psychopathology at school is produced and has productive effects. To this end Foucault’s (1982) conceptualisation of power as productive is generative for grasping how schools can indeed be instrumental in a field that, on first glance, appears to be the province of medical and health sciences (especially psychiatry, clinical psychology and psychopharmacology). It is here also that Foucault’s attention to dominant and subjugated knowledges is of value for informing how to understand how dominant knowledges of school disorders such as ADHD, direct attention from those practices that enable psychopathology to sit comfortably in contemporary schooling and educational environments.
In this (paper/chapter/article/thesis/book) I draw on (theorist’s work) to argue that (1-2 sentences summarizing your argument). (Name of theorist’s) emphasis on (specific concepts that will be used) is especially useful to this analysis as it allows us to think through (major purpose through which the theory is put). To this end (name of theorist’s) conceptualization of (name of major aspect of theory) is generative for grasping how (major application of theory in relation to your argument). It is here also that (theorist’s) attention to (another aspect of theory) is of value for informing (another piece of argument for which the theory is essential).
Text invention strategies

1) Keep a writing journal and a schedule
2) Take reflective notes & synthesize literature
3) Free write
4) Draw mind maps
5) Use metatext as a starting point
6) Tell a friend!
Tell a friend

...and get feedback

1. What stuck out to me the most was...
2. I’d like to know more about...
3. I didn’t quite understand...

Today: reader-based feedback
Reflect on your writing process description from earlier

What's your main takeaway?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Free write &lt;3</th>
<th>Set small goals for the day and put away my phone</th>
<th>Be organized and try to write even though it might not be perfect or even if you haven’t read all the articles that you planned to.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The literature review and my thoughts</td>
<td>Plan, practice writing and don’t procrastinate.</td>
<td>Write on regular basis even if You are not in the mood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set a time and time limit to write something, anything, every day.</td>
<td>My main take away is that I really need to make a matrix in order to synthesize my sources so I can start my literature review ASAP.</td>
<td>I definitely try free write technique. It is such a useful tool to see the things in my head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How writing daily is important, even if it’s a few sentences writing down your thoughts, your findings for the day and how to process them can help forming a bigger picture! It’s always good to put all your data in one space</td>
<td>More detailed writing journal</td>
<td>1. Create a time and space for writing. 2. Try synthesis matrix to organize different theories and ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remove distractions (PROPERLY) and focus more. Most important, I will find ways to maintain focus when I get stuck or don’t understand something, since that is how I lose focus and get distracted in 0.3 seconds. I can try the Pomodoro technique too.</td>
<td>More structured Points which are connected with eachother. The Red Thread which Makes the Text easy to follow. Writing more consense instead of repeating the Same Thing over and over again in another sentence.</td>
<td>start to write immediately and keep in every day, rather than trying to read as much as possible.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Academic Support Centre

Presentation Skills
Open Lecture

7 May 16.15 - 18 pm

Book an individual appointment or sign up for lecture or Write Night:
www.lunduniversity.lu.se/academic-support

WRITE NIGHT

Wish writing weren’t such a lonely process? Bring your computer and something you’re writing (or should be writing) to the ASC to find a community of other writers working on similar projects.

We’ll provide a spot to work, fika breaks, and writing consultants in case you’d like feedback along the way.

Spring term 2020:

2 March
25 March
16 April
6 May
18 May

17:00-20:00

in Genetikhuset

Visit our website and fill out our form to reserve a spot:
www.lunduniversity.lu.se/academic-support

Seating is limited.

The Academic Support Centre