

Editing your thesis

Dr Cherie Todd-Williamson
Centre for Teaching & Learning (CTL)

Good presentation applies to...

Presentation of the problem

Commanding the literature

Significance of findings

Relevance & validity of findings



Your PhD

You will write approx. 200-300 hundred pages
Conduct at least 2 years of research (if not more)

Collect and interpret data

Organise literature

Produce a comprehensive, critical and cohesive discussion to support
your thesis

Editing (by definition) involves:

Arranging, revising, and preparing a written, audio, or video material for final production, usually by a party (called an editor) other than the creator of the material. The objectives of editing include (1) detection and removal of factual, grammatical, and typographical errors, (2) clarification of obscure passages, (3) elimination of parts not suitable for the targeted audience, and (4) proper sequencing to achieve a smooth, unbroken flow of narrative (Business Dictionary, 2018).

Editing your work is not only beneficial,
it's practically a mandatory component of writing your thesis.

Activity:

In small groups discuss editing ...

- *What does 'editing' mean for you?*
- *What have you been doing?*
- *What are you planning to do?*
- *What are you having problems with?*
- *What is working well for you so far?*

Editing your thesis: From macro to micro

As a whole

Each section/chapter

Each paragraph

Each sentence

Reviewing your thesis as a whole:

Make an outline plan and keep it in front of you while you go through your work as a whole.

Questions to ask yourself:

- Does your thesis answer your central research question or thesis title?

Research can be unpredictable, therefore, it's important to make sure that your content matches your title. *For example*, you may have shifted focus while writing, in which case, you will need to re-phrase your dissertation topic while editing.

- Have you defined key words and concepts early on in your thesis?

It's also important to minimise the risk of confusing a reader. When editing, imagine a friend or family member who has no knowledge of your discipline or your dissertation, and then ask yourself, have I done enough to explain each term and concept?

Editing your thesis: From macro to micro

As a whole



Reviewing your thesis **sections/chapters:**

Read each chapter and create a label that will help you to check that all of the relevant points and details are there.

Questions to ask yourself:

- Does all of the content belong in this chapter/section?

Flag anything that might be better placed in another section (or possibly be cut). For example, you might identify repetitive parts which have been stated previously, or discussion that is peripheral.

- Is there too much description and not enough analysis?

In other words, are you being explicit about the implications of a point? Remember to make it clear to a reader why a particular point is included, and how this point helps to address the problems/questions in your thesis.

Structure and flow:

Introduction: Does it:

- Define the topic?
- State the purpose of the research?
- Provide an outline of the thesis discussion?

Chapters: Do they:

- Have a logical order?
- Divide the discussions into appropriate sections?
- Have introductory and concluding segments?
- Present smooth transitions between each paragraph?

Conclusion: Does it:

- Link back to the introduction?
- Sum up the thesis argument?
- Express ideas for to future research avenues?

Reference List: Does it:

- List all sources fully and in the correct format?
- List only the references that you have cited in the main body? And vice-versa?

Appendices: Are they:

- All included and correctly labelled?

Reviewing your thesis sections/chapters:

Questions to ask yourself:

- Is the first sentence of each paragraph a topic sentence?
- Does it introduce the idea you want it to communicate as well as show how it relates to the rest of the discussion?
- Have you used signposting words and phrases effectively to show the relationship between the paragraphs and the points in them?
 - E.g. Opening phrases like: In addition; Similarly; Furthermore; In contrast; However. Other sentences in the paragraph could include:
 - An explanation / Develop a point
 - A quote / An indirect reference that supports it
 - An example from your research
 - A hint at what still remains to be addressed

Editing your thesis: From macro to micro

Each paragraph

GOOD & BAD TOPIC SENTENCES

BAD: A sentence that only states the topic using a keyword.

GOOD: A sentence that makes an argument point (e.g. a thesis statement for just that paragraph).

- For example, if your research is about relationships, it's not enough just to put the keyword 'relationship' in the sentence. Rather you have to create a topic sentence that is specific to that paragraph, which in this case, would tell the readers exactly what part of a relationship this paragraph addresses.



Editing a thesis can feel like a BIG job but there are lots of things you can do to minimise the number of typo, grammar and other sentence structure errors:

- **Check your sentence length:** Aim for sentences that are no longer than three lines and carefully review all punctuation.
- **Read each sentence aloud.**
- **Check quotations have quotation marks** – double or single, depending on your referencing style, and ensure that your style is consistent.
- **Check for common grammar errors** (e.g. their/there and advice/advise).
- **Ensure apostrophes are correct.**

Editing your thesis: From macro to micro

Each sentence

Apostrophes:

<http://owll.massey.ac.nz/academic-writing/apostrophes.php>

USA vs. British spelling:

<http://owll.massey.ac.nz/academic-writing/american-vs-british-spelling.php>

Commonly confused words:

<http://owll.massey.ac.nz/academic-writing/commonly-confused-words.php>



Editing a thesis can feel like a BIG job but there are lots of things you can do to minimise the number of typo, grammar and other sentence structure errors:

- **Identify sentence fragments:** the sentence subject, the verb/action.
 - Are they buried among too many unnecessary words and phrases?
 - Try cutting unnecessary words and read it again.
- **Use a spellchecker:** very helpful in general.
 - Pay attention to your spelling of key names and theories.
 - Ensure the use of capital letters is consistent and correct.

Editing your thesis: From macro to micro

Each sentence

Sentence Fragments:

<http://owll.massey.ac.nz/academic-writing/sentence-fragments.php>

Editing and proofing summary

It's never too soon to start revising, but try to tackle it in these stages, from Macro to Micro.

E.g.: Can save you wasting time fixing sentences that you might remove later

Revision of ...

– **Macro** - Formatting the whole structure of your thesis:

- Layout and presentation; margins, spacing, indentation, correct citation details.
- Does your thesis answer your central research question or thesis title?
- Are the central concepts clearly defined?

– **Meso** - Content and organisation (How everything fits together):

- Do you have a clear research question?
- Are concepts defined (in plain language) early on in chapters?
- Do your introduction and body and conclusion all flow together?
- Do the paragraphs in each chapter have a logical flow?

– **Micro** - Grammar and structuring of sentences:

- Have you used transition sentences, and signposting between chapters and paragraphs. Spell checks, grammatical issues sorted etc.

NOTE: Often editing (especially micro editing) is easier when all of the writing is done. As it's easier to see what needs to be added, or deleted.

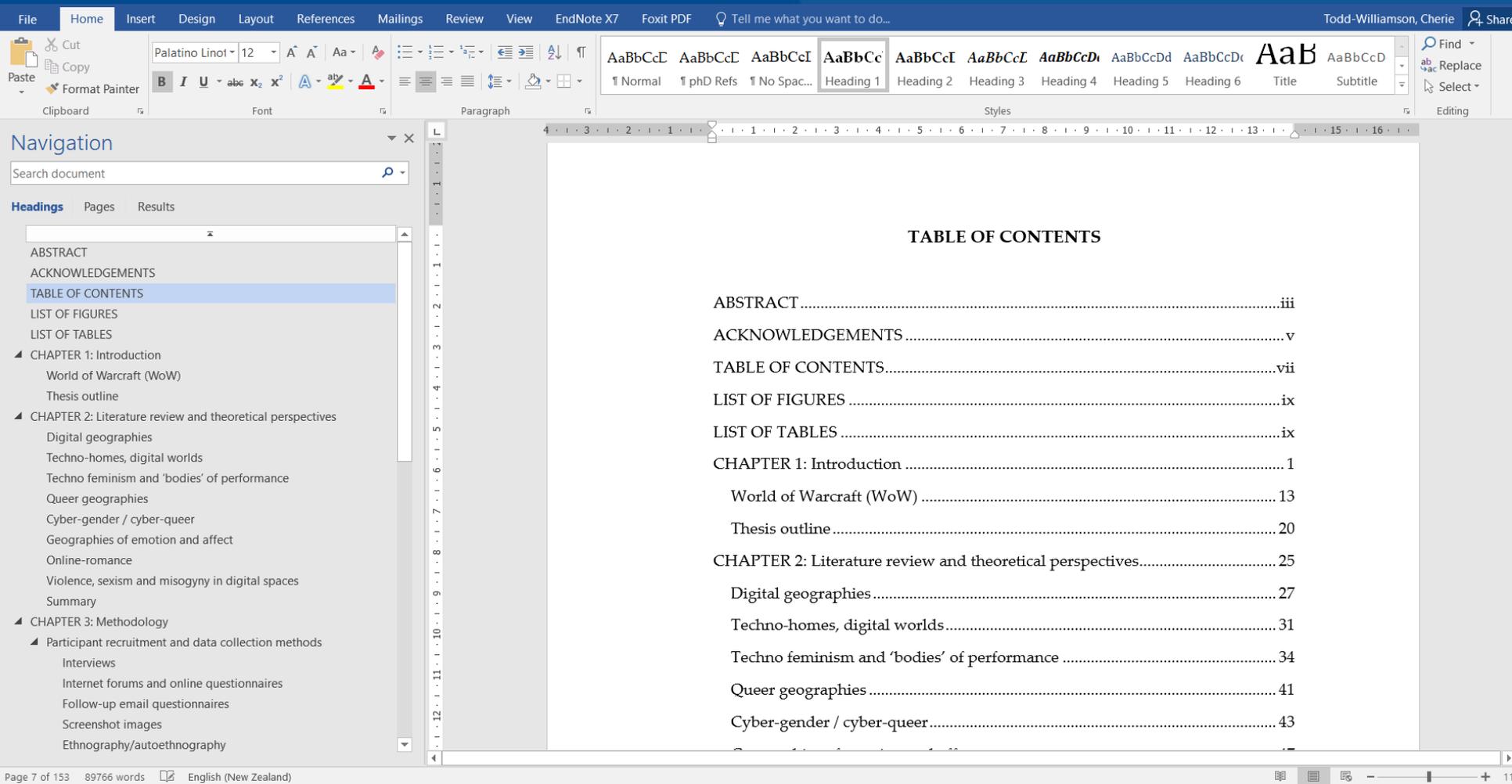
Editing over the thesis timeline

At the beginning

During

Towards the end

What type of doc is this?



The screenshot shows a Microsoft Word document titled "TABLE OF CONTENTS". The document is displayed in a window with the ribbon at the top, showing the "Home" tab. The ribbon includes options for Font, Paragraph, and Styles. The Styles section shows "Heading 1" selected. The document content is a long list of sections and their corresponding page numbers, including "ABSTRACT", "ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS", "TABLE OF CONTENTS", "LIST OF FIGURES", "LIST OF TABLES", "CHAPTER 1: Introduction", "CHAPTER 2: Literature review and theoretical perspectives", and "CHAPTER 3: Methodology". The document is displayed in a window with the ribbon at the top, showing the "Home" tab. The ribbon includes options for Font, Paragraph, and Styles. The Styles section shows "Heading 1" selected. The document content is a long list of sections and their corresponding page numbers, including "ABSTRACT", "ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS", "TABLE OF CONTENTS", "LIST OF FIGURES", "LIST OF TABLES", "CHAPTER 1: Introduction", "CHAPTER 2: Literature review and theoretical perspectives", and "CHAPTER 3: Methodology".

Page 7 of 153 89766 words English (New Zealand)

The thesis as a long document

Microsoft Word Resources

Search OWLL

OWLL

[About OWLL](#) ▼

[Academic writing](#) ▼

[Assignment types](#) ▼

[Computer skills](#) ▶

Microsoft Word

[Basic formatting](#)

[Images, tables, & figures](#)

[Long documents](#)

[Microsoft Excel](#)

[Microsoft PowerPoint](#)

[Stream](#)

Microsoft Word

Microsoft Word is the most common word-processing program used to create assignments and other written documents. This section contains guides on how to format documents correctly using this program. Many repetitive tasks – such as double-spacing an assignment, creating a table of contents, or inserting a table or figure caption – can be done automatically.

In this section

- [Basic formatting](#)
- [Images, tables, and figures](#)
- [Long documents](#)

Related sections

For information on how to arrange and present your work, see the section on [formatting and layout](#).

Academic Q+A

Have a study or assignment writing question? Ask an expert at [Academic Q+A](#)

Live online workshops

[StudyUp \(undergraduate\)](#)

[StudyUp Postgraduate](#)

[Library](#)

Campus workshops

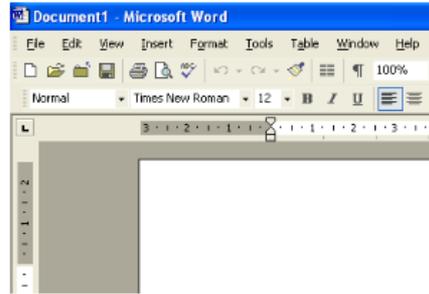
[Campus workshops](#)

- About OWLL ▼
- Academic writing ▼
- Assignment types ▼
- Computer skills ▼
- Microsoft Word
 - Basic formatting
 - Images, tables, & figures
 - Long documents**
- Microsoft Excel
- Microsoft PowerPoint
- Stream
- Distance study ▼
- ESOL study ▼
- Maths & statistics ▼
- Postgraduate study ▼
- Referencing ▼
- Sample assignments ▼
- Study skills ▼

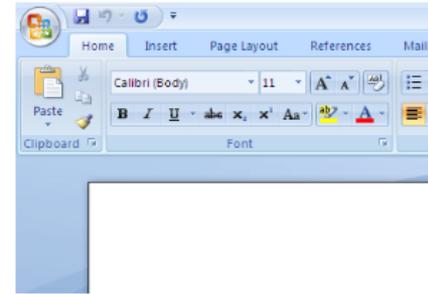
Long documents in Microsoft Word

This page contains helpsheets for the three versions of Microsoft Word (2003, 2007, and 2010). If you are not sure which version of Word you are using, check the chart below.

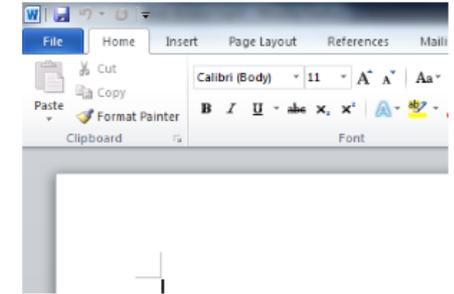
Microsoft Word 2003



Microsoft Word 2007



Microsoft Word 2010



If you have difficulty loading the helpsheets, you may need to install the latest version of the  [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#).

	2003	2007	2010
Creating a table of contents	PDF (405kb)	PDF (386kb)	PDF (345kb)
Numbering headings			PDF (568kb)
Shortcut navigation keys	PDF (142kb)	PDF (141kb)	PDF (117kb)
Comparing documents	PDF (193kb)	PDF (505kb)	PDF (279kb)
Changing the orientation of a single page	PDF (148kb)	PDF (280kb)	PDF (345kb)
Inserting different page numbers	PDF (148kb)	PDF (433kb)	PDF (415kb)
Different page numbers for different sections			PDF (393kb)
Page numbers different on the first page	PDF (74kb)	PDF (98kb)	PDF (110kb)
Starting the page number greater than 1	PDF (78kb)	PDF (96kb)	PDF (131kb)
Printing multiple pages per sheet	PDF (115kb)	PDF (119kb)	PDF (134kb)
Booklet printing			PDF (451kb)
Line numbers	PDF (174kb)	PDF (88kb)	PDF (157kb)

Long document tutorials

Massey Library offers:

1 workshop per semester
and
1 to 1 tutorials (when requested)

Email: library@massey.ac.nz

(Include the words “long document tutorial” in your subject heading)

Kahoot! Online Quiz

Three categories (26 questions in total):

Qs 1 – 10: Spelling consistency – USA & British

Qs 11 – 18: Singular or Plural forms

Qs 19 – 26: Commonly misspelt words

You'll see questions on the screen – e.g.

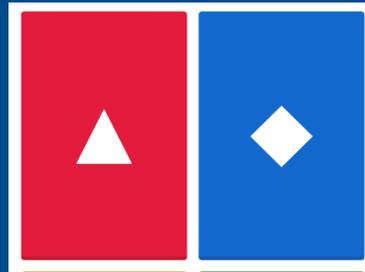
What is the name of Massey's learning management system?

After a few seconds, you'll be given two possible answers – e.g.

▲ Stream

◆ Noodle

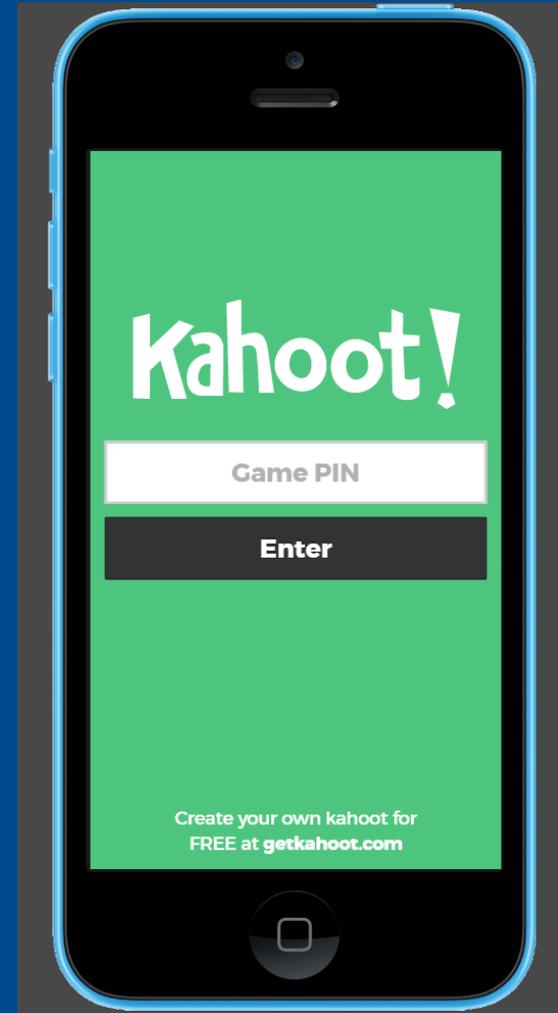
You need to select the correct answer by pressing the appropriate square on your phone, pad or laptop.



You'll receive points not only for correct answers but also according to the speed of your selection.

To join the quiz you need to:

- Open kahoot.it in your browser
- Enter the [game pin](#) which I will show you in a minute
- Enter your [nickname](#) (and you will see it appear on the public screen)



Singular or plural?

- Axis
 - Crises
 - Criterion
 - Nuclei
 - Phenomenon
 - Stimuli
 - Strata
 - Matrix
- Singular
 - Plural
 - Singular
 - Plural
 - Singular
 - Plural
 - Plural
 - Singular

Consistency in singular/plural

- | | |
|--------------|-----------|
| • Axis | Axes |
| • Crisis | Crises |
| • Criterion | Criteria |
| • Nucleus | Nuclei |
| • Phenomenon | Phenomena |
| • Datum | Data |
| • Stratum | Strata |
| • Matrix | Matrices |

(Venolia, 1995)

Citing author/s – Singular or Plural?

- 1 author = shows/states/argues
- 2 or more authors = show/state/argue

E.g.:

- Smith (2000) states that
- Smith and Jones (2001) state that ...

For example:

- What criterion do you use to find suitable research participants?
[Decision based on one factor].
- What criteria do you use to find suitable research participants?
[Decision based on multiple factors].
- The data are / show / indicate – data as a group of different factors.
- The data is / shows / indicates – data as a whole unit (datum).

Referring to sources: Use of tenses

acknowledge	admit	agree	allege	argue
assert	assume	believe	claim	conclude
consider	decide	demonstrate	deny	determine
discover	doubt	emphasise	explain	find
hypothesise	imply	indicate	infer	note
object	observe	point out	prove	reveal
say	show	state	suggest	think

1. Da Souza **argues that** previous researchers have misinterpreted the data.
2. Researchers **have demonstrated that** the use of this procedure is harmful.
3. Smith **admits that** aggregating the data limits the possible variations.

(Smollet, Proctor & Plotnick, 2004)

Consistency in spelling

USA or British?

Labour	– British
Centre	– British
Fiber	– USA
Organize	– USA
Realise	– British
Dialog	– USA
Analogue	– British
Traveler	– USA
Anesthesia	– USA
Programme	– British

NOTE: The NZ dictionary follows the British style of spelling.

Consistency in spelling

USA

Labor

Center

Fiber

Organize

Realize

Dialog

Analog

Traveler

Anesthesia

Program

British

Labour

Centre

Fibre

Organise

Realise

Dialogue

Analogue

Traveller

Anaesthesia

Programme

Note:

- USA shortened version/as sounds
- Use of z rather than s
- Which ever you use, be consistent

(Venolia, 1995)

Common misspellings

• ~~Accomodate~~

Accommodate

• Definitely

~~Definately~~

• Occurrence

~~Occurence~~

• Independent

~~Independant~~

• Questionnaire

~~Questionaire~~

• Recommend

~~Reccommend~~

• ~~Compulsary~~

Compulsory

• ~~Catagories~~

Categories

Commonly confused words

- Clients were given good advise/advice about the procedure
- This population has been effected/affected by droughts
- The knock on effect/affect was a drop in house prices
- Fish oil provides an alternate/alternative source of essential minerals
- Participants took the medication on alternate/alternative days
- Three discreet/discrete measurements were recorded
- The interviewer was very discreet/discrete in addressing these difficult issues
- Oatmeal serves as a complement/compliment to the babyfood
- Following the group therapy session we observed an increased number of complements/compliments

Avoiding verbose phrases

Simplify sentences:

- Wordy sentences should be avoided and edited down to simpler versions. Doing this will make the content more readable as well as more easily understandable.

For instance:

- Despite the fact that = **Although**
- In the event that = **If**
- Has a requirement for = **Needs**
- It is often the case = **Often**
- In view of the fact that = **Because**

Useful tips for avoiding wordiness

- Look out for **prepositions**: "of", "in", "by" (e.g. "in the event of") - if you see it, it often signals a wordy phrase.
- The same thing is often true for **"tion"** and **"ance"** words (e.g. "the maintenance of the relationship" vs. "maintaining the relationship").
- **Relative pronouns**: "who" "whose" "whom" "which" and "that" (e.g. "the experiment, which is a new one, showed that ..." vs. "the new experiment showed ...").
- **Introductory phrases** like "There is", "It is" (e.g. "There are many antelope interested in ..." vs. "Many antelope are interested in ...").
- **Cliches** tend to repeat unnecessarily (e.g. "each and every", "first and foremost").



Written too much and have to cut words?

Editing to cut:

- Take out certain sections?
 - Deleting whole paragraphs can be problematic if they are connected to other areas of discussion, or be linked to previous signposts.
- Go back to key arguments:
 - If they are adequately answered, you may be able to cut words from places where you have added discussion that is not essential to the point being made.
- Too light in other areas?
 - You may need to add more. It's a balancing act!
- Look for redundant sentences or material and cut it.
- Create a clear outline to stop yourself from writing too much.



Paragraphing

Clear topic sentence that reflects the whole paragraph

One point per paragraph

Make sure the paragraphs fit together i.e flow



Read for understanding and clarity

- **Do not use overly complicated language:**
 - When possible, you need to write as simply as possible so that (theoretically) anyone off the street could pick up your thesis, read it, and understand it.
- **Give your thesis chapters to people outside of your discipline:**
 - If they can understand it, you are doing well!
 - And if it's not easily understandable, you will need to work on it some more.

It's important to remind the reader why your research is important

This study is a first in showing the importance of the early embryonic period in the development of lambs and indicated significant biological and economical implications of the uterine environment in sheep production. Supplements at this early stage would reduce likelihood of infection and the potential for stillborns later on.

This study provides greater understanding and direction for future research into this disease in livestock in New Zealand. The enzyme reaction we observed has the potential to be used as the basis of a vaccine for ...

This research is potentially very useful to the timber industry. It allows growers to distinguish hybrids from pure species and therefore ensure the trees when fully established have the qualities required of ..

This study provides greater understanding and direction for future research into this disease in livestock in New Zealand. The enzyme reaction we observed has the potential to be used as the basis of a vaccine for ...



Acknowledging the need for further research

Reinforce the contribution of your own research and acknowledge the need for further research in the area. For example:

A further line of work that would be of considerable interest...

This research has made important contributions to X and Y but there is scope for future work in this area.

The development of a more general X that applies to networks other than Y and Z remains an enormous challenge.

Another recurring issue is The methods we introduce in this thesis present a vast improvement in terms of X however Y makes these methods unsuitable for very large networks. There is still much work that needs to be done in terms of...



Checking your References

- Check for style consistency.
- That all in text citations (in the body) are in the end reference list.
- And vice versa... do you have references in your Reference list that you have not cited in your chapters.
- Checking references can be tedious, but it's very important. Also it can be incredibly time consuming, so allow yourself time to do this properly, without rushing.
- Enrol in workshops on Endnote, or watch online video tutorials about the software that you are using to record your references (e.g. Xotero, Mendeley, Reciprocity, Citation Manager etc...).



Endnote@Massey

http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/research/library/help-and-instruction/endnote/endnote_home.cfm

EndNote

EndNote software stores and manages references.



Download EndNote

By downloading EndNote you agree that Endnote will be installed for the purpose of Massey-related work or study and will not be installed on more than 3 computers per download.

Windows PC Version

- [Personally owned computers](#)
- [Massey owned computers](#)

NOTE: Versions X6 or older must be manually uninstalled.

Mac Version

- [Mac Installer](#)
- [Installation tips for Mac users](#)

NOTE: [Manually uninstall](#) any previous EndNote versions.

Log in: with your student or staff Massey network login.



EndNote Classes

All Massey Libraries provide regular face-to-face and online EndNote workshops. Note: Distance students can also book for an on-campus session.

[SELECT YOUR ENDNOTE CLASS & REGISTER HERE](#)

EndNote is Massey's preferred reference management software; with it you can:

- create, import, manage and search references
- download and manage full text
- insert citations into Microsoft Word documents
- create bibliographies in a variety of bibliographic styles

EndNote@Massey

[Adjusting Author View in a List of References](#)

[EndNote X8](#)

[Install Instructions for Endnote X8 on Massey Computers](#)

[EndNote and Office 365](#)

[Repairing Corrupt Libraries](#)

[Journal Titles That Can't Be Changed](#)

[Sharing Libraries With Other Users](#)

[How Do I Set Endnote To Permanently Open My Library?](#)

[Massey Profile Installer](#)

[Discover: Import Filter Request](#)



Your working environment

When writing:

- Always try to give yourself time to write and think.
- Remember, writing doesn't always flow, so factor that into your writing schedule.
- Find a place that lets you work with minimal interruptions.

Working and communicating with supervisors:

- Supervisors will at give feedback on your writing, and the sooner the better. So writing early is a really good idea.
- **However**, you might decide to focus on just getting your points across in early drafts, and going back to do grammar later. So you will need to let your supervisors know.

Have you tried:

- Bootcamps or writing retreats?

Other tips

- **Time management:**
 - Don't leave editing to the last minute. It takes time!
- **Look at other theses by past PhDs to use as a guideline:**
 - They can give you a better idea of how you want your thesis to look (e.g. overall structure and presentation style, Table of Contents, Fonts, Citation style). Also look at the ways they have structured particular sentences in the different sections/chapters of their thesis.
- **Being a good writer means adopting good writing and revision techniques:**
 - Create your own editing checklists. For example...



Example of an Editing Checklist - Micro

Micro element	Guidelines	Check
Capitalisation	Use of capitalisations are correct and consistently used.	
Punctuation	Commas, colons etc. are correct and in appropriate places, including apostrophes.	
Grammar	All sentences are easy for the reader to understand.	
Formatting	The correct formatting guidelines for PhDs in my college have been followed.	
Spelling	All words are spelled correctly.	
Glossary terms	Complex words have been explained in-full when used, AND added to the Glossary's list of terms, with a full description.	
Acronyms	Acronyms are used for ease of reading and are re-written in full at the first instance in each chapter.	

What about professional editing services?

Always avoid services that offer to re-write, or even write your thesis. Using a service like this could be seen as a serious offence.

Editing companies:

- Typically made up of editors who have an academic background.
- Like to assure quality editing results.
- Multiple editors, so tend to work well with tight deadlines.

Check out several editing agencies to compare prices and level of service.

Freelance editors:

- Like companies, different freelance editors offer different levels of work.

You need to make sure that your editor/proofreader has suitable qualifications, as well as a known history of producing successful work.

Key points to keep in mind when searching for an editor:

- Ethics
- Affordability
- Capability
- Turn around time

Useful links

Massey's Doctoral Research Student webpage –

(where you can find all of the resources from these and other sessions from 2017 & 2018):

<http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/research/researcher-development/postgraduate-research-student.cfm>

What font should you use?

<https://thesiswhisperer.com/2016/03/30/what-font-should-i-choose-for-my-thesis/>

Choosing a referencing management system

<https://thesiswhisperer.com/2013/08/21/endnote-vs-well-everything-else/>

Useful literature

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Day, R. A. (1998). *How to write and publish a scientific paper* (5th ed.). Phoenix, AZ: The Oryx Press.

Dunleavy, P. (2003). *Authoring a PhD: How to plan, draft, write and finish a doctoral thesis or dissertation*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Evans, D., Graba, P., & Zobel, J. (2012). *How to write a better thesis* (3rd ed.). Carlton: Melbourne University Press.

Kamler, B., & Thomson, P. (2014). *Helping doctoral students write: Pedagogies for supervision*. London: Routledge.

Rountree, K. (1996). *Writing by degrees. A practical guide to writing theses and research papers*. Auckland: Longman.

Swales, J., & Feak, C. (1994) *Academic writing for graduate students: Essential tasks and skills*. University of Michigan Press

Swan, M. (2002). *Practical English Usage*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Venolia, J. (1995). *Write right: A desktop digest of punctuation, grammar and style*. California, CA: Ten Speed Press

Walters, D. (1999). *The readable thesis: A guide to clear and effective writing*. USA: Avocus Publishing.



Support over the summer period

CTL services: https://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/staffroom/teaching-and-learning/centres_tl/centrestl-students/centrestl-students_home.cfm

Library services: https://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/research/library/library_home.cfm

Massey's Doctoral Research Student webpage: <http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/research/researcher-development/postgraduate-research-student.cfm>

Writing workshops by Martin McMorro: tinyurl.com/martinspresenations AND academicenglishresources.com

This is our last writing workshop for the 2018, but we will be back in 2019 with more!