

# Turbocharge Your Thesis

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Your thesis is probably the biggest writing task you will ever undertake. It can feel overwhelming. And what makes it worse is that most thesis writers have never developed good writing habits. Worse, they have developed a way of writing that may have been sufficient to get through high school and undergraduate courses but causes real problems when it comes to writing a large thesis. Habits such as leaving it all to the last minute.

## **The write-up period is a delusion**

One of the big mistakes thesis writers make is to assume they will do all their reading, data gathering, analysis and then have a big writing period at the end. People often say to us “I’ve done all the other bits, I just have to write it up. Just have to write it up. Like it was just a minor task. Writing is probably the most intellectually challenging part of the whole process. You need to start writing as early as possible. Write as you go. Start writing now.

## **But I’m not ready**

Oh yes you are. You are ready. Ready right now. Perhaps you’re not ready to write the final words in your thesis but you are ready to write something. If you’ve read some articles (and who hasn’t!) then you are ready to write about them. If you’ve run some experiments you’re ready to write about them. Waiting to feel ready is a big trap. Prolific writers don’t wait to feel ready. They write. The reality is you will never feel ready. But you are.

## **Write rubbish**

Expecting to write the final words in your thesis from scratch is a sure fire way to kill your motivation to write. Many thesis writers spend hours obsessing over a word or looking for the killer opening sentence. This is the way to become a slow writer. The fast way is to write drafts, preferably quickly, and then rewrite and refine. Get the story clear first and then come back and add the ornamentation. Pulitzer prize winner James Michener once said “I’m not a very good writer, but I’m an excellent rewriter”.

## **Finishing is an illusion**

Thesis writers talk about working on their thesis until it is perfect or until it is finished. They want to write the final word on their topic. To encapsulate all of their thinking, everything they’ve read and to rebut every possible criticism. The reality is your thesis will be bound but it will never be finished. There will always be another reference you could add, another approach, another interpretation. What do you think you will find the first day after you bind your thesis. A spelling mistake or too. The best thesis is a submitted thesis.

## **Get your fingers dirty**

You can’t dream your thesis. You can’t plug a USB cable into your brain and just download your thoughts onto the paper. You have to sit in the chair and get your fingers dirty. You have to write. Reading is not writing. Referencing is not writing. Editing is not writing. Writing emails is not writing. Housework is not writing. Writing means getting new words down on the page or computer screen.

## **Writers write**

We could tell you much more about writing; you could read one of the many fine books about writing; you could even attend workshops about writing. But they will all tell you the same thing; writers write. And thesis writers have to write theses. So pencils sharpened .. let’s go.

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