

Dissertation Writing Process

I. Getting a New Perspective

1. Think of the dissertation as requiring a different approach from other academic work – it requires a marathon runner, not an academic sprinter.
2. Re-frame how you view the dissertation: not as a project that is “too big,” but as a series of small steps and tasks.
3. See your dissertation as a choice you have made – replace “I have to” with “I choose to” to empower and motivate yourself.

II. Approaching Your Dissertation

1. Forget about finishing – just keep starting, every day.
2. Segment the entire goal (an outline, a chapter) into small steps to make it a more manageable task.
3. Be realistic about time frames – allow yourself enough time, and over-estimate time for writing.
4. “Engage” with your dissertation for AT LEAST 15 minutes each day – and engage (or “re-engage”) with your advisor if you have not met within the last month.

III. Setting the Stage for Writing and Getting Started

1. Work with your personal rhythm, not against it – plan to write during your “peak” time of day.
2. Organize your materials (files, supplies, notes) BEFORE you begin writing.
3. Clear your mind before you start writing – get rid of negative feelings by writing in a journal or chatting with a friend.
4. Work in an environment where distractions are limited.
5. Schedule writing times according to a weekly schedule; also make a daily game plan to help you prioritize your day.
6. Before writing, review your notes in order to plan what you are going to say.
7. When you are writing, write! (Likewise: When you edit, edit!)
8. The first draft need not be a masterpiece – that is why it is called a DRAFT!