

How to stay sane whilst writing a Thesis

Writing a thesis isn't all academic. There are practical things to consider like carefully choosing a topic and supervisor, managing your time, and assessing and obtaining the resources and support you need.

The close to perfect match

- Aim for you, your topic and supervisor(s) to complement each other.
- Choose a topic that is important to you, that you believe will make a specific contribution to knowledge.
- Read good, bad and famous theses in your discipline to get some ideas of what to do and not do.
- Choose a supervisor interested in and competent to supervise your topic. Is your topic of relevance to your supervisor?
- Ask yourself if you can form a trusting relationship with the supervisor(s) and if you will have similar expectations about supervision.
- Meet potential supervisors several times before choosing/deciding.

Good timing

- If studying full time, treat your thesis like a full-time job.
- Aim for 9am to 5pm where possible.
- Most PhD's take longer than the scholarship term. Work as hard as possible through any funded years.
- Think in terms of a time-line in 6-monthly blocks (if full time) and discuss this time-line with your supervisor(s).
- Think about what time you study best, taking into account your body clock and personal commitments.
- Holiday for a few weeks each year (scheduling around experiments if necessary).
- Try not to split your place of study between 2 places.
- Set realistic goals and stick to them for most of the time.
- Keep a daily journal of what you did (left page) and how you felt (right page). Look back on what you've accomplished and see how the lows go away in the end!

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Practical and emotional support

- If necessary, have an IT expert set up your software and hardware correctly from the start.
- Join a post-graduate support group (online via chat rooms and blogs, or face-to-face). Talk to your faculty, postgraduate association or university counsellor about setting one up.
- Get feedback by giving a seminar or presentation at least once a year on your topic.
- Keep talking to family, friends, and colleagues about how they and you are coping with your study, especially when you write the thesis.

Stay positive

- Think realistically about yourself, others and your thesis.
- Keep negative gargoyles off your shoulder. See a counsellor to help you change your negative thinking into productive positive thinking.
- Remember that what you write at first is only a draft and needn't be seen by anyone unless you decide to show it.
- Don't wear your critical and creative hats at the same time. Start a draft with your creative hat on and revise it later with your critical hat on.
- Use your favourite stress management techniques. If you're not sure what to use or need any other personal support see your university counsellor.

For further information contact the UNE Counsellors at:

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Email: counselling.service@une.edu.au
www.une.edu.au/counselling