

Approaching Big Projects & Academic Style

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Overview

- “Big” writing projects—theses, dissertations, books, etc.
- High stakes = intimidating process
- Often the single project that determines graduation, career advancement



Overview

- Minimize stress and roadblocks
 - Analyze
 - Plan
 - Talk
 - Write
 - Read
 - Revise



Analyze

- Find recent, published, approved examples
- Analyze examples for style, format, organization, etc.
- Use examples to answer big/small questions
 - Headings, citation, terminology, length, tone, etc.

Plan

Develop two plans

1) plan detailing the driving questions, general overview, and chapter descriptions

This plan makes clear the “logic” of the project

2) Writing plan— plan when you will write based on your deadline

Schedule Time

Use a chart like the one below to identify blocks of writing time. Stick to your schedule, just like you do for other important commitments.

	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
12 am	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
1 am	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
2 am	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
3 am	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
4 am	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
5 am	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
6 am	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
7 am	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
8 am		█	█	█	█	█	Write
9 am		█	█	Write	█	█	Write
10 am		Write	█	Write	█	█	Write
11 am		Write	█	Write	█	█	
12 pm		Write	█	█	█	█	
1 pm		Write	█	█	█	█	█
2 pm		Write	█	█	█		█
3 pm		█	█	█	█		█
4 pm		█	█	█	█		█
5 pm	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
6 pm	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
7 pm	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
8 pm							
9 pm	█	█	█	█			
10 pm	█	█	█	█		█	
11 pm	█	█	█	█		█	

Talk

- Talk early on with faculty members
 - Help everyone share expectations and direction
- Talk with anyone who will listen, even if they are not listening
 - Talk keeps you familiar with your project
 - Talk is practice for your defense and/or interviews

Write

- Do the math
 - How long does it take you to draft a page?
 - Time yourself, then do the math on your project
- Allow yourself time to write badly
 - Not everything you write will be polished or even appear in final text
 - Writers get into trouble when not allowing time to think via writing

Read

- Throughout the writing process, read your project
 - Stay familiar with previous sections/chapters
 - Helps when editing and writing other sections/chapters
- Stop reading books, articles, etc.
 - At some point, stop reading and focus on your writing
 - You will never read everything on your topic; the faculty you are working with know this
 - Your defense will not be a book report; it will be about your project

Revise

- Everything you write will be revised
 - Remind yourself that what you write today need not be perfect
- You will need help revising
 - Seek feedback from faculty, peers, friends, writing consultants
- Revise as you go; do not wait for faculty feedback

Academic Style

- Formal but not boring
 - Academics have emotions; use them
- Match audience and purpose
 - Know the journal, publisher, outlet for your writing
 - Imitate features of conversations in your field
 - If peers tell jokes or use first-person “I”, join them, if not....

Strategies for Academic Style

- Write naturally, especially in first draft
 - Writers get stuck and stressed when trying to elevate style/tone
- Avoid thesaurus
 - Does more harm than good
 - Ex. Parsiminiusor.....stingy
- Address tone/style when revising

Strategies for Academic Style

- Be careful with clichés and idioms
 - can frustrate readers, make writing tired/lazy
 - Rely on reader having additional, cultural knowledge

Clichés and Idioms	
cold as ice	cut corners
last but not least	draw the line
In the same boat	play devil's advocate
bring to the table	turn a deaf ear
now or never	right off the bat

Strategies for Academic Style

- Use ITTS– I am trying to say _____
 - Fill in the blank with your words/thoughts, then edit out the “I am trying to say”
 - I am trying to say that taking pictures of graffiti for analysis is simply another form of textual analysis
 - Taking pictures of graffiti is simply another form of textual analysis
- Build vocabulary in field
 - Keep a list from what you read

Tone/Style Practice

Circle/underline words/phrases that create a tone/style:

1. Let's take a look at structural imitation

Next, consider structural imitation

First sentence is less formal; it was written for first year college students. Neither is right or wrong.

Tone/Style Practice

2. Eminent aestheticians have repeatedly declared that the highest form of song composition is a fusion of perfect poetry with perfect music.

Well-known aestheticians **consistently recognize** the highest form of song composition **fuses** perfect poetry and perfect music.

Tone/Style Practice

3. Last but not least, this research suggests...

Finally, this study suggests...

Finally, our data suggests...

Finally, the data indicates...

Finally, we/I suggest/conclude...

UNO Writing Center

- Schedule appointments or drop by
- Writing Center at UNMC, open 20 hours/week for in-person/online sessions



Questions?

