 

Basic guidance on initial thesis writing

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1. We recommend that you write your thesis in English, because the literature you will use is mainly in English, and it makes it easier to condensate the thesis into a manuscript that can be submitted for *peer review* and publication.
2. We would also recommend that you as soon as possible write a Table of Content, ToC. Make it as detailed as possible at this stage with the main headings (**Introduction, Materials and Methods, Results** and **Discussion**) and sub-headings. Make a copy of the ToC and start to fill in notes from the literature you have surveyed under sub-headings of the **Introduction, Materials and Methods** and **Discussion**,
3. Let the ToC be a living document. As you survey more and more literature and make notes in the Copy of the ToC, hereafter called the thesis, you will experience the need for changing or making new sub-headings. Go back to the ToC and update so there is agreement between the thesis and the ToC. [There is software in Microsoft word that makes this harmonization between the text and the ToC, If you format the headings “Heading 1”. “Heading 2”. “Heading 3”, etc, this should be done automatically.]
4. Number the introductory pages (Cover page to ToC) with Roman numbers. Start the thesis (Introduction) with page number 1.
5. We do not think that a Master thesis needs an abstract, but some prefer to have a summary. If you decide to write a summary, you should label that **0 Summary** and start it on page 1, followed by **1 Introduction** on the following pages.
6. The scope of the thesis is that you in the **Introduction** describe the situation as it is before you start your work, and outline what you will do to bring this field of research forward. This part can be described under a sub-heading “Objective and working hypothesis” at the end of the Introduction. In the **Materials and Methods,** you describe what you have available of material (data) and how you will do the work (with literature references to where you have found your methods). **Results** have no literature references. Here you present your own results only. In the **Discussion** you compare your findings (results) with what is available from other studies and describe how your results progress this field of research. If you have some ideas on further work, these can be presented at the end of the discussion. Some would also like to have a sub-heading with conclusions.
7. **Figures and tables**. If you refer to a specific figure or table, start with a capitol letter (e.g.: These data are shown in Figure 3 and Table 1). If you are referring to tables and figures in general, use lower case.
8. **References**. We recommend that you use a reference programme, and we recommend EndNote. A reference programme is very time-saving if you would like to submit a manuscript to a scientific journal, or if you would like to continue with a PhD or find a science-related job. EndNote is most likely free for university students. Take a free on-line, introductory course. Put all your references in the EndNote base. Since you are writing on related subjects you may wish to exchange references.
9. You may have used large data sets (e.g. enormous tables) that is inconvenient to include in the text of your thesis. Put them in an Appendix under **Supplementary data**, (e.g. Appendix 1, Appendix 2, etc.
10. Be very exact with the formalities. Use the scientific name the first time a species is mentioned in your thesis. The scientific names should always be in italics and the genus name starts with a capitol letter, e.g. *Phoca vitulina* and *Phocoena phocoena*. If you use abbreviations that are not in common use, spell out the first time they occur in your thesis.
11. Use simple, but precise language as close to the spoken language as possible. But avoid trendy phrases and slang words. When you refer to other’s work and results, be respectful and polite, even if you disagree with the results.
12. Use your supervisors. Send them early drafts of your text so you can get correction, if necessary, at an early stage.
13. The best wishes for your thesis writing.